

Editorial: LGBTQ+ community still has to fight for Pride, 2023 WLNR 22354728

NewsRoom

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June 28, 2023

Section: Opinion

Editorial: LGBTQ+ community still has to fight for Pride Despite resolutions and celebrations in much of the county, recognition falls short of full acceptance.

The Herald Editorial Board

If you're wondering why Pride Month - a recognition and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community and its members - is so named, it's a matter of necessity to stress that message of pride in the face of pockets of resistance to that acceptance that remain present in Snohomish County and throughout the state and nation.

For much of the county, the month of June, now drawing to a close, has been marked with official proclamations and celebrations, all occurring without reported problems. Resolutions were signed by local officials, including by County Executive Dave Somers as well as city councils and mayors in Snohomish, Lynnwood, Edmonds, Mill Creek, Mukilteo and Mountlake Terrace. Public celebrations, including parades, picnics, dances, festivals, block parties, brunches - yes, many with participants in drag - were held in Everett, Edmonds, Lynnwood, Shoreline, Woodinville, Monroe, Bothell, Lake Stevens and Snohomish.

Yet, some scattered rain of disapproval threatens a more unanimous public acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in the county.

Lake Stevens Mayor Brett Gailey balked at signing a proclamation recognizing Pride Month in his city, The Herald's Sydney Jackson reported Monday. And a Pride group in Arlington has had its event pushed back to July 22 because of prolonged wrangling with city officials and opposition from members of online groups, including Moms For Liberty and Conservative Ladies of Washington.

Gailey's reluctance to sign a resolution this year is puzzling because he signed the city's first such proclamation in 2021 and proposed a community advisory committee to promote inclusion that year.

Citing only "personal beliefs" this year, Gailey has made no public explanation for his reversal and did not respond to multiple requests by The Herald for comment on the matter.

As well, when Lake Stevens City Council Member Anji Jorstad, who drafted the city's first proclamation in 2021, sought support from the rest of the council to discuss a resolution for Pride month this year, her motion received a second form fellow Council Member Mary Dickinson, but was voted down by the council's other five members.

North of Lake Stevens, Arlington Pride has sought to stage a follow-up to its first Pride celebration in 2022 at Legion Memorial Park, which was attended by about 300 people as well as a handful of black-clad and masked protesters holding

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signs that warned “Drag queens are groomers.” (Aside from those employed in the pet care industry, the allegation against drag performers is baseless.)

This year’s event was initially stymied by an early request for background checks of performers in drag and that the organization pay a \$3,500 fee to cover security for the event. More recently, the fee request has been dropped and Arlington Pride has said it will provide its own security, but it asked the city to enforce a new state law that authorizes local government to restrict the open-carry of firearms at public gatherings.

City Administrator Paul Ellis, in a response to the group, declined the request, determining that the Pride event did not fit the law’s definition of “a demonstration, march, rally, vigil, sit-in, protest, picketing, or similar public assembly.”

Ellis instead implied that responsibility for public opposition to the Pride event was on the organization itself: “While the City has concluded your entertainment, based on the limited information you have provided, is protected by the First Amendment, it is clearly entertainment that certain segments of the community do not support ... you should consider how your message is being received by the community.”

Two points: Ellis’ definition of “public assembly” is so narrow it could be used to deny the state law’s intended protection for any such gathering. Ellis’ reference to the group’s exercise of its First Amendment rights, itself, argues for it meeting the legislation’s definition. And nothing in a public celebration of Pride - certainly not evidenced by last year’s peaceful event - would come close to justifying the need for anyone to openly carry firearms in the event’s vicinity.

The planned event is one that state legislators would have envisioned the new law would protect.

The continued opposition to Pride - whether it’s reluctance to express simple support for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community or blatantly hostile intimidation and threats - is ample proof of why Pride events are necessary in our communities. The message of such events is a declaration that members of the LGBTQ+ community have legal and recognized rights to live their lives openly and without fear of retribution or attack.

Those who don’t respect those rights don’t have to participate in Pride events, but neither should they be allowed to interfere in the rights of the rest of the community - members and supporters - to honor, celebrate and demonstrate the meaning of Pride.

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Section: News

Catching up on preschool skills

June 28, 2023

Due to COVID-19 school closures, along with parent fear of sending their children back into the classroom, many early childhood centers saw a decrease in enrollment during the pandemic.

Early childhood teachers are now witnessing the repercussions of this “freeze in time” when it comes to social skills in their students. Although time seemed to stand still during the pandemic, the children did not stop growing. Unfortunately, with children being isolated during the important ages of 1 – 5, classroom environments are taking a bit longer to run like a “well-oiled” machine.

The basic skills of manners, cooperation, patience and compassion that are usually being mastered as toddlers in typical social settings became a task to learn well past the toddler stage. The children in my care have risen to the task and are doing a marvelous job of treating their peers with kindness and respect.

Preschool is such an essential experience for children to have before entering kindergarten. I am very thankful to be the beginning of a child’s school career and am so proud to send them off to elementary school with grace and civility.

Julie Crews, Grace Lutheran Preschool, Naples

Citizens ignored by commission

There was a Board of County Commissioners’ zoning hearing on June 21. They thoroughly displayed their continuous insincerity towards the citizens of Lee County who foot the bill for their \$100,000.00+ annual salary.

Three cases were on the docket and the first two were processed briskly. Then came the rezoning request from Commissioner Mike Greenwell for property he owns along SR 31 in Alva.

At this hearing and at the HEX hearing two weeks ago there were many citizens voicing their objections.

To a person they opposed this rezoning. In doing so they brought forth many facts as to how this case contravened county plans, rules, and regulations. If that is not enough it was also brought to light how this plan contravenes state and federal rules and regulations.

After the testimony from all sides the county commissioners kept asking Deputy County Attorney Michael Jacob, in essence, how they could work around all of this.

They finally, in a magnanimous gesture, worked out an agreement where the maximum height of a building would not

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exceed 45 feet. (At one point a person left the hearing room, presumably to confer with Commissioner Greenwell, and very quickly reappeared to accept this limitation.)

This is a very brief synopsis of what took place but it is very indicative of how this county, in particular the Board of County Commissioners, the HEX examiner, the county manager, and the county attorney work to provide developers with every little request. If this is not so, how can this request and the request for Kingston and Owl Creek and others be approved.

All of these have had multiple contraventions to laws and regulations and all have been passed with little to no explanations.

The Board of County Commissioners has tried their very best to eliminate transparency and remove public input from the equation.

They have eliminated the need to post public notices in newspapers. They have made it illegal to approach a commissioner on a zoning question. They limit the time for citizens to speak while letting applicants go on ad infinitum.

By their very testimony at these hearings, one would think that county employees are working for the applicants instead of you.

Do you think you are getting your hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth from your county employees?

To paraphrase a line I read, the commissioners seem to spend their time ignoring their constituency and expending great effort on how to work around any and all public protestations.

Norman Cannon, Fort Myers

Paper fails to cover story

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that The News-Press chose front page coverage of a restaurant dynasty taking over some present Fifth Avenue positions in Naples. Everyone wants to know who's doing the cookin'.

But that The News-Press failed to cover a strangely approved near-79 acre agriculturally designated property owned by a sitting Lee County commissioner despite detailed and irrefutable facts and evidence regarding land plan requirements didn't deserve a mention DID surprise me. I guess I was under the impression that The News-Press tried to cover local news.

Of course, we know EVERYONE is much more interested in what restaurants on Fifth Avenue are doing, especially those folks in Olga and Alva where rural lifestyles will now be displaced by high rises, high density and even more traffic. But, of course, everyone also knows this Legislature in Tallahassee just this year passed a law that counties can no longer consider impacts traffic exerts on communities.

I guess dramatically increased traffic, high-rises, increased density and being designated a high hazard area isn't important enough to deny a request by a sitting Lee County commissioner who was appointed by our governor. This action in the halls of our decision-making local government wasn't worthy of a word in our local newspaper.

Not, of course, when there is a change in restaurant ownership on Naples' Fifth Avenue. It's obviously much more important to know who's cookin'.

Patty Duncan, Fort Myers

Insurance conundrum

I have been insured by Citizens Insurance for 19 years. Last year was the first time I have ever filed a claim and it was for less than \$10,000. When it came time to renew, I was information that I needed flood insurance even though I am not near any pond, stream or body of water. Total cost is nearly \$4,500.00 for \$91,000 worth of insurance.

As if that isn't bad enough, I have been informed that because my roof will be 10 years old next winter I will be dropped by Citizens. Bottom line, I will not be able to get insurance from any company. My roof was inspected by a licensed professional after the hurricane. It was deemed to be perfect. The metal roof has a lifetime warranty. My house has no structural issues. Yet my policy will be cancelled.

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How is this right? More important, what am I to do? Replace a perfectly fine roof for \$10,000 if I can find a contractor available or not have insurance. This is a case of consumer fraud and I am left holding the bag.

Nancy Cooper, North Fort Myers

Trump was a complete failure

I'm responding to the letter citing what he considers are Trump's accomplishments. Trump's job creation pales in comparison to Obama's (11.5 million) and Biden's (10.7 million so far) and unemployment numbers stood at 4.7% when Trump came into office, he inherited a booming economy. Unemployment numbers did drop further and when they're low it follows that they will also be low for minorities and women, however, unemployment in 2020 was as high as 14.7% to 9%.

Imagine if he hadn't lied and ignored COVID for months, telling us it would just disappear.

The Mueller report proved that there was Russian collusion despite AG Barr's interpretation. Most of Trump's inner circle was indicted over it.

So, what did he accomplish? All I see is a massive tax cut for millionaires that blew up the debt and did not pay for itself. Add the attempted coup and the theft of top secret classified documents and it's safe to say that Trump was a complete failure.

D. Wallace, Cape Coral

Tired of conspiracies

In an age where you can fact check through Google and other honest fact-finding sites how do people listen and believe crazy conspiracy theories?

For example a recent writer displayed a narrative about knowing Hunter Biden had the biggest corrupt financial deal in history. I repeat "in history."

First Hunter Biden plead guilty to two counts of tax fraud which he paid back and having a gun after going through drug rehab. Second it was a Trump appointed judge and prosecutor. Third, nothing was found while Trump was president. Fourth, he "knows" no present factual info other than from some conspiracy-driven news site.

Time for Americans to use intelligence to learn facts versus crazy wild factless conspiracy theories.

Glenn Mueller, Naples

Faith in Trump. Seriously?

My mind tends to go to another place when I read letter writers professing their faith in Trump policies and how much better we were, according to them.

I'm reminded of an economic advisor who made a presentation in front of Trump and other folks, who said after leaving government that Trump completely misunderstood two often-used economic terms that were being discussed. He remarked that he was not sure if he should inform during the meeting so he just went on with his presentation. Also, pretty common knowledge that intelligence officers making presentations kept dumbing them down, hoping to get his attention and understanding.

They resorted to a wide range of tactics and he often looked away listlessly, and if he would ask questions they were often unrelated to the topic at hand. Of course, there are incidents like Trump querying about a nuclear bomb to thwart hurricanes and putting bleach in a body to counter COVID. The list goes on. Seriously?

To me Trump's days are filled with wondering Big Mac or cheeseburger, which Fox channel is praising him most, and which worshipers to call on one of his unsecured phones.

Paul Fowler, Bonita Springs

The former Fort Bragg

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A mailbag author questions, why would anyone want to change the name of Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg?

This was written in reference to our Governor Ron DeSantis's speech, stating that he would change the name back to that of a Confederate slaveholder, General Bragg.

We must realize that it is the day of institutional racism, and it is common that we have a racist government. Our governor is a racist trying to become the racist president.

His goal is to satisfy all the desires of the racist common people. That is how you become president of a racist nation.

There is no attempt to disguise or claim to be anti-racist.

Lewis Robinson, M.D., Fort Myers

'Moms' chapter elevates Hitler quote

Our state, which seems to be vying for the inevitable title of the book banning capital of the country, ought to take a wary look at the organization here that spearheads the movement to remove materials from schools' libraries and restrict their use in classrooms.

It's the Moms for Liberty, the Melbourne-based group of zealots who showed its true color recently, and the hue was not pleasant; one of its chapters in Indiana put atop the front page of its newsletter, complete with capitalized emphasis, an ominous quotation accurately ascribed to no less a pedagogic authority as Adolf Hitler: "He alone who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future."

While the group did issue an apology and removed the offensive phrase, its placement under the masthead was hardly inadvertent.

The group aspires to the ideology that bred Hitler and his Holocaust henchmen and women, too, who were among the most admiring of what today would be called his "base."

Viewing it as a careless oversight is a misnomer; it's more akin to a revelatory Freudian slip.

It's particularly troublesome because a substantial segment of the proscribed publications are by Jewish, Black, and LGBTQ+ authors, groups not known to be particular favorites of the Fuehrer.

While the instincts of all members of the "Moms" need not be maligned, this episode warrants closer scrutiny of the motivation of the Florida group and what it may portend.

Marshall H. Tanick, Naples

DeSantis profiled

DeSantis' political profile has developed in a step by step fashion, beginning with his unscientific approach to the COVID pandemic, his suppression of teaching racial and gender themes in schools and his punishing of teachers who defy him, his backing of permissive gun laws, his aggression toward immigrants and transgenders, and his diminishing of women's rights by banning nearly all abortions after six weeks.

He has made the case to donors that Trump is fundamentally unelectable — a plausible assumption, in view of the number of civil and criminal matters Trump faces.

Now he is trying to persuade voters exhilarated by Trump's willingness to fight at every turn that he, DeSantis, is of the same ilk.

DeSantis takes Trump literally. The core position of DeSantis is that he can actually deliver what Trump promises. However, the real issue for DeSantis is whether his all out war on liberals will be what Americans want.

It is becoming apparent that his war on Disney is not popular with most. Nor have his antagonisms towards teachers, blacks

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and the LBTGQ nation been widely accepted.

Nor his denials of the right to good health by banning mandated masking and vaccinating during COVID when more than 80,000 Floridians perished. Nor has his abortion ban won the praise of many women who see their rights to health care and family planning denied. Nor has his immigration legislation criminalizing humanitarian care of migrants enthused Hispanics and Florida businesses.

But he seems to be holding onto wealthy, white men who have never been to Disney World.

Joe Haack, Naples

Korean War remembered

This anniversary of the start of the Korean War reminds me...

I was the first sergeant of an Army quartermaster company stationed in Kobe, Japan at that time.

There were more than 200 men in my company.

The North Koreans were overrunning South Korea. President Truman, acting on the authority of the United Nations, ordered General MacArthur to engage the North Koreans and push them back above the 39th parallel.

General MacArthur did not have an Army to deploy to Korea so to gain time to raise one he asked for volunteers throughout the Far East Command to stem or slow the North Koreans until he could raise one.

Headquarters asked for 20 volunteers from all the companies there including ours. Almost every man in our company volunteered. I selected the 20 members to deploy to Korea.

They were all killed in action.

The next week Headquarters asked for 20 more volunteers. Not one single man volunteered.

After that Headquarters levied 20 men from each company and they selected the men to deploy to Korea. That system remained in effect until General MacArthur invaded Korea and turned the tide of the war.

E.R. Santhin, Naples

Zelensky and democracy

Can Volodymyr Zelensky pull it off, a democratic Russia?

Wagner fighters, under Yevgeny Prigozhin leadership took Russian military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don without a shot being fired.

As Wagner's military convoy headed toward Moscow, Russian crowds cheered them on and posed for selfies.

The symbolism rings loud and clear. Russian people including the Russian Military Headquarters in Rostov-on-Don are fed up with Putin's savage failed attacks in Ukraine and imprisoning and murdering of his competitors and journalists.

Volodymyr Zelensky, who is fluent in Russian, is an attorney and entertainer, with incredible leadership skills and charisma; he might just pull it off. He has the advantage over Yevgeny Prigozhin of, instead of being a criminal, is absolutely committed to establishing a free democracy.

I envision President Zelensky communicating effectively with Russian military personnel and freeing them from Putin's control. Instead of stopping half-way to Moscow he could go all the way and taking over Moscow without firing a shot as occurred in Rostov-on-Don.

It would be most fitting for Russian oil and gas exports to pay for restoration of Ukraine and for Putin and other criminals to

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spend their lives in prison as occurred with the Nazis after the Nuremberg Trials.

Reversing the autocratic dictatorship in Russia and establishing a democracy would undermine many autocratic dictatorships existing today. President Zelensky would certainly qualify for the Nobel Peace Prize.

William A. Pettinger M.D., Bonita Springs

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Why Moms for Liberty was designated an 'extremist' group, 2023 WLNR 22352063

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Section: Main News

Why Moms for Liberty was designated an 'extremist' group

Maddie Hanna (Staff Writer)

Moms for Liberty calls itself a parent empowerment group. But as the polarizing organization arrives in Philadelphia this week for its annual summit, it's being identified as something else: an "antigovernment extremist group."

That's according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the veteran civil rights organization that tracks domestic extremism. This year, the group added a number of "parental rights" groups - the Southern Poverty Law Center refers to them as "anti-student-inclusion" - to its tally of hate and antigovernment extremist groups.

Moms for Liberty has accused the Southern Poverty Law Center of espousing "hate" toward its members. Here's why the organization says Moms for Liberty warrants the designation:

What makes Moms for Liberty an antigovernment group?

Founded in Florida in 2021, Moms for Liberty was born out of opposition to COVID-19 mandates in schools and now claims 285 chapters across 45 states. It pivoted to targeting diversity education and how LGBTQ issues are handled by schools, as part of a broader conservative movement that has accused schools of indoctrinating students around race, gender, and sexuality.

That messaging is what landed Moms for Liberty on the SPLC's list, said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst with SPLC's Intelligence Project.

"It's really looking at their overall narrative: that public educators and public schools are attempting to indoctrinate and sexualize children through this radical Marxist agenda," Carey said.

The SPLC notes statements from Moms for Liberty leaders, including the group's slogan that "we do not co-parent with the government," comments referring to "government schools," support for abolishing the federal Department of Education, and accusations that teachers unions are responsible for indoctrination.

In one example flagged by the SPLC, Moms for Liberty said last year that "the K-12 cartel - also known as the national teachers union (NEA) - met and drafted a proposal to replace the word 'mother' with 'birthing person.'" Describing the proposal as "insane," Moms for Liberty said that "as the teachers union pushes an agenda focused on everything but educating our children, American parents are rising up, taking back our school districts and putting the focus back on educating our children."

'Brown' backlash

Why Moms for Liberty was designated an 'extremist' group, 2023 WLNR 22352063

The SPLC didn't designate Moms for Liberty as a hate group, which "really attack an entire class of people," Carey said. Still, she said, "their tactics are definitely hateful."

She drew parallels to segregationist parent groups that arose after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision - saying Moms for Liberty similarly aims to "suppress" different groups of people.

Carey pointed to the group's opposition to critical race theory - an academic framework that examines racism as embedded in institutions, but that critics have used as a catchall for diversity education and "divisive" lessons. A Tennessee Moms for Liberty chapter, for instance, filed a complaint in 2021 alleging that texts about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington and Ruby Bridges' autobiography violated the state's anti-critical race theory law.

Moms for Liberty has also opposed policies accommodating transgender students and has referred to gender dysphoria as being "normalized by predators." And while Moms for Liberty has said it's focused on removing inappropriate sexual content, efforts to ban books from libraries have disproportionately targeted stories about LGBTQ people or people of color, Carey said.

Other groupson 'extremist' list

Moms for Liberty isn't the only education-related group to land on the SPLC's list this year. Others include No Left Turn in Education, started by a Gladwyne mother, and Parents Defending Education, which has been filing complaints against school districts across the country - including Lower Merion - saying it's "fighting indoctrination in the classroom."

Local Moms for Liberty chapters - Pennsylvania has the second-largest Moms for Liberty presence nationally, according to the group - appear on the SPLC's "Hate Map" alongside neo-Nazi groups, like the National Socialist Movement, and white nationalist groups, like the Patriot Front.

Carey said the education groups represent a trend of "a shift to public spaces" by extremist groups, that "comes with them showing up for school board meetings and running for public office. A lot of these antigovernment and hate groups are really infiltrating the lives of everyday Americans."

Some Moms for Liberty chapters have been linked to groups like the Proud Boys. Last week, an Indiana chapter made national headlines for a quote it attributed to Hitler in its newsletter: "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future." (Following a backlash, the chapter condemned Hitler and updated its newsletter: "The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert ... If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.")

How has Moms forLiberty responded?

Some right-leaning groups, including Christian conservative groups, have previously accused the SPLC of unfairly labeling them hate groups. Moms for Liberty continues to be embraced by leading Republicans: GOP presidential candidates Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley, and Vivek Ramaswamy are all expected to speak at the Philadelphia summit, which begins Thursday.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Democratic presidential candidate known for promoting anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, will no longer speak. The campaign for Kennedy, who had been announced as a speaker a week earlier, "told us his schedule changed and he can no longer speak to our summit," Moms for Liberty cofounder Tiffany Justice said Tuesday. She noted that the group's website had been updated with the change.

In a statement, Justice and fellow cofounder Tina Descovich said parents deserve to be a part of their child's public school education.

"Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government

Why Moms for Liberty was designated an 'extremist' group, 2023 WLNR 22352063

employees?" they said. "We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that."

mhanna@inquirer.com

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Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 22354062

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Section: Opinion

Letters to the Editor

No vouchers

Just when you thought education matters couldn't get any worse, a recent report reveals that compared with the previous school year, Pennsylvania lost a record number of teachers. Nearly 10,000 teachers left the ranks while only 5,000 new ones were certified. Teacher turnover has a negative impact on student outcomes and affects districts financially. This comes at a time when the legislature is under a court order to fix funding for public education, and we must assume that any fix would include making teaching a more attractive profession.

What will not make teaching more attractive is Gov. Josh Shapiro's revelation that he supports using state money to provide vouchers to students attending private schools. Shapiro, who attended a private religious school, seems to have joined the ranks of various Christian groups that don't believe in the separation of church and state. Using public money for private education weakens public education at a critical time when it needs our full-blown support. We all need to make sure the governor gets that message.

R. Thomas Berner, Bellefonte, penbrookwriter@comcast.net

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The League of Women Voters of Central Delaware County joins education and good governance organizations across the state in loudly opposing Senate Bill 795, a bill to create a new private school voucher program - called Lifeline Scholarships - that would drain millions of dollars away from state taxpayers and public schools. The state already funds two private school voucher programs, currently totaling \$340 million a year, that provide tax credits to parents for private school tuition. The commonwealth has never directly given families money to pay for private school, as SB 795 proposes.

Under SB 795, money would go directly to the private schools, and parents would not be taxed or required to meet any income-eligibility test. Please go to www.legis.state.pa.us, find your local legislators, and urge them to vote against this bill. All children deserve access to high-quality public education. It is the legislature's constitutional duty to fix the current school funding system by enacting a new funding formula. We believe it is irresponsible to appropriate state funds for tuition vouchers that benefit private and religious schools when the commonwealth hasn't met its most basic duty to students who attend our public schools.

Anne Mosakowski, president, League of Women Voters of Central Delaware County

Step right in

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Columnist Jonathan Zimmerman is right: We can't stop a group that wants to rent the Museum of the American Revolution for its cocktail party. However, we can be sure that the museum does not change anything in its exhibits when this group uses the venue for its event. It would be great if the Moms for Liberty members had to go through the current exhibits to get to their hors d'oeuvres. Maybe it would force them to confront their bigotry and narrow-minded opinions about history and see our country for what it truly is - with its faults as well as its achievements. We stumble and make mistakes, but we should never hide from what we have done or what we can achieve. Our battle for the soul of our nation and democracy will be fought for years to come and should never be abandoned. We as a people must continue to be open-minded, inclusive, and always strive to be better, not hateful and narrow-minded.

Vince McGinley, Haddon Heights

Truth in labeling

The Inquirer recently published an op-ed where the writer claimed to be "pro-life," yet within the piece, he was rather loose in labeling both Gov. Josh Shapiro and House Bill 428 as "pro-abortion," perhaps knowing that terminology would be more inflammatory. Last time I checked, many people, including myself, are "pro-choice." That means we support a woman's right to make her own health-care choices (including to have or not have an abortion), but that certainly does not mean we are pro-abortion. As the writer focused on the abortion issue alone (not on the totality of both the mother's and child's lives), perhaps he should have called himself and his organization "antiabortion," "anti-choice," or "pro-forced birth," rather than "pro-life."

Kent Kingan, Malvern

...

Michael J. McMonagle's op-ed on abortion is morally wrong and incoherent. He states that "abortion is the direct and intentional killing of a child in the womb," but, in truth, an embryo or fetus is no more a child than an acorn is an oak. He holds that the "rape exception" that would allow abortion "removes all of the love and justice from the pro-life position" and "punishes the child for the crime of his or her biological father." As such, he gives the fetus and the rapist more personhood than he does the woman who has been so brutally assaulted, placing her value in third place (if that). Finally, while he may extol "our Philadelphia-area pro-life movement," no movement that falsely equates a fetus as a person, rationalizes away sexual violence, and diminishes women in so many ways should be called "pro-life." It is more accurately described as pro-criminal and anti-women.

Bill Dingfelder, Philadelphia

Mutiny's bounty

In her June 26 column on the recent coup attempt by Yevgeny Prigozhin and his mercenary Wagner Group military company, Trudy Rubin demonstrated remarkable understanding of the events leading up to and following the situation. Her unique attention to detail is illustrated by noting that Russian President Vladimir Putin - in a recorded video slamming the mutiny - did not color his hair as he usually does for public appearances. She also included a range of unanswered questions. Among them: Why did the Wagner Group retreat, and why would Putin say that Belarus mediated the truce? Finally, she noted that this was an opportunity for President Joe Biden and NATO allies to take advantage of the chaos and give Ukrainians the weapons that could end the war. I agree - they should strike while the iron is hot.

Joel Chinitz, Philadelphia, jjchin@comcast.net

Pledge prayer

Former President Donald Trump famously said, "I'm really rich." Yet his supporters persist in giving him money - \$12 million within days after his first indictment, \$4 million within one day after the second. That's a waste. A man worth around \$2.5 billion doesn't need money. A man with a \$100 million, three-story penthouse apartment decorated in gold and marble, who lives in his own posh resort with chandeliers in the bathrooms, and who spends a lot of time leisurely playing golf, often

Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 22354062

on courses he owns, shouldn't need their money.

Trump can fund his own court and campaign costs with ease. The \$5 million award in the E. Jean Carroll case is chump change. What this billionaire needs now is not money from his supporters - many of whom are described as godly and evangelical - but prayer. Loyal Trump supporters should save their hard-earned money and, instead, pledge novenas, most likely to St. Jude, patron saint of the unlikely and desperate, or perhaps to Our Lady Undoer of Knots.

Edward J. Gallagher, Bethlehem

Sensationalism wins

I don't imagine anyone reading the news about the doomed passengers and crew of the Titan submersible has anything to say other than the usual platitudes, and yes, this is tragic news. However, the seemingly infinite and ongoing coverage of the aftermath will sadly clog up the news cycle for God knows how long. The sensationalism and obsession with such tragic stories never cease in feeding our ever-shorter attention spans.

Compare that to the recent story about the high school senior who was shot 10 times, yet fought to complete his senior year studies to graduate on time. He was then prohibited by the principal from attending his prom and walking in his graduation ceremony. That is a narrative that news consumers should invest in and care deeply about. I understand the adage, "If it bleeds, it leads," but just because this worked for the last 100-plus years in mainstream journalism does not mean we have to continue to be bogged down by the same sensationalism at the cost of local human interest stories that mean something here and now.

Michael Dalbey, Cherry Hill

---- **Index References** ----

Company: North Atlantic Treaty Organization; League of Women Voters Educa

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56); Contraception (1CO66); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Women's Health (1WO30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Delaware (1DE13); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; House; Wagner Group; NATO; League of Women Voters)

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End of Document

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NewsRoom

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. won't be at summit, 2023 WLNR 22354041

NewsRoom

6/28/23 Phila. Inquirer B2
2023 WLNR 22354041

Philadelphia Inquirer (PA)
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June 28, 2023

Section: Region

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. won't be at summit

Maddie Hanna (Staff Writer)

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Democratic presidential candidate known for promoting anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, will no longer speak at this week's Moms for Liberty summit in Philadelphia.

The campaign for Kennedy, who had been announced as a speaker a week earlier, "told us his schedule changed and he can no longer speak to our summit," Moms for Liberty cofounder Tiffany Justice said Tuesday. She noted that the group's website had been updated with the change.

Kennedy would have joined a slate of Republican presidential contenders speaking at the summit, which begins Thursday night. Former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis are both scheduled to speak Friday, along with former Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador. Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy is expected to speak Saturday.

The event is the second annual summit for Moms for Liberty, the conservative "parental rights" group that formed amid opposition to pandemic restrictions and has since shifted to accusing schools of indoctrinating children around racial and LGBTQ issues.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated Moms for Liberty as an antigovernment extremist group, and protesters have called on the downtown Marriott to cancel the event, along with the Museum of the American Revolution, where a reception is to be held Thursday.

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215-854-4552

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; United Nations Publications

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); U.S. President (1US75); World Elections (1WO93))

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. won't be at summit, 2023 WLNR 22354041

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Southern Poverty Law Center; United Nations) (Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; Robert Joseph Kennedy)

Word Count: 215

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NewsRoom

Quoting Hitler an example of the shift on the right, 2023 WLNR 22288519

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2023 WLNR 22288519

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June 28, 2023

Quoting Hitler an example of the shift on the right

ELWOOD WATSON

Last week, an Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, a nonprofit organization that advocates for “parental rights” in education, ended up apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after previously using a quote from the racist and antisemitic Nazi leader in its newsletter.

”We condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history,” read a statement from chapter chair Paige Miller on the cover of the revised newsletter. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology.”

The group was recently labeled as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center in its annual 2022 Year in Hate and Extremism report.

The initial version of the newsletter included the quote, “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future,” and cited Hitler. While the origin of the quote is not entirely known, it has been attributed in numerous historical texts to a 1935 rally speech by the Nazi leader.

Perversely going on the defensive, the national chapter of Moms for Liberty denounced the Indianapolis Star -- the local paper that first reported the story -- as engaging in “intentional dishonesty,” even while issuing a statement themselves that condemned the chapter’s decision to quote Hitler.

Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice, co-founders of the organization, responded in a statement, “They should not have quoted Hitler. Period. Parents are passionate about protecting future generations from tyranny, but Hitler did not need to be quoted to make that point.”

Gee, you think? Well, thanks for coming to such a reasonable conclusion.

Of course they should not have used commentary from one of the most odious, despicable and abominable human beings in history. But the truth is, Moms for Liberty is hardly an aberration.

There has always been a segment of Americans -- primary white -- who have, whether overtly or covertly, harbored rabid levels of hostility and hatred toward individuals they view and perceive as “the other.” These men and women were largely forced to discuss and reaffirm their racist and bigoted viewpoints with like-minded individuals. For much of our recent history, their outpourings were confined to secret conferences, white supremacist communications, underground newsletters, obscure far-right magazines and radio programs and in more recent decades, the darkest, racially sordid corners of the web.

After their disastrous and humiliating defeat in 1964, the right-wing segment of the Republican Party, who by this time had

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wrestled control of the party away from the more moderate Stanton/Rockefeller wing, was emotionally and psychologically shell shocked by such a devastating loss, and thus determined to have their collective voices and ideas represented on the national stage.

Over the past several decades, the conservative right has been successful in amassing a cottage industry of right-wing pundits, radio and network hosts, think tanks, magazines, journalists, clergy and other political tools. These forces have been very astute at playing on the fears, resentments, hatreds, fragilities and insecurities that have rankled the psyches of their audience.

Embodied with the perennial dual forces of patience and determination, they have reached within striking distance of being able to claim “mission accomplished.” It has become an alarming, disturbing and distressing state of affairs. Those of us who are committed to a progressive, inclusive society that respects the rights of all American citizens must combat and respond to such vile and fascist-oriented politics progressively, proactively and with fearless ferocity.

Elwood Watson is a professor of history, Black studies, and gender and sexuality studies at East Tennessee State University.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

News Subject: (Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Republican Party; Southern Poverty Law Center; East Tennessee State University) (Adolf Hitler)

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June 28, 2023

GOP Lawmakers Side With Proud Boys After Their Wild Brawl With Neo-Nazis
Photo Illustration by Luis G. Rendon/The Daily Beast/GettyWhen members of the Proud
Boys and another far-right group founded by a former Proud Boy ...

Kelly Weill

Alexander Reid Ross

Photo Illustration by Luis G. Rendon/The Daily Beast/GettyWhen members of the Proud Boys and another far-right group founded by a former Proud Boy member protested at the same Oregon LGBTQ Pride event this weekend, the two factions ended up brawling on a sidewalk. The fight—which saw Proud Boys and members of the Rose City Nationalists exchange haymakers outside an Oregon City burger joint—was one of the frequent spats that populate the far-right social scene. But footage of the fight has gone viral as part of an ongoing effort to whitewash the far right, with conspiracy theorists and lawmakers describing some of the movement’s gangs, describing the Proud Boys as patriots and their opponents as federal agents. “This is the BEST video on the internet right now,” conservative internet personality Benny Johnson tweeted, describing footage of the brawl as a “Pro-America Patriot rally” interrupted when “feds show up dressed as ‘Nazis,’” until “Patriots for Feds out of rally.” The clip actually shows uniformed members of the Proud Boys yelling at a small contingent of Rose City Nationalists near a Pride event that both had showed up to oppose on Saturday. RCN is part of a larger network of white nationalist “Active Clubs,” which promote violent beatdowns against enemies. The group and the Proud Boys (which also glorify street brawls) have crossed paths before. RCN’s founder, Casey Knuteson, has been affiliated with multiple far-right groups in the Pacific Northwest, including area Proud Boys, who yelled at him by name and called him homophobic slurs during the Saturday confrontation. (Knuteson did not return The Daily Beast’s request for comment.) Activists have long documented both groups’ presence in Oregon. Nevertheless, lawmakers like Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) amplified Johnson’s allegation that RCN members were federal agents. “Feds or not Feds?” Massie quote-tweeted Johnson’s post. David Livingston, a conservative state representative in Arizona, also retweeted posts calling the RCN federal officers, Arizona Right Wing Watch reported. The allegations are the latest instance of elected officials describing white supremacist groups as a federal psy-op. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (who has, herself, spoken at a conference hosted by white nationalists) implied that recent demonstrations by fascist groups like Patriot Front “looks like a fed operation trying to create racism, white supremacy, and racial division where none exist.” Proud Boys have also encouraged those conspiracy theories on Facebook. In the aftermath of the melee, Proud Boys celebrated, energized by their victory. Gavin McInnes, the group’s founder, who has since attempted to distance himself from the group, wrote on Telegram, “Masked Feds show up to Proud Boys event. PBs immediately call them out, tune them up, and demask them.” In a subsequent post, McInnes falsely identified a young California man whom right-wing activists accused of being among those unmasked, while right-wing social media celebs took to Twitter to ridicule the Active Club, calling them “feds.” Subsequently, an Elon Musk supporter tweeted out the same California man’s name to his 1 million followers, to which Musk publicly replied, “always remove their masks.” (The falsely accused man later posted time-stamped receipts showing him in California on the day of the brawl, and made a video calling the allegations “just crazy,” adding that “my family and I are being harassed completely.”) Kate Bitz, an organizer with the Oregon-based anti-hate group, Western States

GOP Lawmakers Side With Proud Boys After Their Wild..., 2023 WLNR 22320020

Center, said this messaging is meant to distract from the similarities between Proud Boys and overt white supremacist groups, as the Proud Boys attempt to make inroads with more mainstream conservatives. These accusations “deflect from the consequences of the anti-LGBTQ+ narratives they’ve been pushing for years,” Bitz told The Daily Beast. “Obviously, it doesn’t help their standing in the community to show that white nationalists are showing up at the same event and protesting on the same side as the Proud Boys.” Despite McInnes’s claims about federal agents, the Portland, Oregon Proud Boys chapter confirmed on Telegram that the fight had been personal in nature, with one of their former members. “The incident that occurred was the result of a personal beef between a disavowed member and our chapter,” the group wrote in a statement. “For a period of time the disavowed member chose to skulk around, talk Shit and dox 2 current members. Unfortunately he decided to drag his new bros into his personal issues.” The FBI also issued a statement denying involvement in the sidewalk scuffle. “We are appalled by recent online allegations that the FBI had personnel posing as protesters in Oregon City, OR this weekend,” Kieran Ramsey, special agent in charge of the Portland division said in a statement. “Any such claims are absolutely false.” Following the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, which resulted in multiple Proud Boy leaders’ convictions on seditious conspiracy charges, the Proud Boys have refocused their efforts on targeting LGBTQ events. Their campaigns have forced restaurants to cancel drag shows, and brought them in line with more accepted right-wing organizations like Moms for Liberty. “The Proud Boys are heavily involved in the Miami chapter of Moms for Liberty,” one former Moms for Liberty member told Vice this month. “Moms for Liberty want to push their agenda with fear, harassment, and intimidation, and they have the Vice City Proud Boys as their foot soldiers.” Other extreme groups have previously attempted to break bread with the establishment GOP. White supremacist groups like Identity Evropa (now defunct) and its successor group American Identity Movement (also defunct) encouraged members to maintain a clean-cut image and run for local offices. Part of that image was an unofficial uniform of khaki trousers, which have since been adopted by white supremacist groups like Patriot Front and Active Club chapters. That uniform style of dressing, reminiscent of a Capitol Hill intern, has only fueled conspiracy theories on the right, with Proud Boy apologists claiming that the outfits look like something a federal agent would wear. The conspiracy theories don’t make communities any safer, researcher Jennefer Harper told The Daily Beast, noting the Proud Boys’ and the RCN’s deepening feud, which continued online after the Saturday fight. “I think they are going to be on high alert when they come out looking for each other, so I think that could definitely lead to some spiraling violence,” she told The Daily Beast. “And just like the public has confused this Active Club cell as either feds, Patriot Front, or antifa, I think the greater public could misidentify people and groups and attack them as well.” But the infighting between the Proud Boys and the RCN, instead of an attack on the Pride event, showcased local resilience against anti-LGBTQ groups, Bitz said—even in Oregon City, which was hosting its first-ever Pride Night on Saturday. “More and more towns are holding their first, second, or third Pride events this year,” she said. “The Northwest Nationalists repeatedly targeted Pride events this year. They likely think Pride organizing originating for the first time and in contested territory for LGBTQ+ rights might be easier to intimidate. That’s not how it’s played out.” Read more at The Daily Beast.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); North America (1NO39); Oregon (1OR01); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (GOP; Neo-)

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GOP Lawmakers Side With Proud Boys After Their Wild..., 2023 WLNR 22320020

NewsRoom

Liberal groups fight back as 'parents' rights' notches wins, 2023 WLNR 22311817

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2023 WLNR 22311817

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June 28, 2023

Issue DAILY
Section: Main (A Section)

Liberal groups fight back as 'parents' rights' notches wins

Laura Meckler;Hannah Natanson;John D. Harden

Growing energy on the left to resist book bans, anti-LGBTQ initiatives

In the raging culture wars, conservative parents jumped out first with a robust agenda built around the defense of "parents' rights."

Now, seeking to apply some countervailing pressure, groups are coalescing on the left to resist conservative efforts to remove books from schools, end student LGBTQ clubs and restrict classroom discussions of race and gender. Experts and advocates say the liberals - some forming groups nationally and others in states and local communities - increasingly are in a strong position to push back.

Liberal groups with names such as "Stop Moms for Liberty" are campaigning for like-minded school board candidates, lobbying legislators and training parents to show up at school board meetings. They host Zooms and Facebook pages where parents can commiserate and strategize.

The burst of activity comes at a time when education activists enjoy enormous sway on the political right. When Moms for Liberty holds a national summit later this month, for instance, it will include speeches from at least four GOP presidential candidates, including former president Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

It took a while for many to engage, said Isabell Moore, public schools community organizer for Down Home NC, a North Carolina advocacy group.

"Most of us are kind of just going about our daily lives, showing up for teacher appreciation day and volunteering for the PTA. Our public schools are a fact - we love them, we care about them," she said. There have always been parents involved, she said, but "it was not till these attacks that the majority of everyday parents were like, 'We really need to jump in and take this to the next level.'"

Liberal education advocacy ticked up last year and has been gaining steam since, says Sigal Ben-Porath, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who recently published "Cancel Wars," a book about cultural and free speech debates in education. First it was on the local level, and then with some larger national umbrella organizations.

"There is a definite acceleration of organizations and mobilizing on the left in response to the book bans and the anti-LGBTQ efforts," she said. "It is significantly on the rise."

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The conservative groups were initially formed by parents angry about pandemic restrictions such as mandatory masks. Later, they turned their focus to policies and curriculums aimed at racial justice that they saw as promoting racist ideas. More recently, their attention has trained on issues of gender identity as they worked to ban discussions in classrooms and bar transgender students from playing sports. And many have campaigned for school voucher programs that allow parents to pay for private school with tax dollars.

They have notched success after success on the local, state and national levels, rallying around the idea of parents rights. They helped push the issue into the GOP presidential primaries, pass state legislation and made inroads in local areas by winning school board contests - in some cases taking control of school boards.

Tiffany Justice, co-founder of Moms for Liberty - which has 120,000 members spread out over 285 chapters - expressed surprise that any parent would oppose their views.

”I don’t understand how any parent can be against fundamental parental rights,” she said. She said parents have a right to direct their children’s education but also said it’s wrong to insist that schools teach material she and others find offensive or outside academic standards, such as LBGTQ content.

Last fall, conservative candidates won 39 percent of 1,834 contests in which candidate ideology could be discerned, according to an analysis by The Washington Post. The Post classified candidates’ ideology based on data from Ballotpedia, which tracks many school board contests, as well as from endorsements made by conservative groups Moms for Liberty and the 1776 Project, by DeSantis, and ratings assigned by the liberal group Red, Wine and Blue.

The Post found that liberal candidates had more success in politically conservative counties, winning 35 percent of the races, than conservatives had in liberal counties, where they won just 20 percent of the races.

Some of those successes were helped by groups on the left. Caught off-guard at the start, activists began organizing last year and now have groups in places across the country, many of which are affiliated with national organizations that provide support and in some cases, paid staff.

Upcoming battles

Among the coming battles: another round of school board elections, with about 9,000 school districts in 35 states holding contests this year, according to Ballotpedia.

Red, Wine and Blue, a liberal group that focuses on suburban moms, now has paid organizers in three states with school board races this year - Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia - as well as in North Carolina and Michigan. It counts about 400,000 supporters across 50 states, including people who have signed up for email or text messages or joined a Facebook group.

”A big goal is to flip back seats that were won by extremists in 2021 just to stop the chaos,” said Katie Paris, the group’s founder. The other side, she said, is “not winning as much as one would think based on how much they have dominated headlines over the last two years and been allowed to misrepresent parents.”

Looking ahead to 2024, Down Home NC is already working now to recruit candidates for the school board races, earlier than ever before, and plans a candidate training session for July.

In the meantime, many groups are working to train like-minded parents to attend and speak at school board meetings, something conservative groups have been doing since the height of the pandemic. To face them, Red, Wine and Blue has put more than 11,000 people through one-hour “troublemaker trainings.”

This spring in North Carolina, a group called Heal Together held its first two sessions teaching parents to speak at school board meetings and track school board activity. They drew a combined 160 people from 32 out of the state’s 100 counties, and another 160 are registered for a training this week. They hope to train at least two people from each county this year.

One goal, said Moore, the North Carolina organizer: “Not letting Moms for Liberty be the only voices in the room.”

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Defense of Democracy, a liberal parents’ group headquartered in New York, holds weekly video meetings open to its 2,000 active volunteers across 40 chapters in which leaders train members how to run for school board, win media coverage and lead peaceful protests. By the end of the summer, the group hopes to persuade at least one member in each chapter to begin regularly attending their local school board meetings.

”Maybe they want to say something nice about a teacher, or they can just sit there quietly,” founder Karen Svoboda, a 52-year-old mother and stepmother to seven children in the Wappingers Central School District.

The organization also promotes a pledge asking political candidates and elected officials to protect “our public schools, our children, and our country” by defending the “civil rights of [everyone] regardless of race, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or anything else.”

A year-old group with the unsubtle name Stop Moms for Liberty encourages its members to review school board agendas and track board votes. When they find decisions they believe will prove unpopular or controversial, they post on social media, contact reporters and notify advocates such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP, said founder Liz Mikitarian. The group also provides resources for members interested in running for school board themselves. And it hopes to send 50 to 60 people to protest the upcoming Moms for Liberty gathering in Philadelphia.

The group took off, recruiting 3,000 members in the first two months, Mikitarian said.

”I just couldn’t be quiet anymore,” she said, “and I guess a lot of other people felt the same.”

Liberals have some public support behind them. A Fox News poll in March found 71 percent of registered voters “extremely” or “very” concerned about book restrictions imposed by local school boards. And a March survey by USA Today/Ipsos found 72 percent of Americans in support of “teaching the ongoing effects of slavery and racism in the United States in public schools.”

Conservatives, though, can claim support on other matters. A Washington Post-KFF poll taken late last year, for instance, found more than 6 in 10 adults said trans girls and women should not be allowed to compete in girls’ and women’s sports, including professional, college, high school and youth levels. And it found more than 2 in 3 adults said it was inappropriate to discuss trans identity with students in elementary grades. (The poll found people divided when asked about middle school, but supportive of these discussions in high school.) More recent surveys have found similar results.

Making connections

Some of the work underway is simply about linking liberal parents with one another.

Stop Moms for Liberty has dozens of Facebook groups across 27 states. Some are at the district level, some at the state level, and there’s one big national forum. It sees itself as a connector, helping more than 9,000 members trade notes on strategy for campaigns or book battles.

Red, Wine and Blue runs a “banned book club,” where parents discuss books that have been challenged in schools and libraries. It also hosts “ask anything” events over Zoom to discuss sensitive topics such as what it’s like to parent a transgender child or raise children of color in majority-White suburbs.

Svoboda also hopes to connect people using a new podcast. She said the show, which launched this month, will interview “people who are concerned about the rise of Christian nationalism and the pressures put on our school system.” One of the first guests will be a Florida teacher who is being investigated by the state for showing students a film with a gay character.

In North Carolina, Moore recalled sitting at a table in Craven County for about six hours outside a youth basketball event in January, talking with many parents about schools. “Not one parent brought up: ‘I want to see more books banned.’ They want school bus driver positions filled,” she said. “We feel like we need to shift the conversation publicly back onto the issues that the majority of public school parents really care about.”

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Emily Guskin contributed to this report.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: ACLU Pennsylvania

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (USA Today; University of Pennsylvania; Red, Wine and Blue; Heal Together; American Civil Liberties Union)

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NewsRoom

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AP State News

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June 27, 2023

Pennsylvania Daybook

The Associated Press

Associated Press Pennsylvania Daybook for Tuesday, Jun. 27.

The daybook is for planning purposes only and is not intended for publication or broadcast. You should verify any event you plan to cover.

Please keep the AP in mind when news develops. The Philadelphia bureau is reachable at 215-561-1133.

To see your Daybooks and events for Pennsylvania and other States up to 12 months ahead, speak to your bureau or sales rep about access to AP Planner, or visit <http://applanner.com>.

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 10:00 AM Pennsylvania State Police hold funeral for recently deceased officer - Pennsylvania State Police hold funeral for Jacques 'Jay' Rougeau Jr, who lost his life in the line of duty earlier this month

Location: Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier, Erie, PA

Weblinks: <http://www.psp.pa.gov>

Contacts: Pennsylvania State Police, 1 717 783 5556

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 10:00 AM PennDOT holds event reminding motorists and boaters to drive sober - Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Pennsylvania State Police, Ridley Township Police Department, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) hold media event and mock Boating Under the Influence (BUI) stop at the Ridley Township Municipal Marina in Ridley Park, Delaware County, to highlight an Independence Day impaired driving and boating enforcement campaign

Location: Ridley Township Municipal Marina, 401 Swarthmore Ave, Ridley Park, PA

Weblinks: <http://www.dot.state.pa.us/>, <https://twitter.com/PennDOTNews>

Contacts: Krys Johnson , Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, krysjohnso@pa.gov, 1 610 205 6797

Pennsylvania Daybook

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 11:00 AM Philadelphia Mayor Kenney's public schedule - Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney delivers remarks at the Parks & Rec Compost Program ribbon cutting ceremony held at Bennett Compost, 5650 Rising Sun Ave (11:00 AM EDT) and speaks at the Fotteral Square Park ribbon cutting ceremony held at Fotteral Square Park, 2400 N 11th St (3:30 PM EDT)

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Weblinks: <http://www.phila.gov/>

Contacts: City of Philadelphia, Press@phila.gov, 1 215 686 6210

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 11:30 AM PHCA celebrates expected passage of health bill - Pennsylvania Health Access Network and Protect Our Care Pennsylvania hold event to celebrate the expected passage in the House of House Bill 1050, a bipartisan bill which 'guarantees access to essential no-cost preventative health care services such as cancer screenings, mental health screenings, and other critical care to all Pennsylvanians'

Location: Virtual Event

Weblinks: <http://pahealthaccess.org/>, <https://twitter.com/pahealthaccess>

Contacts: Antoinette Kraus, PHAN Director, akraus@pahealthaccess.org, 1 267 971 1680

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 12:00 PM SEPTA host living history event on Stonewall riots - Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority holds quarterly Living History Program for employees, today welcoming Philadelphia Gay News founder Mark Segal and William Way LGBTQ+ Center's LGBT Archive lead curator Bob Skiba to discuss the significance of the historic Stonewall Riots in NYC in 1969, as well as their impact on Philadelphia

Location: SEPTA Headquarters, 1234 Market St, Philadelphia, PA

Weblinks: <http://www.septa.org>, <https://twitter.com/septa>

Contacts: John Golden, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Jgolden@septa.org, 1 215 580 7842, 1 215 580 7418

NEW EVENT: Tuesday, Jun. 27 2:00 PM Bucks County DA Weintraub announces dismantling of catalytic converter theft ring - Bucks County District Attorney Matt Weintraub announces the dismantling of a multimillion-dollar catalytic converter theft ring that targeted victims in Bucks County, Montgomery County, and the entire Delaware Valley region, via press conference

Location: Bucks County Justice Center, 100 N Main St, Doylestown, PA

Weblinks: <https://www.buckscounty.gov/>, <https://twitter.com/BucksCountyGovt>

Contacts: Manuel Gamiz Jr., Bucks County DAs office communications, mgamiz@buckscounty.org, 1 215 348 6298

Pennsylvania Daybook

Tuesday, Jun. 27 - Wednesday, Jun. 28 Annual Advanced Forum on Obstetric Malpractice Claims

Location: The Union League of Philadelphia, 140 S Broad St, Philadelphia, PA

Weblinks: <https://www.americanconference.com/obstetric-malpractice/>, https://twitter.com/ACI_Conferences, #ACIObstetrics

Contacts: American Conference Institute, customerservice@americanconference.com, 1 212 352 3220

UPDATED EVENT: Wednesday, Jun. 28 - Saturday, Jul. 01 ESMO World Congress on Gastrointestinal Cancer

Location: International Barcelona Convention Center, Barcelona

Weblinks: <https://www.worldgicancer.com/>, <https://twitter.com/WCGIC>

Contacts: Sandi Beason, HMP Global, pr@hmpglobal.com, 1 601 573 1737

Thursday, Jun. 29 Wawa Hoagie Day - Wawa Hoagie Day, with the convenience store chain giving out free hoagies as part of Philadelphia's Welcome America Festival

Weblinks: <https://www.wawa.com/>, <https://twitter.com/wawa>

Contacts: Wawa, public.relations@wawa.com

Thursday, Jun. 29 - Sunday, Jul. 02 Peach Music Festival curated by The Allman Brothers Band - The Peach Music Festival, 11th annual music festival curated by The Allman Brothers Band, headlined by Goose, Tedeschi Trucks Band, My Morning Jacket, and Ween. Further lineup includes Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Les Claypool's Flying Frog Brigade, Mike Gordon of Phish, Lettuce, Ripe, Twiddle, Duane Betts, Dogs in a Pile, Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram, Circles Around the Sun, and Andy Frasco & the U.N.

Location: Montage Mountain, 1000 Road, Scranton, PA

Weblinks: <http://www.ThePeachMusicFestival.com>, <https://twitter.com/peachmusicfest>, #ThePeach

Contacts: Peach Music Festival, press@peachmusicfest.com

NEW EVENT: Thursday, Jun. 29 - Sunday, Jul. 02 Moms for Liberty 2023 National Summit begins - Moms for Liberty 2023 Joyful Warriors National Summit begins. Republican presidential candidates former President Donald Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former South Carolina Governor and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, and former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson are scheduled to speak over the course of

Pennsylvania Daybook

the event

Location: Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, 1201 Market St, Philadelphia, PA

Weblinks: <https://www.momsforliberty.org/summit23/>

Contacts: Moms for Liberty, media@momsforliberty.org, 1 321 345 1671

CORPORATE DATA

Thursday, Jun. 29 Dentsply Sirona Inc Q2 2023 Ex-dividend date 0.14000 USD

Weblinks: <http://www.dentsply.com>

Contacts: Joshua Zable, Dentsply Sirona Inc, joshua.zable@dentsplysirona.com, 1 718 482 2184

Thursday, Jun. 29 FMC Corp Q2 2023 Ex-dividend date 0.58000 USD

Weblinks: <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=117919&p=irol-irhome>, <https://twitter.com/FMCpest>

Contacts: Brian Angeli, FMC Corp Investor Relations, ir@fmc.com, 1 215 299 6119

--- Index References ---

Company: HMP Global; THE UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA; SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY; AMERICAN CONFERENCE INSTITUTE, INC.; DENTSPLY SIRONA INC.; United Nations Publications

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Legal (1LE33); Police (1PO98))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Healthcare Services (1HE13); Music (1MU57); Music Concert (1MU45); Psychiatric Services (1PS61))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Delaware (1DE13); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Pennsylvania State Police; Pennsylvania Department of Transportation; Ridley Township Police Department; Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; U.S. Coast Guard; The Allman Brothers Band; Tedeschi Trucks Band; My Morning Jacket; Moms for Liberty; HMP Global; Union League of Philadelphia; Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority; American Conference Institute; Dentsply Sirona Inc; United Nations)

Word Count: 904

End of Document

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NewsRoom

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pulls out of Moms for Liberty..., 2023 WLNR 22332252

NewsRoom

6/27/23 Gazette (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22332252

Gazette, The (Colorado Springs, CO)
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June 27, 2023

Section: Wex

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pulls out of Moms for Liberty conference days before speech

Barnini Chakraborty, Washington Examiner

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a Democratic presidential candidate challenging President Joe Biden for the nomination, has pulled out of a speaking event at this week's controversial Moms for Liberty summit in Philadelphia.

The group's co-founder, Tiffany Justice, said Tuesday that even though the Kennedy camp confirmed his appearance a week ago and that Moms for Liberty had hyped up his appearance, Kennedy informed the influential group of conservative mothers that "his schedule changed and he can no longer speak at our summit."

DEBUNKING KARINE JEAN-PIERRE'S CLAIM THAT AMERICANS FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEIR FINANCES

Kennedy, the namesake of one of America's most famous political dynasties, has endeared himself to some conservatives with his anti-vaccine messages and harsh criticism of Biden's immigration policies. He's also grabbed headlines for comparing mask mandates to "Hitler's Germany" and raised more than a few eyebrows when he claimed chemicals in water were making frogs gay and children transgender. Kennedy, whose name had once been floated for a spot in former President Barack Obama's administration, seemed to have found his groove in some conservative circles.

He had been slated to join former President Donald Trump, Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL), Vivek Ramaswamy, and more at the three-day conference that will bring together hundreds of like-minded people across the country to hear pitches from presidential contenders. Conference attendees will also participate in workshops intended to teach them how to mobilize their voting power and push for conservative policies in education.

Moms for Liberty was founded in 2021 and has led the recent culture war against school boards. They've shown up at meetings, raged against books that reference race and gender identity, and have accused public school teachers of trying to indoctrinate students.

CLICK HERE TO READ MORE FROM THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER

The founders are also all current or former school board members in Florida who were opposed to student mask and quarantine policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. In two years, the women have turned their once-modest nonprofit group into one of the most powerful organizations that cater to conservative policies. The group has more than 120,000 active members in 285 chapters across 44 states and is growing every day. Their largest chapter is in Florida. Their second-largest is in Pennsylvania.

Moms for Liberty has been on the receiving end of weeks of protests by multiple organizations that claim Moms for Liberty is nothing more than a far-right, well-funded, racist cabal that pushes exclusionary policies.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pulls out of Moms for Liberty..., 2023 WLNR 22332252

Original Location: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. pulls out of Moms for Liberty conference days before speech

Washington Examiner Videos

---- **Index References** ----

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Coronavirus (1CV19); Healthcare (1HE06); Infectious Diseases (1IN99); Viral (1VI15))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; Robert Joseph Kennedy)

Keywords: (News)

Word Count: 430

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NewsRoom

Op/Ed: So when did quoting Hitler become OK? It didn't...., 2023 WLNR 22188693

NewsRoom

6/27/23 Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, Ind.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22188693

Indianapolis Star, The (Indianapolis, IN)
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June 27, 2023

Op/Ed: So when did quoting Hitler become OK? It didn't. Don't do it, or you'll be sorry.
Opinion: After quoting Hitler in their newsletter, Moms for Liberty explained the quote,
apologized and then removed the quote. This was avoidable.

Oseye Boyd, Indianapolis Star

So, we're OK with quoting Hitler now?

That's what ran through my mind when I saw the newsletter from Moms for Liberty with a quote from Adolf Hitler.

Big mistake. This won't go well.

Does it ever?

Do people pay attention to recent history?

Those were my next thoughts.

Sure enough, not long after I saw the newsletter via Twitter, the newsletter was edited to give more context and explanation as to what Moms for Liberty meant by using the quote, and eventually the quote was scrapped completely and a third version of the newsletter was created — which really should've been the first version. If the quote was never used, this whole brouhaha would've never occurred.

More: Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in newsletter

Lesson learned, I guess. I hope.

I'm just baffled by how we got here. I'm going to take what Moms for Liberty say it meant by using the quote at face value. The moms weren't using the quote to applaud Hitler but as a warning for parents to watch out for government indoctrination and control of the children.

"The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People (in bold letters) must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government."

I'm a Gen Xer who learned in school everything about Adolf Hitler was bad. My sixth-grade teacher, who was German, by the way, taught our class about Anne Frank's diary. She had us dip onion paper in tea so it would look like old diary pages.

Op/Ed: So when did quoting Hitler become OK? It didn't...., 2023 WLNR 22188693

More: 'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton County parent group

I guess I was indoctrinated pretty well as I never wanted to read Hitler's "Mein Kampf" nor did I think Hitler had one redeeming quality. I would never think to quote anything Hitler said. It has literally never crossed my mind, but we're in a different time today. There's good on both sides, you know.

As a citizen of the U.S. of A., I didn't want my name attached to anything that could be construed as sympathizing with anyone who committed innumerable atrocities and caused the deaths of so many. Being indoctrinated against dictators in sixth grade worked. I always assumed that most Americans were indoctrinated against dictatorships.

So, I find it interesting that more people have gotten comfortable with quoting Hitler to make their points, especially when they talk about government indoctrination of youth as if this is all something new. According to Merriam-Webster a word that originally meant "teach" now means something nefarious: "brainwash." Conservatives are very clear that they don't want liberal indoctrination of their children, which is why I used the word indoctrination facetiously a few times because one could argue everything is indoctrination: religion, education, our belief in democracy and America, even the American dream. People often accept lessons or ideas without thinking critically about what they're being taught. However, many parents don't like what's being taught today, labeled it indoctrination, i.e., brainwashing, and waged a war against it. If it's the indoctrination they do like, those are just good ol' traditional American values.

It used to be that those who espoused Hitler were on the fringes. Now, suburban moms who are for liberty and protecting their children in schools are quoting him. A state representative from Illinois is quoting him, and a ministry organization even put the quote on a billboard. How did we get here? I'm not sure, but it's all very strange to this Gen Xer. History has taught us that power, especially ultimate power, corrupts. Even if dictators started with good intentions, the harm they caused canceled out any good. I mean Satan was once an angel, right? Judas was a disciple before he betrayed Jesus. We don't go around talking about the good Satan or Judas once did, or quoting them.

More: 3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in recent history

Plus, don't you know by now quoting Hitler won't end well and you'll have to apologize? Save us all the grief and just don't do it.

Contact IndyStar Public Engagement Editor Oseye Boyd at oboyd@gannett.com. Follow her on Twitter @oseyetboyd.

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: Op/Ed: So when did quoting Hitler become OK? It didn't. Don't do it, or you'll be sorry.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Adolf Hitler)

Keywords: (Mao Zedong, Adolf Hitler, Soviet Union, Politics, Biographies & Quotations, History, Sensitive Subjects, War & Conflict, Family)

Word Count: 743

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Op/Ed: So when did quoting Hitler become OK? It didn't...., 2023 WLNR 22188693

NewsRoom

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6/27/23 Metro - Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22317129

Metro - Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)
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June 27, 2023

Section: Center City

What to expect as Moms for Liberty comes to Philadelphia

Jack Tomczuk

Philadelphia's Fourth of July celebrations won't be the only event drawing crowds this weekend.

Around 650 people from around the country are coming to Philadelphia for Moms for Liberty's annual summit, which begins Thursday and includes talks featuring former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, among others.

Also expected during the four-day conference are hundreds – and perhaps thousands – of protesters, some traveling into Center City on chartered buses organized by national advocacy groups.

Moms for Liberty, which was founded in Florida two years ago, champions the rights of parents in public education and has sought to influence policy through school board elections. The organization claims to have nearly 300 chapters and 120,000 active members.

Earlier this month, the South Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups, designated Moms for Liberty as an “anti-government extremist” organization that pushes to restrict LGBTQ rights in schools and pursues book bans and curriculum changes.

Tina Descovich, a co-founder of Moms for Liberty and former Florida school board member, rejected the SPLC label, referring to it as “absolutely ridiculous.” She arrived in Philadelphia earlier this week ahead of the summit.

”We're just a bunch of moms – and a few dads and aunts and uncles and cousins – that are concerned about educational failure in America,” Descovich said Tuesday in an interview with Metro. “We're concerned about the future of our kids and our country, and we just want to have a voice in this debate.”

Opponents contend that Moms for Liberty hides behind its name and a vague notion of parental rights to push far-right messages and remove educational content related to systemic racism and LGBTQ issues.

”We believe that they are trafficking in bigotry, fear and hatred, particularly towards LGBT people and people of color, to seize control of school districts across the country,” said Svante Myrick, president and CEO of People for the American Way, one of several groups organizing demonstrations to coincide with the summit.

Jazmyn Henderson, of ACT UP Philadelphia, compared the group's tactics toward the transgender community to the Nazis during the Holocaust. “They're using different rhetoric and different language, but it's pretty much the same thing,” added Henderson, a trans woman.

What to expect as Moms for Liberty comes to Philadelphia, 2023 WLNR 22317129

Moms for Liberty made headlines last week when an Indiana chapter apologized after quoting Nazi dictator Adolph Hitler on the front cover of its newsletter.

A coalition of national and local advocacy organizations are set to host near-constant demonstrations Friday through Sunday outside the Marriott hotel located at 12th and Filbert streets, where the bulk of the summit is being held.

Among the planned activities are a banned book giveaway, a drag queen storytelling session and dance parties.

Defense of Democracy, a group initially formed in upstate New York to counter Moms for Liberty, is bringing shuttle buses from Buffalo and Durham, North Carolina.

ACT UP is organizing a protest Thursday beginning around 5 p.m. outside the Museum of the American Revolution, which is the venue for the conference's opening reception.

Lawmakers, activists and historians have called on MOAR to cancel the private, after-hours event.

"Hosting a hate group at the Museum of the American Revolution sends the message that the museum endorses these views," six state senators from Philadelphia wrote in a letter last week to the museum's president and CEO, Scott Stephenson.

In a statement, a museum spokesperson said that "rejecting visitors on the basis of ideology would in fact be antithetical to our purpose." They added that staff concerned about the event will be accommodated.

Petitions have also targeted Marriott for hosting the summit. The hotel chain did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

"I think it's really unfortunate and quite sad when elected leaders want to silence part of the electorate," Descovich said.

Moms for Liberty has advised members not to engage with protesters. The organization has hired a private security team for the conference, according to its website, which also includes a link to Pennsylvania's concealed carry laws.

A spokesperson for Mayor Jim Kenney's administration said the city "will prioritize the safety of participants and members of the public and protect the constitutional rights of all individuals without regard to the views expressed by any groups that choose to demonstrate or protest."

The post What to expect as Moms for Liberty comes to Philadelphia appeared first on Metro Philadelphia.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Government (1GO80); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Marriott; Moms for Liberty; South Poverty Law Center; People for the American Way)

Keywords: (Local, News, Politics, Moms For Liberty)

Word Count: 729

What to expect as Moms for Liberty comes to Philadelphia, 2023 WLNR 22317129

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NewsRoom

As Moms for Liberty comes to Philly, tensions run high, 2023 WLNR 22210699

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2023 WLNR 22210699

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June 27, 2023

As Moms for Liberty comes to Philly, tensions run high

John L. Micek

Jun 27, 2023

By Harrison Cann

Since its founding in 2021, Moms for Liberty has had no shortage of attention-grabbing accomplishments, including immediate buy-in from some of the right's fiercest culture warriors; high-profile politicization of previously nonpartisan school board elections; and getting books banned for thousands of students.

Today, almost two years later, this self-described parental rights group, which grew out of opposition to COVID-19 restrictions and mask mandates in schools, is now a leading force in the conservative education movement.

Earlier this month, the organization, whose website states that it "is dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government," added to its list of highlights when it was designated as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which has monitored hate groups and extremist behavior since the mid-20th century.

Among its litany of reasons for designating Moms for Liberty alongside groups like the John Birch Society, the Nation of Islam and any number of militias, the Southern Poverty Law Center noted that "Moms for Liberty members across the nation have been making waves for intimidating and harassing teachers and school officials. They have publicly battled teachers' unions, labeling them as 'cartels' and 'terrorist organizations.' They condemn corporations, like The Walt Disney Co., that are supportive of the LGBTQ community. They lobby for parental rights bills, such as the 'Don't Say Gay' law and advocate for anti-critical race theory bills."

In an interview with City & State in advance of Moms for Liberty's national summit in Philadelphia this week, co-founder Tina Descovich rejected the Southern Poverty Law Center's designation and pushed back against reports that her group is on a mission to ban books its members don't approve of, stating that they are not barring other parents from showing books and content to their children outside of school.

"Putting a book in an age-appropriate category, at a higher level or with parental permission is not banning books," Descovich said, adding that "parents can show their children materials in their own home or in the public library or at Barnes & Noble. But when you have a community space, everybody gets to have a voice in that conversation."

Proving that there is indeed no such thing as bad publicity, the opprobrium directed at Moms for Liberty seems to have helped swell its ranks. Roughly two years after first coming to national prominence, fueled by a combination of parental rage

As Moms for Liberty comes to Philly, tensions run high, 2023 WLNR 22210699

at COVID restrictions and the financial and logistical support of Republican presidential candidates Ron DeSantis, Donald Trump and Nikki Haley – all of whom are slated to speak at the Philadelphia summit – as well as from leading GOP organizations, the group has become a major player in local school board discussions nationwide.

In addition to backing hundreds of school board candidates in last year's midterm elections, the group is now up to 285 chapters in 44 states, with nearly 120,000 members nationwide. Pennsylvania is second only to Florida in the number of county chapters, with 27 and counting. There are Moms for Liberty chapters in Philadelphia and the surrounding collar counties, as well as in the greater Lehigh Valley, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh areas.

Pa. LGBTQ groups mobilize against Moms For Liberty gathering in Philly

Descovich began her current mission after a stint on the school board of Brevard County in Florida. She co-founded the group with Tiffany Justice, who was a school board member in a nearby county, after witnessing what she called a severe lack of involvement from parents and community members in the district's policy decisions.

"Time and time again, no one would show up" to school board meetings, Descovich recalled. "I would put out all the calls and emails to the community – all types of things. No one was paying attention or caring."

Moms' mobility

When asked why Moms for Liberty's second national summit is being held just blocks from the birthplace of American liberty, Descovich replied that her group wanted to use Philadelphia as a backdrop for the group's focus on "preserving American values."

Unsurprisingly, in an overwhelmingly Democratic-leaning city with a strong teachers union and widespread opposition to attacks on public education, the announcement of the summit was met with outrage from many Philadelphians and several city leaders in a number of areas.

On-the-ground protests are also scheduled to take place outside the event throughout its run. A project of People for the American Way, a progressive nonprofit that advocates for equal rights and constitutional liberties, known as "Grandparents for Truth," is expected to hold its inaugural event during the first day of the summit. ACT UP Philadelphia, as well as Defense of Democracy, a New York organization founded in direct opposition to Moms for Liberty, are also expected to bring members to protest in person. Additionally, a petition that was created to stop the summit had garnered more than 27,000 signatures as of the middle of June.

Brand new battleground

"K-12 education has become a central feature of our politics and the culture war in this country," said Aaron Terr, director of public advocacy at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, known as FIRE, which focuses its work on defending civil liberties and freedom of speech, particularly on college campuses. "COVID resulted in parents and activists paying more attention to what's happening in their local schools."

Meet Moms for Liberty, the group leading LGBTQ book bans in Pa. schools

Descovich agrees. "I think it's very important for parents to be engaged and involved – not just doing things like volunteering in the classroom and making cupcakes, which is fun and important," Descovich told City & State. "Parents really needed to take it to the next level when it came to making decisions on children's education."

Moms for Liberty has drawn national headlines for leading the right-wing culture war against education via tactics like challenging school boards, accusing teachers of seeking to indoctrinate students and attempting to get content they deem as pornographic or obscene out of school libraries.

Descovich asserted that "anti-American rhetoric" has been ingrained in the educational discussions around gender and race. When asked for an example, Descovich said she first became alarmed when her son received extra credit on an assignment involving a "Wanted" poster for Italian explorer Christopher Columbus for "crimes against humanity." She said there is a modern movement to "trash" historical figures like Columbus and the Founding Fathers.

"My whole journey started there with that assignment about Christopher Columbus," Descovich said.

As Moms for Liberty comes to Philly, tensions run high, 2023 WLNR 22210699

Board meetings, bans and backlash

The rapid expansion of Moms for Liberty has led to increased pushback against the group and what it calls the parental rights movement. For example, several organizations have mobilized in response to its priorities, including the LGBTQ advocacy organization GLAAD, which lists Moms for Liberty as a group that has “spread misinformation and false rhetoric against LGBTQ people, youth and allies.”

At the same time, there has been a corresponding rise in activism and electoral success among conservative parents at the local level. Moms for Liberty local chapters endorsed about 500 candidates in 2022, with 275 getting elected. The group has yet to post any official endorsements in Pennsylvania races this election cycle, but parental rights advocates not officially affiliated with the group have also started to gain power in districts across the commonwealth.

Hate groups’ political influence in Pa. and beyond growing, watchdog says

Central Bucks School District in Bucks County has been in the spotlight since 2021 for its decisions regarding Pride flags, students’ use of preferred pronouns and what the district calls “sexualized content” in library books – a nod to the overt impact Moms for Liberty has had in the halls of education.

The school district is a prime example of the culture war at the local level: It is caught up in a federal complaint over its policies and several allegations; additionally, more than 800 Central Bucks alumni signed a letter earlier this year condemning the district’s actions.

Ben Bosick, a recent graduate of Central Bucks South High School who came out as nonbinary in their sophomore year of high school in 2021, told City & State that district policies put both teachers and marginalized students in an untenable position.

The pronoun policy “created this dynamic that forced teachers to either step in and fear (for their job) or do nothing and let students get harassed,” Bosick said. “Unfortunately, many chose the latter.”

While Moms for Liberty’s Bucks County chapter hasn’t officially endorsed a candidate in the area, they do have a questionnaire that asks local candidates to weigh in on issues related to vaccine exemptions, gender identity, opting children out of sex education and curating school libraries.

Terr, who acknowledged FIRE’s support of Moms for Liberty in an amicus brief filed against school districts that shut down public commenters while citing decorum policies, said the First Amendment must be applied neutrally across these conversations.

“It’s possible to fight both illiberal attempts to ban books based on hostility to their views or ideas and to defend the First Amendment right to call for book bans at the same time,” Terr said. “Those things aren’t inconsistent with each other.”

Terr advised that instead of trying to shut down critics at board meetings, participating government officials should use their position to express opposition and allow commenters to make counterarguments. “That is the framework of discussion and debate envisioned by the First Amendment,” he explained.

Susan Spicka, executive director of the advocacy group Education Voters of Pennsylvania, said that greater parental involvement at school board meetings, as well as specific public comment rules that limit personal attacks, can work to “drown out” heated and hateful rhetoric during meetings.

Spicka said adults came to Shippensburg Area School District meetings targeting an individual trans child saying “really ugly things.”

“A group of moms went together and we just went up to the microphone one after the other and talked about the good things that were going on in the school district ... we talked about and thanked our school board and thanked our teachers,” Spicka told City & State. “When you have that type of atmosphere, in many cases, it just takes the wind out of their sails.”

Significance for students

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State Sen. Steve Santarsiero, a Bucks County Democrat and former history teacher, told City & State the parental rights movement is a “misnomer” and that school boards – which are duly elected and hold public meetings – already have existing systems for public input and accountability.

”It’s kind of the wolf in sheep’s clothing,” Santarsiero said. “They portray themselves as just well-meaning parents who want to have input, but the truth is, they’re pursuing a pretty far-right agenda.”

Sen. Steven Santarsiero, D-Bucks (Commonwealth Media Services)

In an ideal setting, Terr said, school districts and boards would have transparent processes on how and why they decide certain materials should – or shouldn’t – be in a curriculum or library.

”Public schools are supposed to prepare students for life in our pluralistic democratic society,” Terr told City & State. “As (students) go through life, they’re going to encounter many people who think and behave differently than they do.”

Spicka acknowledged that Moms for Liberty has actually brought greater awareness of and attention to school board operations – and the power their policies can have.

”We’ve seen people start to understand what Moms for Liberty really stands for, what their goals are, and how they’re doing things,” she told City & State. “It’s really activated and woken up a lot of parents who are coming out to say, ‘Look, I just want teachers who are supportive. I want schools that are safe and welcoming. And I don’t want politics garbage rammed down my school board and then pushed even further down into my buildings.’”

For both direct combatants and those being indirectly impacted by the current battle over the future of learning, the climate in today’s educational environment is changing. For the students caught in the increasingly hostile crossfire, Santarsiero said, challenges are only becoming more difficult.

Moms for Liberty and its allies “have created a very politically charged atmosphere for students,” he said. “It comes at the expense of kids and at the expense of creating a community that is open and accepting of everyone.”

Harrison Cann is a reporter for City & State Pa., where this story first appeared.

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---- Index References ----

Company: Central Bucks School District; BARNES & NOBLE, INC.; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; The John Birch Society; THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Health & Family (1HE30); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

As Moms for Liberty comes to Philly, tensions run high, 2023 WLNR 22210699

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Nation of Islam; City & State Pa.; GOP; People for the American Way; Defense of Democracy; Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression; FIRE; GLAAD; Central Bucks South High School; Education Voters of Pennsylvania; County Democrat; Commonwealth Media Services; Central Bucks School District; Barnes & Noble; Southern Poverty Law Center; John Birch Society; The Walt Disney Co.)

Keywords: (Uncategorized); (city-and-state); (moms-for-liberty); (pa-politics); (public-education)

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NewsRoom

More groups of historians denounce Moms for Liberty event..., 2023 WLNR 22202666

NewsRoom

6/27/23 Phila. Inquirer B1
2023 WLNR 22202666

Philadelphia Inquirer (PA)
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June 27, 2023

Section: Region

More groups of historians denounce Moms for Liberty event at museum

Ximena Conde (Staff Writer)

Seven groups of historians have now denounced an upcoming welcome reception at the Museum of American Revolution for “parental rights” group Moms for Liberty. They’ve written their members, the museum, and one group has canceled an event they had planned at the Old City institution.

Moms for Liberty, or M4L, has made national headlines since its founding in 2021 for its efforts to lift pandemic precautions, ban books, and limit conversations about race, sexuality, and gender identity in classrooms. Earlier this month, the Southern Poverty Law Center labeled the group an “antigovernment extremist organization.”

The group is scheduled to hold a four-day sold-out summit in Philadelphia starting Thursday where aspiring school board candidates can receive training and hear from guests, including former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. The group says Pennsylvania has one of its largest membership bases, second only to Florida.

The museum has defended its decision to host the controversial group, arguing its mission is to share diverse and inclusive stories about the country’s history with as broad of an audience as possible and that it hopes to strengthen democracy through dialogue.

But dozens of the museum’s staffers have pushed back. The historian groups are the latest to repudiate the museum’s rationale for hosting the event, acknowledging it’s unusual for them to try to intervene in what’s essentially a space rental. Still, the groups said Moms for Liberty was not a group simply espousing different points of view. They said it has encouraged the harassment of teachers and librarians.

”This organization consistently spreads harmful, hateful rhetoric about the LGBTQIA+ community, including popularizing the use of the term ‘groomer’ to refer to queer people and attacking the mere existence of trans youth,” read a statement from The Committee on LGBT History, the first historian affinity group to condemn the museum.

The Organization of American Historians, the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, and the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians published similar statements, encouraging the museum to reconsider.

The groups said they worry the museum is lending legitimacy to Moms for Liberty by hosting.

The groups argued Moms for Liberty and their campaigns are antithetical to the complete, contextualized, and factual accounts historians try to provide through research. Moms for Liberty’s work has even fueled attacks on historians’ work, according to the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, which spoke out Monday.

More groups of historians denounce Moms for Liberty event..., 2023 WLNR 22202666

In its letter to museum CEO R. Scott Stephenson, the American Historical Association said it understood that legally, it might be difficult to cancel the rental agreement, but urged the museum to try. The McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania added discriminatory behavior should not be protected under the guise of free speech and academic freedom.

What's more, the National Council on Public History worried hosting Moms for Liberty marred some of the work the museum was doing, including the recent "Black Founders" exhibit that highlights Black Revolutionary War-era abolitionist James Forten.

"The staff have worked to create relationships with the Black community in authentic ways; by hosting M4L, the museum is undermining those relationships and jeopardizing the staff's ability to conduct future work in these crucial areas," read a statement from the council.

Though museum staffers don't have to work that night if they feel unsafe, some LGBTQ workers have already expressed feeling that the museum doesn't have their back.

Asked if the letters from historian groups could sway their decisions, a museum spokesperson said their previous statement remained unchanged.

"We welcome all visitors and pride ourselves on a museum experience that reflects our mission to uncover and share the stories of diverse people and complex events that sparked the ongoing American experiment in liberty, equality, and self-government," read the statement.

Protests against Moms for Liberty are planned throughout the summit. In addition to their statement, the Philly-based Society for Historians of the Early American Republic moved a July 15 awards reception to the Doubletree Hotel from the Museum of American Revolution. LGBTQ advocates have also called on the Philadelphia Marriott, which is hosting the group, to cancel the event.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (M4L; Society for Historians of the Early American Republic; Berkshire Conference of Women Historians; American Historical Association; National Council on Public History; Southern Poverty Law Center)

Word Count: 694

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More groups of historians denounce Moms for Liberty event..., 2023 WLNR 22202666

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2023 WLNR 22202676

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June 27, 2023

Section: Region

5 Pa. Republicans in Congress back Trump's campaign

Julia Terruso (Staff Writer)

Five of Pennsylvania's eight Republican representatives in Congress have endorsed former President Donald Trump in his 2024 bid for the White House.

U.S. Reps. Mike Kelly, Dan Meuser, Guy Reschenthaler, John Joyce, and Scott Perry officially backed Trump on Friday and now constitute the "Pennsylvania Federal Leadership Team," as Trump's campaign has dubbed his Pennsylvania GOP supporters.

The five representatives are longtime allies of Trump who supported him in previous elections and ran with Trump's endorsement in the midterms. Their backing comes as Trump faces two indictments, one in New York and one in Miami.

In New York, he is facing state charges stemming from payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign to bury allegations that he had extramarital sexual encounters. In the Miami case, the former president is accused of mishandling classified documents he kept after leaving office and obstructing the government's efforts to retrieve them. Trump has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

The former president's legal problems have done little to dissuade his backers. According to FiveThirtyEight's tracker of congressional endorsements, Trump has the support of 56 of the 63 House Republicans who have endorsed a candidate. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has the support of five House Republicans.

Trump carried all 67 Pennsylvania counties in the 2016 presidential primary. He was the first Republican in 28 years to win the state and he's remained focused on its 19 electoral votes, making frequent trips here for rallies and events. He'll be in Philadelphia Friday for a convention held by Moms For Liberty, a self-described parental rights group that has become a prominent voice in the conservative movement accusing schools of ideological overreach, including teaching about race, gender, and sexuality.

The spotlight now shifts to the three other Republicans in the Pennsylvania delegation - Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R., Bucks), Lloyd Smucker (R., Lancaster), and Glenn Thompson (R., Centre) - who have not endorsed a candidate.

Fitzpatrick, a moderate who represents a swing district based in Bucks County, said he couldn't vote for Trump in 2016 after video surfaced of Trump using vulgar, aggressive language to describe women. Fitzpatrick initially dodged questions about whether he would back Trump in 2020 and then ultimately said he didn't vote for Trump in 2020. He sought to censure Trump but voted against impeaching him for inciting the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

Both Meuser, who represents the east central part of the state and Reschenthaler, who represents part of the Southwest, came

5 Pa. Republicans in Congress back Trump's campaign, 2023 WLNR 22202676

to Trump's immediate defense after his indictments this year, calling the prosecution politically motivated. In a call with reporters earlier this month, Meuser said he thought five or six of the GOP nominees could do the job but liked Trump because he'd proven himself.

"A plan is one thing. An execution is another and I'm gonna go with the proven executor of plans to correct the United States' ship if you will in the shortest amount of time possible," Meuser said.

Perry, who chairs the House Freedom Caucus, has also been a longtime Trump ally. He was a major player in Trump's plan to overturn the 2020 election results and last year was referred to the House Ethics Committee for possible sanction over refusals to comply with Jan. 6 subpoenas.

In addition to the congressional support, Trump's campaign also announced endorsements from former U.S. Rep. Fred Keller and Carla Sands, Trump's former ambassador to Denmark.

While Trump has strong GOP congressional support, he's so far gotten less enthusiasm out of GOP lawmakers in Harrisburg, who have been quiet about his candidacy and legal troubles and have so far abstained from endorsements in the GOP primary, which officially kicks off in January 2024.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Legislation (1US12); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (House Republicans; Congress; White House; Pennsylvania Federal Leadership Team; Pennsylvania GOP; Moms For Liberty; House Freedom Caucus; House Ethics Committee) (President Donald Trump)

Word Count: 597

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NewsRoom

AHA SENDS LETTER OPPOSING MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S...

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June 27, 2023

AHA SENDS LETTER OPPOSING MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S HOSTING OF MOMS FOR LIBERTY EVENT

WASHINGTON

The following information was released by the American Historical Association:

The AHA has sent a letter to the Museum of the American Revolution asking that the museum reconsider its decision to rent event space to Moms for Liberty as part of that organizations Joyful Warriors National Summit. Moms for Liberty has crossed a boundary in its attempts to silence and harass teachers, rather than participate in legitimate controversy. . . . [T]his isnt about politics or different understandings of our nations past; its about an organization whose mission is to obstruct the professional responsibilities of historians, the AHA wrote. We encourage you to reconsider whether this organization should be granted the legitimacy of holding a major event at a museum with the reputation and professional standing of the Museum of the American Revolution.

[Download the letter as a PDF.](#)

June 26, 2023

Scott Stephenson, President

Museum of the American Revolution

Dear Dr. Stephenson:

The American Historical Association requests that the Museum of the American Revolution (MAR) reconsider its decision to rent event space to Moms for Liberty as part of that organizations Joyful Warriors National Summit.

The AHA understands that legal obligations might make it impossible to undo the rental agreement, but we hope that the museum will consult with legal counsel to explore options for canceling the rental. We also recognize that this is a business relationship rather than a museum program, and that it is unusual for a scholarly association to intervene in such a transaction. But this is an unusual situation: the MAR is a museum dedicated to professional historical work and the AHA is an organization of historians; Moms for Liberty is an organization that has vigorously advocated censorship and harassment of history teachers, banning history books from libraries and classrooms, and legislation that renders it impossible for historians to teach with professional integrity without risking job loss and other penalties.

The AHA is cognizant of the complexities of this situation. Like the museum, the AHA often encounters difficult decisions involving a tangle of mission, ethics, standard procedures, financial contingencies, legal obligations, professional commitments, and more. In this case, the AHAs responsibility is to the integrity of history education and the ability of all

AHA SENDS LETTER OPPOSING MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S...

historians to conduct their work free from censorship, harassment, and threat of termination. Indeed, we have been especially active on this front, under the broad umbrella of Teaching History with Integrity. This work has included an extensive investment of time and effort to apprise state legislators and the general public of the dangers of divisive concepts legislation an organized attempt to limit what can be taught in history classes at public schools and universities.

The AHA would not be making this request if it was only a matter of disagreement over content or interpretation. Moms for Liberty has every right to argue for an approach to history education with which we disagree. However, Moms for Liberty has crossed a boundary in its attempts to silence and harass teachers, rather than participate in legitimate controversy. Moms for Liberty promotes legislation that censors honest and accurate history teaching, and even threatens teachers with termination for no offense other than teaching history with professional integrity. In New Hampshire, it put a bounty on teachers, offering \$500 to any individual who reports an educator for violating such a law, a promise immediately condemned by Governor Sununu. Moms for Liberty has demanded that local school boards inappropriately interfere with the professional work of social studies/history teachers and has encouraged parents to call teachers at home.

For the AHA, this isnt about politics or different understandings of our nations past; its about an organization whose mission is to obstruct the professional responsibilities of historians. We encourage you to reconsider whether this organization should be granted the legitimacy of holding a major event at a museum with the reputation and professional standing of the Museum of the American Revolution. Our institutions, like others in our discipline that care about helping the public engage and grapple with the past, share a responsibility to resist efforts to undermine that important and essential obligation. This can include refusing to collaborate with or even grant legitimacy to organizations that vigorously and unethically seek to eviscerate the work of our staff, colleagues, and members.

The AHA is aware that this event is merely a three-hour portion of a larger program centered elsewhere in Philadelphia. Considering the superb historical scholarship at the Museum of the American Revolution, including challenging exhibitions that thoughtfully contradict the narrow and bigoted historical misinformation that Moms for Liberty advocates, some education is likely to take place. We are confident that if the museum is unable to cancel the rental it will continue to do the good work of ensuring that all visitors have access to the facts and ideas that Moms for Liberty finds so threatening to its vision of the American past and will convey to them the museums deep commitment to the professional integrity of history educators.

Sincerely,

James Grossman

Executive Director

---- Index References ----

Company: Museum of the American Revolution

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (American Historical Association; AHAs; Museum of the American Revolution)

Word Count: 832

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AHA SENDS LETTER OPPOSING MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S...

NewsRoom

Indiana Democratic Party: The Recent History of Nazism in Indiana is Unacceptable

NewsRoom

6/27/23 Targeted News Serv. (U.S.) 00:00:00

Targeted News Service (US)
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June 27, 2023

Indiana Democratic Party: The Recent History of Nazism in Indiana is Unacceptable

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana, June 27 -- The Indiana Democratic Party issued the following news release:

On Wednesday June 21, a newsletter authored by the Hamilton County Chapter of the far-right group Moms for Liberty circulated widely following its publication of a quote attributed to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

Unfortunately, this is only the newest instance of Indiana Republican-aligned groups touting pro-nazism sentiments, not the first. In January 2022, Rep. State Sen. Scott Baldwin stated regarding Senate Bill 167, “Marxism, Nazism, fascism ... I have no problem with the education system providing instruction on the existence of those ‘isms... I believe that we’ve gone too far when we take a position... We need to be impartial.”

In October 2021, the Indiana GOP did not condemn the use of a Nazi flag just feet away from the Nickel Plate trail in Macy. The owner of the flag said the use of the flag was to compare Democrats to Nazis.

Kokomo Tribune 10.22.21: “Nazi flag along Nickel Plate Trail draws anger from riders, officials;

Property owner says flag is political statement opposing Democratic Party”

”Let us be totally clear. We will not tolerate fascism, nazism, or hate speech of any kind,” said Indiana Democratic Party Chairman Mike Schmuhl.

”Moms for Liberty, a designated extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, is a stain on the communities in Hamilton County and our state as a whole. Hoosiers should reject this group and any organization or person that tries to use hate speech to gain followers or attack perceived opponents. Hoosiers deserve true liberty - the ability to live the life of their choosing - free of government interference or authoritarianism.”

According to its website, Moms for Liberty was founded in January 2021 “to stand up for parental rights at all levels of government.” However, in the few short years they have been active they have already been declared to be an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center in its 2022 issue of the annual The Year in Hate and Extremism report.

”Moms for Liberty commonly propagates conspiracy theories about public schools attempting to indoctrinate and sexualize children with a progressive Marxist curriculum,” the report states. “The social media accounts and real-world activity of the national organization and its chapters reflect views and actions that are antigovernment and conspiracy propagandist, anti-LGBTQ and anti-gender identity, and anti-inclusive curriculum.”

* * *

Original text here: <https://www.indems.org/the-recent-history-of-nazism-in-indiana-is-unacceptable/> T40-MgEditor-8199697

Indiana Democratic Party: The Recent History of Nazism in Indiana is Unacceptable

T40-MgEditor

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Government (1GO80); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Indiana Democratic Party; Moms for Liberty; Indiana GOP; Southern Poverty Law Center) (INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana)

Word Count: 412

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NewsRoom

There's a Reason We're Seeing Videos of RFK Jr. Shirtless, 2023 WLNR 22171946

NewsRoom

6/27/23 TheDailyBeast.com (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22171946

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June 27, 2023

There's a Reason We're Seeing Videos of RFK Jr. Shirtless
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The Daily Beast

Photo Illustration by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/GettyListen to this episode of The New Abnormal on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon and Stitcher. Videos of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s shirtless workouts are floating around online, but co-host Andy Levy of The New Abnormal politics podcast senses a motive deeper than just toxic masculinity from the 2024 presidential nominee hopeful. "RFK Jr. apparently thinks that the best way to win the presidency is to be shirtless in showing people that he can lift weights and do pushups," jokes Andy's co-host Danielle Moodie on the latest episode of the show. Subscribe to The New Abnormal on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, Amazon Music, or Overcast. But Andy thinks she's onto something and explains his theory in full detail. "I don't need to see those pictures. I'm like at the point where I'm blocking anyone online who sends those pictures of RFK Jr.," he adds. "But I do think there is sort of a crafty little strategy there..." He and Danielle also discuss Joe Biden's age problem, and how people are tired of Trump, too. Then Andy gets real about his knowledge of what's happening in Russia. Also on this episode: Kelly Weill, a reporter at The Daily Beast, tells Danielle what we need to know about the right-wing group Moms for Liberty, which she calls "a softcore version of the Proud Boys." "Moms for Liberty really bridges that gap between far-right politics and acceptability politics. They'll have regular moms, regular concerned parents, but pushing these really extreme agendas objecting to mentions of Martin Luther King, Jr. in schools, objecting to gay educators." "It's really hard-boiled hatred wrapped up in this package of nurturing and care and compassion. If the Oath Keepers are coming, and in their full regalia, to a school board meeting, Moms for Liberty is baking them cupcakes," explains Kelly, who also shares what the group's next move is, which would be funny if it wasn't so terrible. Plus! Law Dork newsletter's Chris Geidner breaks down a recent Supreme Court case ruling, *Jones v Hendrix*, which essentially prevents some legally innocent people from challenging their conviction. Geidner explains the ruling in detail to Andy, adding that it really "is as bad as it sounds." Listen to this full episode of The New Abnormal on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon and Stitcher. Read more at The Daily Beast.

---- Index References ----

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Internet Media Content (1IN04); Internet Technology (1IN39); Music (1MU57); Online Music (1ON32); Streaming Audio & Video (1ST18))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (RFK Jr.)

There's a Reason We're Seeing Videos of RFK Jr. Shirtless, 2023 WLNR 22171946

Word Count: 402

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6/27/23 Wenatchee World (Wash.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22141171

Wenatchee World, The (Wenatchee, WA)
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June 27, 2023

NCW chapter of Moms for Liberty flagged as hate group, leader says label ‘exposes what the battle is all about’

Mitchell Roland; The Wenatchee World, Wash.

Jun. 26—NCW — Johanna Carveth insists the group is an apolitical collection of “liberty-minded” moms and dads concerned about children.

“Parents have the right to question and know what’s being taught to their children,” Carveth said, as a description of the term “liberty-minded.”

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a leading civil rights nonprofit organization, says the Moms for Liberty organization and its individual local chapters, like the one Carveth runs, are an “anti-government movement,” according to its “Year in Hate and Extremism” report, released on June 6.

“They are at the forefront of a reactionary, outspoken minority — referred to as the anti-student inclusion movement, which targets funding for public education, advocates for the abolition of the Department of Education, and spreads hateful imagery and rhetoric targeting the LGBTQ+ community,” wrote Ricky Riley, a spokesperson for the SPLC, in an email.

Carveth sees it a bit differently.

“It’s strictly believing in the cause of parental rights,” Carveth said of the purpose of Moms for Liberty. “We believe that parental rights don’t end at the classroom door.”

Founded in early 2021 partly as a response to COVID-19 mandates, Moms for Liberty has seen its profile rise over the last two and a half years and has recently taken root in the region, with several other chapters scattered about the state.

“None of it is true as far as our purpose and what we believe,” said Carveth, chair of the Chelan and Douglas counties chapter that has five due-paying members and other associates who attend meetings. “Our goal is to empower the parents.”

The classification by the SPLC is not a legal definition or government designation, but according to Carveth, the label “exposes what the battle is all about.”

The national group heavily focuses on school curriculum and is “dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government,” according to the group’s mission statement.

According to the SPLC, schools “have been on the receiving end of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks, frequently

NCW chapter of Moms for Liberty flagged as hate group,...., 2023 WLNR 22141171

through the guise of ‘parents’ rights’ groups.”

”Moms for Liberty was included in the 2022 Year in Hate and Extremism report due to the group’s antigovernment principles, their trafficking in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government, and their actions to censor school discussions around race, discrimination, and gender identity,” Riley said.

Carveth insisted the organization “doesn’t hate members of any group,” though pushed back on symbols of Pride being displayed in public schools.

”It’s not just a rainbow to kids, it means something more to kids,” she said, adding it would lead parents to discuss relationships and sexuality with their children.

According to the Carveth, the display of Pride merchandise in media, stores and schools is “unnecessary for kids to have in front of them in a school setting.”

”I don’t believe that anything but the America flag should be in the classroom,” she said.

Estimates vary on the total membership of the group, though the national organization claims to have 300 local chapters in 45 states.

There are six chapters in Washington, two in Oregon and one in Montana. The Chelan and Douglas counties chapter was founded in October.

”So far, we’re a really small group,” she said.

Carveth’s four children have graduated from the Eastmont School District and she now has two grandchildren in public schools. She praised her interactions with her children’s teachers and the local school climate, though later said members “haven’t had to dig too deep, yet” into the local school systems.

”We’re fortunate to live in the area that we do,” she said.

A self-described nonpartisan group, Carveth recruited members at a January meeting of the Chelan Douglas Women Republicans, later commenting on a post announcing her visit that the group tends “to find like and Liberty-minded folk on the ‘red’ side of things.”

Carveth said the group was “absolutely not” involved in a May social media post that called on people to show up at the May 23 Wenatchee School Board meeting to voice concern over “explicit books” and to help “stop the indoctrination of children.” The post led to a packed boardroom, with dozens of attendees defending the materials.

According to Carveth, none of her chapter members spoke during the meeting, and she was “not aware” of chapter members attending the meeting.

”We don’t want any book banned, ever,” Carveth said. “But we do want some moderation of the books that end up in our school libraries.”

Across the country, members packed, and in some instances, disrupted local school board meetings as the group rose. In the Wenatchee Valley, meetings remain sparsely attended beyond school staff.

Carveth said she attends when possible, and would like to go more in the future.

”A lot of us are busy moms,” she said, “it’s hard to make them.”

Carveth said the group is “not that active in the community at this point.” The chapter has an online presence, though like most across the country, it’s selective of who can see the activity.

NCW chapter of Moms for Liberty flagged as hate group,..., 2023 WLNR 22141171

Most chapters have private Facebook pages where users must be approved to see posts. The local chapter has roughly 110 users on its page, each “heavily screened” before being allowed to access the page, Carveth said.

The group also hosts a monthly meeting that draws up to 10 attendees. The meetings have an open agenda, though the group also receives suggested topics from the national organization.

As summer turns to fall and a series of local school board seats appear on the ballot, the group will research to see if they want to offer non-financial support local candidates who align with their views.

In Wenatchee, all five seats on the board will be up for grabs.

”We want to be able to support any candidate who is liberty-minded,” she said.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Children’s Health (1CH55); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (NCW; Moms for Liberty; Department of Education; Chelan Douglas Women Republicans; Eastmont School District; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

Historians spill the tea on Moms for Liberty, urge museum..., 2023 WLNR 22116168

NewsRoom

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Arkansas Times
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June 26, 2023

Historians spill the tea on Moms for Liberty, urge museum to throw group overboard

Austin Bailey

Jun 26, 2023

History is already not looking kindly upon the Moms for Liberty 2023 summer conference in Philadelphia, and it hasn't even happened yet.

The American Historical Association put out a statement Monday taking the Museum of the American Revolution to task for hosting an organization known "to censor history teachers, harass them, and threaten their employment in our schools." Part of their letter reads:

The AHA would not be making this request if it was only a matter of disagreement over content or interpretation. Moms for Liberty has every right to argue for an approach to history education with which we disagree. However, Moms for Liberty has crossed a boundary in its attempts to silence and harass teachers, rather than participate in legitimate controversy. Moms for Liberty promotes legislation that censors honest and accurate history teaching, and even threatens teachers with termination for no offense other than teaching history with professional integrity.

Founded in 1884, the American Historical Association is the biggest membership organization for professional historians in the world. You can read their letter in full [here](#).

Speaking up for history teachers against a group that harasses and wishes to criminalize them is the right thing to do, and you'd think it would be a universally popular stance. Amazingly, though, Arkansas's very own education secretary, Jacob Oliva, is not only not denouncing Moms for Liberty; he's taking the anti-government extremist group up on their invitation to speak at their Joyful Warriors National Summit this weekend.

Oliva shares the speaker roster with former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, whose attempts to portray himself as the sane, anti-Trump alternative in the crowded Republican presidential field might have veered off track here. Other speakers include once and maybe future President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The post [Historians spill the tea on Moms for Liberty, urge museum to throw group overboard](#) appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Education (1ED85); Social Issues (1SO05))

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NewsRoom

Librarians train to defend intellectual freedom and fight book bans, 2023 WLNR 22050751

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June 26, 2023

Section: News

Librarians train to defend intellectual freedom and fight book bans

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO - School librarian Jamie Gregory has been called a “pedophile” and “groomer,” bombarded with private messages threatening harm, accused of distributing pornography in schools, and had her personal address posted on social media.

She takes it on the chin.

”I’m just not going to quit. I’m not going to let them call me that, especially when I’ve worked my whole entire life to get to where I am,” said Gregory, who was named the 2022 South Carolina school librarian of the year.

The “shocking” allegations made her think: “My whole entire adult life, and all of my education and all my work - what if this is over? I’m not going to let that happen,” Gregory said Saturday to a room packed full of about 100 fellow librarians at a training session on fighting book bans at the American Library Association’s annual meeting in Chicago.

The attendees broke into applause at Gregory’s declaration.

Book bans and how to fight them is a major focus of the this year’s ALA’s conference. “The world’s largest library event” provides training and education for library professionals, according to the conference website. Librarians may attend sessions, like the one Gregory spoke at, aimed at helping them confidently counter book challenges, fight legislative censorship and ensure the freedom to read.

The ALA conference hosts thousands of librarians, library staff, authors, publishers and educators as several states push to restrict access to books in schools and libraries - overwhelmingly those about race, ethnicity and LGBTQ+ topics. The association in March released data showing a record 1,269 demands to censor library books in the U.S. in 2022, a 20-year high.

”Addressing book censorship and protecting library users’ intellectual freedom, protecting librarians’ ability to provide for information in their communities, is at the forefront of this year’s meeting,” said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom and executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

All day Saturday, attendees are invited to climb atop a giant chair to read their favorite banned book.

Gregory selected “ Gender Queer,” Maia Kobabe’s autobiographical comic on what it means to be to be nonbinary and asexual - the source of the firestorm against the school librarian and the most challenged book of 2022, according to the ALA. She also chose “Out of Darkness” by Ashley Hope Perez, a historical fiction novel about an interracial teen romance.

Librarians train to defend intellectual freedom and fight book bans, 2023 WLNR 22050751

"This one always makes them crazy," said Gregory, patting the copy of "Gender Queer" and ascending the stepladder to the massive velvet reading chair, books in hand.

Librarians "make information available to people freely and equitably," and Gregory said she plans to keep doing that.

"I don't impose my own personal moral system on students or patrons. They have to have their own, that's not my job," she said.

In Gregory's conservative community in Greenville, South Carolina, the public library board is pushing branches to remove Pride displays. In March, she testified against a bill that would allow parents to challenge any educational materials they say violate banned teachings around white privilege and implicit bias.

Still, Gregory said she feels the majority of her community supports her, despite the vocal minority.

"I've had a lot of people reach out to me who I don't even know, saying, 'We think you do a great job' - even parents at the school," she said.

Parents always have the right to choose what their children read, but they don't have the right to restrict access for the whole community, said Christine Emeran, director of the Youth Free Expression Program of the National Coalition Against Censorship, a First Amendment advocacy organization.

"You can't just concede to demands of a particular group of parents and to censor libraries," she said.

Emeran, who is scheduled to be featured in a panel discussion called "Help! They're coming for our books!" at the conference Sunday, began to notice an increase in book bans starting in 2021, at the beginning of President Joe Biden's term. She attributed the shift to "a cultural backlash" against changing views on LGBTQ+ issues, women's rights and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Local libraries are calling in the National Coalition Against Censorship for help now more than ever. In the past, the organization assisted on a few book ban cases per year. "Now we're getting two or three a week," Emeran said.

"Librarians are under pressure and they're feeling frustrated, discouraged," said Emeran, who encouraged readers to support local libraries, attend school board meetings and get involved in their communities to protect the right to read.

Groups such as Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education and Citizens Defending Freedom have had an outsized effect on what is allowed to be read, she said.

"The majority may oppose censorship as a whole. But the problem is that the majority are silent," Emeran said.

Gregory and fellow panelists Lindsey Kimeri, coordinator of library services for Metro Nashville Public Schools, and Chris Chanyasulkit, an elected library trustee in Brookline, Massachusetts, advised attendees on how best to navigate book challenges in their communities.

Attentive faces bent over notebooks followed every word.

"No more humble brag, no being quiet, no more 'be quiet at the libraries,'" Chanyasulkit said. "Not quiet anymore. Now we're going to talk about how it's an incredible, game-changing place for communities, because you need to be loud. The others are, and we're not doing enough."

Savage is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

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Librarians train to defend intellectual freedom and fight book bans, 2023 WLNR 22050751

Company: National Coalition Against Censorship; FIRST AMENDMENT INC.; AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION; METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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NewsRoom

Re: DeSantis. Who needs friends when you're an instrument..., 2023 WLNR 22075118

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June 26, 2023

Re: DeSantis. Who needs friends when you're an instrument of the divine?

Diane Roberts

Jun 26, 2023

Ron DeSantis has no friends.

The guys he played baseball with at Yale didn't like him. One told New Yorker writer Dexter Filkins, "Ron is the most selfish person I have ever interacted with."

While DeSantis appeared highly intelligent, he enjoyed "embarrassing and humiliating people."

DeSantis served in Congress before his run for Florida governor in 2018. Nobody liked him there, either. As one of his former colleagues said, "He had no friends."

Well, did Mussolini have friends? Does Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have friends? Do we picture Viktor Orbán hanging out in the bar with his pals? If you're convinced the Almighty has chosen you — remember that ad Casey DeSantis tweeted out during the 2022 campaign? "And on the eighth day, God made a fighter" — you don't care what anyone thinks of you.

Punish his enemies

Look at the original \$117 billion budget DeSantis signed at a private Fort Pierce yacht club on June 15. He boasted about big money for Everglades restoration, teacher pay raises, and sales tax exemptions for everything from sunglasses to diapers to generators. This is normal behavior for governors, especially ones looking to the next election.

But DeSantis is using taxpayer money to punish his enemies, a warning to those who cross him. Through the budget, he's pushing his hate-fueled vision onto us, trying to transform Florida into a subtropical version of Massachusetts under the Puritans: intolerant, ignorant, repressive, and cruel.

There's \$25 million to destroy the welcoming and creative culture of New College, driving out qualified professors and hiring right-wing hacks to bring in sports, fraternities, and plenty of flag-waving.

Migrants arrive at Martha's Vineyard, Mass., on Sept. 14, 2022, after they were recruited in San Antonio by an operative working for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration and flown to the small community. Credit: Ray Ewing/Vineyard Gazette/Handout via REUTERS

There's \$30 million for a conservative think tank to be imposed on the University of Florida, \$100 million to expand the State Guard, \$12 million to fund the human trafficking of asylum seekers and other migrants to Democratically controlled states, and \$6 million to pay the legal fees DeSantis will need as he defends his unconstitutional acts in court.

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That's bad enough, but it's the vetoes, issued with no explanation, that really highlights DeSantis' unrelenting pettiness and score-settling. This guy likes to punch down, attacking the poor and the powerless. He cut \$14.5 million in health care initiatives, nursing, and gun violence prevention.

He brags about funding Everglades restoration (enough to buy the endorsement of the compromised Everglades Foundation, anyway) and Indian River clean-up, but does nothing to address the causes of the pollution befouling most of Florida's rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Adding insult to injury, he cut a measure allowing cities to regulate fertilizer use, making it damned near impossible to slow down the toxic algal bloom choking Lake Okeechobee and other Florida waterways.

DeSantis was campaigning in April so he must have failed to notice that Fort Lauderdale was under water. Maybe that's why he vetoed flood mitigation programs.

Naturally, he handed developers determined to drain, scrape, and monetize every single inch of Florida pretty much whatever they wanted.

Instrument of the devine

The Bible reminds us that vengeance belongs to the Lord, but DeSantis figures that, since he's an instrument of the divine, he might as well use his veto to knee-cap those who cross him. Sen. Joe Gruters had the gall to endorse Donald Trump for president, so DeSantis slashed projects worth \$27 million in his district.

Don't feel bad for Gruter — he's a culture wars dolt. But this kind of sucks for Sarasota.

Rep. Randy Fine speaks at an anti-abortion rally on the steps of the Historic Florida Capitol Building. May 24, 2022. Credit: Danielle J. Brown

Brevard County fell victim to DeSantis' wrath, too. Melbourne's zoo rented space to the emotionally fragile Rep. Randy "Imma be a yooniversity president!" Fine for a campaign event. Fine implied the zoo sponsored it. The zoo pushed back. Fine was offended. The result: The zoo's \$2 million budget request was denied.

Maybe DeSantis thinks giraffes, otters, and turtles are part of the woke conspiracy.

The free flow of information scares the governor: News is dangerous. So DeSantis cut funding for 21 public broadcasting stations. They'd asked for \$6.5 million to replace clapped-out generators and moldy tiles, repair damaged wiring, and bring broadcast towers up to FAA standards.

Real history is also a threat. The governor tried to stamp out the past that so frightens him by vetoing money for a Black history event in Orlando and the Black Music Legacy project: They'd requested a grand total of \$360,000 — a little more than half what it cost to fly those asylum seekers from Texas to Martha's Vineyard.

Getting scriptural

The governor has a chip the size of Gibraltar on his shoulder and suffers from a sense of grandiosity that would make Captain Ahab blush. DeSantis recently told a "700 Club" interviewer he'd have liked to hang out with the Apostles: "These are people who, you know, Peter is just fishing one day and all of a sudden this guy comes up to him, catches all the fish and says, 'You know, you're going to be a fisher. I want you to be a fisher of men.'"

Such an eloquent and erudite grasp of scripture. DeSantis probably thinks Jesus would approve of his quest to own the libs.

Donald Trump. Credit: Scott Olson/Getty Images

Yet this mix of Trumpy syntax, absurd pronouncements, and gratuitous nastiness isn't translating into love from potential primary voters. No doubt DeSantis will tout his vetoes in speeches and campaign ads as victories in his war on woke, but that won't solve his fundamental problem: People can't stand him. DeSantis' numbers were pretty good when he kicked off his campaign; now he's polling 40 points behind Donald Trump.

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Think about that: Trump with his 37 indictments, his sexual assault rap, and his increasingly-surreal lies, is way more popular than the straight-backed family man with the attractive kids and the immaculately dressed missus.

While sane people find Trump loathsome, Republicans think he's charismatic. Manly. Funny, too. DeSantis has no detectable sense of humor. He exists in a perpetual state of tantrum-throwing. Aides reportedly write "Likeable" on his notepads, encouraging him to stop behaving like a belligerent jerk in public.

The problem is, if you are, in fact, a belligerent jerk, it's hard to hide it.

Of course, the primaries are many months away. Anything could happen. Trump could spontaneously combust, leaving a strange, toxic orange goo all over the walls of Mar-a-Lago. DeSantis might learn to act like a human being.

Or not. He's currently in second place, bolstered by a loyal mob of "Moms for Liberty," swastika-sporting fan boys, homophobes, and "Christian" nationalists.

The question is, are there enough of them to put him over the top in the Republican primary?

It's probably too late for charm school.

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Company: THE EVERGLADES FOUNDATION, INC.

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Industry: (Environmental (1EN24); Environmental Problems (1EN46); Environmental Solutions (1EN90); Nature & Wildlife (1NA75); Pollution (1PO10))

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NewsRoom

Librarians are such improbable targets, 2023 WLNR 22074548

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June 26, 2023

Section: Opinion

Librarians are such improbable targets

Jerry Elsea

FILE - Books are displayed at the Banned Book Library at American Stage in St. Petersburg, Fla., Feb. 18, 2023. Activists in Louisiana are voicing concerns over a bill advancing in the GOP-controlled House to bar children and teens from accessing public library books deemed “sexually explicit,” saying the proposal could be used to target LGBTQ+ content. (Jefferee Woo/Tampa Bay Times via AP, File)

The Sioux City Public Library visitor, 17-year-old me, needed help. There I was with a self-selected school research subject, the Mau Mau rebellion in British Kenya Colony, but with no idea how to find stuff for my paper.

Not to worry, said a librarian, eager to help. First (she advised) consult the Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature and note all articles on the still-smoldering uprising. Then request those magazines, which the library probably has. Take notes; better use 3x5 index cards to keep in a recipe box - subtopics listed methodically (a practice foreign to me). On she went, probably not knowing she sparked a lifelong admiration of librarians. If time allows, she said, read Robert Ruark’s “Something of Value,” a novel, yes, put packed with relevant factual information on Mau Mau.

”Wow!” I thought. “These people have research down to a science.”

Yes, library science, a discipline taking Bachelor’s Degree holders through extra college years, qualifying them to organize and present age- appropriate services while keeping pace with rapidly growing technology and information needs of the marginalized. All of which puts librarians in the lowest-paid profession requiring advanced schooling.

Modestly paid but highly respected.

But not by everyone. As censors who screen materials before making them available, librarians sometimes run up against critics who demand offensive materials be removed or stowed where kids can’t reach them.

That makes it censor vs. censor. Because librarians and journalists are first cousins, sharing a passion for freedom of information, you can guess which side I’m on.

Suppression of information goes way back. I wouldn’t be surprised to learn cave men kept cavekids from seeing risqué carvings on cave walls.

But book banning in the United States gained steadily in the 20th century’s last half. It started low-key. In my decade as a Cedar Rapids Public Library trustee (1975-85), just one demand for book removal reached the board. It was a local mom’s worry that new author Judy Blume’s popular coming-of-age novels were too sexually explicit for her daughter. (Request

Librarians are such improbable targets, 2023 WLNR 22074548

denied.) That meant expert materials selection staff were handling all other concerns.

But no one in those tranquil times could have imagined the tumult engulfing librarians and administrators - public and school - in today's red state culture wars.

How did we get from there to here? Blame politicians, mainly Republican, who saw electoral gold in those book bans. In some campaign stops, they denounced certain book titles, lumping librarians in with other intellectuals - notably "pointy-headed" college professors (a George Wallace coinage) - while ironically giving the impression that because they're of common clay, they read very little.

By February 1983 alarm signs were vivid enough to cause the American Library Association and other sponsors to begin observing Banned Books Week. (So, happy 40th anniversary, First Amendment champions!)

Today, attempted book suppression is in overdrive, with Iowa catching some of the worst publicity. In Vinton last year, the public library closed temporarily following resignation of the entire staff. Cause: incessant resident complaints about display of LGBTQ books and too many books about Democratic politicians. And, oh yes, presence of LGBTQ people on library staff. All that followed resignation of two directors and one interim director in two years.

In Des Moines, Florida-bred Moms for Liberty stalks legislators, demanding removal of materials "not age-appropriate" from school curriculum and library shelves. The real targets are books dealing with racism and LGBTQ issues. Moms for Liberty pressure has yielded results, including Gov. Kim Reynolds' proposal that if one school removes a book, so should all the district's schools.

One law after another forbids "obscene" materials. The latest, effective July 1, requires policies allowing someone to request removal of any classroom materials. Librarians await clarification, but the Department of Education says none is forthcoming.

At least no Iowa law (yet) allows fining or jailing non-compliant teachers, though several legislators have recommended that. Makes them look tough, they think

GOP-inspired laws cracking down on school libraries look remarkably similar - notably Iowa's and Indiana's. They follow Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' lead against "woke" librarians. But no Midwest state matches Missouri, where last April, the GOP-dominated House voted to strip from the state budget \$4.5 million slated for public libraries (legislation headed off by the Senate). All in retaliation to an American Library Association lawsuit over a draconian law banning books that discuss racial injustice and Holocaust history as well as LGBTQ issues. Librarians who fail to comply with the law could be fined \$2,000 and/or imprisoned for a year.

How refreshing, then, to see the Illinois Legislature's passage of a bill banning book bans. It seeks to protect public and school libraries from pressure to ban, remove or restrict access to books based on "partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

At the bill's signing June 19, Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker said, "The argument for banning books always begins with the claim that it's about protecting children ... But banning books from libraries isn't about that at all. Book bans are about marginalizing people, marginalizing ideas and facts. Regimes ban books, not democracies."

I could read between the lines, "Take that, red states!"

Librarians are such improbable targets. My thoughts return to that librarian of yore who taught me how to research for my school paper. An adage says, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime."

That librarian taught me to fish.

Gazette retiree Jerry Elsea served 10 years on the Cedar Rapids Library Board, eight years as president.

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June 26, 2023

Section: opinion

We Muslims Used to Be the Culture War Scapegoats. Why Are Some of Us Joining the L.G.B.T.Q. Pile-On? Guest Essay

Wajahat Ali

The political right's exhausting and cruel war on "wokeness" is now aligning with the efforts of some Muslim Americans to attack the L.G.B.T.Q. community under the guise of protecting religious freedoms and parental rights.

After enduring a gantlet of scapegoating after 9/11, you'd think we Muslims would have learned.

As a practicing Muslim American raising three children, I don't find it in conflict with my faith to recognize that in a pluralistic, democratic society, all our communities must be able to live with security, dignity and freedom, even when there are profound differences on certain issues.

Last month a group of Muslim scholars and preachers published a joint statement titled "Navigating Differences: Clarifying Sexual and Gender Ethics in Islam ." In the name of helping families, the statement reiterates what is considered by many scholars to be traditional Islamic views on homosexuality but trades compassion, political foresight and pastoral care in favor of fear, panic and legalistic double talk.

It says that "there is an increasing push to promote L.G.B.T.Q.-centric values among children through legislation and regulations, disregarding parental consent and denying both parents and children the opportunity to express conscientious objection." It appears to uncritically accept the zero-sum notion, pushed by right-wing politicians, that acceptance of the L.G.B.T.Q. community comes at the expense of giving up religious freedoms. It seems oblivious to the reality that if you replaced "L.G.B.T.Q.-centric" with "Shariah," it would mimic the sentiments that have often been directed at devout Muslims in our country.

It's also remarkable that so many religious leaders came together to speak with one voice on this particular issue, which one could falsely assume from the current political hysteria is the leading threat facing children. But as anyone who's been part of recent debates within broader Muslim American communities knows, you'd probably never get this kind of concerted public statement from Muslim leaders on the issue of gun violence — the leading cause of death for American children — or climate change, which ultimately threatens all life. Somehow, though, this issue has managed to rally an array of Muslim scholars.

In Montgomery County , Md., outside Washington, D.C., the group Moms for Liberty, which has been designated an extremist organization by the Southern Poverty Law Center, has united with some Muslim parents who are protesting that the public school system no longer allows their children to opt out of reading books with L.G.B.T.Q. stories. "It's not bigoted to

We Muslims Used to Be the Culture War Scapegoats. Why..., 2023 WLNR 22003217

want a safe space for all children, nor is it bigoted to provide reasonable accommodations to those with sincerely held religious beliefs,” says Raef Haggag, a Montgomery County public school parent and former high school teacher. When we exchanged emails, he told me that Muslim parents in Montgomery County had never called for a book ban, but that he believed an opt-out option would reflect parental rights and also be a reflection of “genuine tolerance, inclusivity and religious freedom.”

But is it truly inclusive and tolerant to signal to L.G.B.T.Q. kids or L.G.B.T.Q. parents that simply reading a book or learning about their existence might be so threatening and offensive that it requires an opt-out option in schools? How would Muslim parents feel if this was applied to children’s books about Ramadan or hajj?

Kareem Monib, a Muslim parent and a founder of the opt-out group Coalition of Virtue, recently appeared on Fox News and bonded with the host Laura Ingraham over what they saw as their fight for religious freedoms, apparently forgiving Ingraham for her past anti-Muslim bigotry: “Five years ago, Laura was saying we shouldn’t have Muslims in this country,” Mr. Monib told Semafor, “Now she’s saying: Thank God, the Muslims are here!” He seems to be referring to comments Ms. Ingraham made eight years ago, but either way, the irony is lost on him.

Muslims have also joined this campaign in Hamtramck, Mich., which has an all-Muslim City Council. Last week the council voted unanimously to bar Pride flags from being displayed on city properties — apparently forgetting that their Muslim immigrant forebears faced discrimination when they arrived in the city.

The increasing political demonization of L.G.B.T.Q. Americans is following the same script that has been used to marginalize Muslims and drum up fears about the supposed dangers of Shariah finding its way into the American legal system, all to pander to a constituency that is terrified of pluralism.

Let’s take a DeLorean back to the post-9/11 years, during which Islam, especially the specter of Shariah, was frequently made the villain.

Much like the recent deliberate efforts to mischaracterize critical race theory, Shariah was deliberately misdefined as a legal-political-military doctrine and the pre-eminent totalitarian threat of our time. Thanks to a well-funded right-wing machine, Shariah became a litmus test for Muslim American citizens to prove their moderation and loyalty.

In 2011 the presidential aspirant Herman Cain said he wouldn’t appoint a Muslim to his potential administration or the federal courts because he feared they would “force their Shariah law onto the rest of us.” In 2015, Ben Carson echoed those talking points, saying he wouldn’t support a Muslim American for president unless he or she renounced Shariah. Ultimately, Donald Trump ran on a Muslim ban and put in place a modified travel ban with the help of the Supreme Court. By 2017, according to one report, over 200 anti-Shariah bills had popped up in 43 states over nearly a decade, based on trumped-up claims that Islamic law was infiltrating the U.S. judicial system.

Compare all that with now: Before the 2024 elections, the L.G.B.T.Q. community has emerged as the boogeyman du jour. Right-wing media and G.O.P. elected officials are routinely accusing liberals of being groomers. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene recently said that transgender people are “sexual predators,” and the Texas G.O.P.’s new platform explicitly rejects trans identity and refers to homosexuality as an “abnormal lifestyle choice.” In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis defended his “Don’t Say Gay” law by saying his critics support “sexualizing kids in kindergarten.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump, who remains the Republican front-runner for 2024, said that providing gender-affirming care to minors was equal to “child abuse.” As a result of this ginned-up hate, there are over 520 anti-L.G.B.T.Q. bills that have been introduced in state legislatures, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

Now that queer Americans are being singled out, why are some Muslims so willing to go along?

We often forget that there are people whose lives are directly affected by these hateful words, statements and policies. I reached out to several L.G.B.T.Q. Muslims to ask them if they had any words for fellow Muslims who are supporting the right wing’s political attacks on L.G.B.T.Q. literature, rights and identities. “Don’t let Islamophobes and evangelical Christians vying for political power dictate the contours of your Islam,” Ramish Nadeem and Hanan Jabril, young Muslim

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activists, wrote in an emailed statement. “Is learning about L.G.B.T.Q.+ people, who do exist in the world we live in and even in our Muslim traditions, really gonna harm your kids’ faith? Is your Islam really that fragile that it must lead with exclusion, isolation and hate instead of mercy, openness and community?”

As Muslims in America, we have the capacity to be true to our faith and to embrace our neighbors — including members of the L.G.B.T.Q. community who may not share all our beliefs. And as citizens aware of how we’ve been treated, we should have better recognition of how the scapegoating of people for their sexual orientation or gender identity is a play from an old divide-and-conquer playbook. As the Times columnist Michelle Goldberg recently wrote , “Nothing drives conservatives to reach out to groups they once feared as much as another group that they fear even more.”

As a Muslim parent, I understand how difficult it is to raise our children in a political environment that still views them as perpetual suspects because of their religion and, in many cases, their skin color. However, we still have religious freedoms in this country that allow us to live our lives according to our values, even if they aren’t shared by the majority.

Ultimately, living in a pluralistic society requires reciprocity and respect, even if we occasionally make one another uncomfortable. It’s hypocritical, shortsighted and cruel for Muslims to align with hateful forces targeting vulnerable communities that, like us, are still fighting against bigotry and for acceptance. The way forward is to opt into a country where all our kids have a chance to be the heroes of their own stories.

Wajahat Ali (@WajahatAli) is a senior fellow at the Western States Center, a columnist for The Daily Beast and the author of “ Go Back to Where You Came From: And Other Helpful Recommendations on How to Become American .” He co-hosts the “ Democracy-ish “ podcast.

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In the Attacks on Trans Rights, We're Seeing the Rise of a New Confederacy

Nan D. Hunter

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Illustration by Liberaljane.

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A right-wing inquisition is singling out young transgender Americans, their parents, their teachers, and their doctors as targets in the battle over what kind of nation we are and want to be. Since 2021, roughly half the states have passed at least one law designed to eliminate medical or educational policies that recognize trans youth and protect them from abuse. According to the ACLU, 20 states enacted 72 new anti-trans laws in the first six months of 2023; more than 200 are in the pipeline.

Anti-trans campaigners seek to create a blanket of repression. Because the recent wave of anti-trans laws was not triggered by a landmark event like the rush of anti-abortion laws enacted in the wake of the Dobbs decision, this new reality has crept up on the country. Major media outlets have struggled to keep up with which laws have been passed in which states. With the exception, perhaps, of the trans people who find themselves in the cross hairs of these new laws, almost no one saw it coming.

The geography of gender panic illuminates the right wing's stranglehold on a large swath of the United States. As of June 1, 24 states, including Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Arizona, account for almost all of the recent explosion of anti-trans legislation. More than 140 million people—42 percent of the US population—live in these states. All but Arizona and Georgia cast their electoral votes for Donald Trump in both 2016 and 2020, and of the states that voted for Trump twice, all but North Carolina, Ohio, and Alaska have binged on anti-trans laws (though North Carolina passed the nation's first bathroom ban in 2016, which it later gave up after public pressure and business boycotts, and Ohio banned trans athletes from

school sports).

As a comparison, the Guttmacher Institute counts 26 states where abortion is now banned or significantly restricted—a nearly identical list. With the passage of a handful of new laws or court decisions, the overlap may soon be complete. Laws attacking “critical race theory,” which also came on suddenly and are now widespread, have less of a complete overlap because such resolutions often arise in local school boards rather than in state legislatures. Nonetheless, according to a report from the UCLA Law School’s Critical Race Studies program, anti-CRT laws now affect 22 million public school students, almost half the nation’s total.

Special Issue: Body Politics

Given the avalanche of anti-trans legislation, it might be surprising to learn that the bulk of Americans are turned off by the extremism and cruelty of these laws. According to Roll Call , recent polling found that 64 percent of Americans believe that the sudden onset of anti-trans bills this year amounts to “too much legislation,” with politicians “playing political theater and using these bills as a wedge issue.” On youth access to gender-affirming medical care, an NPR/Ipsos poll found that 47 percent of Americans oppose restrictions while 31 percent support them, with 21 percent declining to answer. On allowing trans girls to compete in girls’ sports, however, the same survey found that 63 percent oppose. A Pew survey from June 2022 found that the number of people who think American society has gone too far in accepting trans people (38 percent) is roughly equal to the number who think it hasn’t gone far enough (36 percent).

How is it possible that a country with so little demand for anti-trans policies produced such an onslaught of anti-trans laws? The most important characteristic that these states share with states that have passed new anti-abortion and anti-CRT laws is a legal structure that reinforces minority control of governance—in effect, a democracy deficit. Political scientist Jacob Grumbach calls such states “laboratories against democracy.” Eight of the 24 states that have passed the worst anti-trans laws rank among the worst states for legislative gerrymandering, according to ratings issued by either the University of Southern California’s Schwarzenegger Institute or the World Population Review.

In 2010, Republicans got a head start redrawing district lines for state legislatures as well as for Congress. Although both parties can play the gerrymandering game, Republicans have been far more successful and systematic at it. Since 2010, of the country’s 20 most populous states, there is only one in which Democrats have controlled the governorship and both chambers of the legislature for 10 years or more—California. Republicans have achieved that feat in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas. In the 30 least populous states, Republicans have sustained at least a decade-long trifecta in nine (Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming), while Democrats have done so in five (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Oregon, and Rhode Island).

Current Issue

The attack on trans kids is backed by issue-specific groups like Moms for Liberty, who instigate local eruptions, but the overall campaign is part of a larger national advocacy network and supported by the legal organizations Alliance Defending Freedom and America First Legal, the latter led by Trump administration alumnus Stephen Miller. Together, these groups are out to torpedo the institutions, practices, and norms of democratic governance.

All of these developments are occurring within a networked system of right-wing policymaking at the state level that can and does function across the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. In today’s digitized world, the lack of geographic contiguity between, say, Mississippi and Montana no longer matters. And while the anti-trans and anti-abortion laws generate the most immediate attention, solely focusing on them obscures an even more consequential development: a model of political economy in which so-called social issues constitute the keystone of regressive and authoritarian governance.

In effect, a new Confederacy is emerging, not in the literal form of 160 years ago, but as a viable structure for subnational governance. Its constitutional foundation is secured by the increasingly right-wing Supreme Court’s reconfiguration of powers between national and state levels of government. The court has systematically withdrawn federal protections with the goal of enhancing state power using a variety of methods. One has been to eliminate a constitutionally protected right, as it did with abortion in the Dobbs decision. Another has been to eviscerate a national standard established in a statute, as when it removed federal oversight of discriminatory voting access schemes in the Shelby County ruling. Yet a third has been to increase the power of state governments in areas of the law that historically have been regulated primarily at that level, including education and public health.

As Jamelle Bouie wrote in The New York Times , the right hopes to eliminate a national “baseline for political and civic

equality,” a goal that racists have been pursuing since Reconstruction. But the political ramifications of today’s overlapping anti-trans, anti-abortion, and anti-CRT regions go beyond history repeating itself. Although there is a distinctive Southern etiology to cries for states’ rights, it is dangerous to assume that white supremacy is limited to any particular region. Nor is it smart to ignore other regional conservative tropes, such as the tradition of land rights in Western states. Those who focus solely on the South as the predictable villain are still fighting the Civil War.

The subnational governance structure is a decentralized network of power centers rather than a single regime, but reliable one-party control enhances its strength. Two institutions beyond the governorship and the state legislature are critical. One is the state’s judiciary. Judges on the highest courts of most states have a clear partisan identification—either because they were appointed by a governor or because they won a partisan election. Additionally, state attorney general offices are increasingly involved in joint, multistate litigation projects such as the challenge to the availability of mifepristone. Attorneys general of both parties participate in such alliances, but those from states that conservatives fully control have the advantage of not needing to worry that they will be restrained by their legislatures or courts.

Fighting back: Protesters outside a campaign event held by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, in Fort Myers. (Giorgio Viera / AFP via Getty Images)

As a pure example of the paranoid style in American politics, this scare campaign against trans people is bad enough. It is a manufactured panic of political opportunism and religious fundamentalism, fed by an unconstrained media environment that hungers for news of whatever can be depicted as abnormal, ascendant, and invasive. The imagined horde of moody, discontented teens riding a supposed trend of gender experimentation provides an easy target for those who are still smarting from the legalization of same-sex marriage. Even if it becomes obvious at some point in the future that this frenzy was an episode of regrettable excess, real people—many of them highly vulnerable—are being harmed in the meantime.

Despite its massive impact, there is a temptation to dismiss the anti-trans campaign as merely another battle confined to the domain of cultural politics. Some on the liberal left agree that the cruelty is unconscionable but believe that the underlying problem is less significant than questions of economic redistribution. But the flood of anti-trans, anti-abortion, and anti-CRT laws is much more than a distraction from economically regressive legislation. Instead, the attacks on women, people of color, and trans people work hand-in-glove with attacks on the social institutions that we all depend on.

The inseparable nature of attacks on trans people and on our democratic institutions can be seen in the debates over public schools. The anti-trans campaign is a bonanza for groups engaged in a war against public education, which has long been a major target for the right wing, in spite of the fact that public education has support even in some deeply conservative states.

Painting schools as dens of “woke indoctrination,” as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis put it, facilitates disinvestment, which has direct material consequences. Of the 23 states most actively targeting trans youth and their families, the Education Law Center gave 16 grades of either an F or a D for their per-pupil funding level relative to the national average. In effect, however, there is a sectarian carve-out: Religious schools are often shielded from policies that starve public schools. A report issued in September 2022 estimated that by the end of that school year, Florida would shift an estimated 10 percent of its education budget from public to private schools. Most of the schools receiving those funds are religious and lack accreditation. In Tennessee, Governor Bill Lee has plans to start dozens of conservative charter schools by partnering with the K-12 school management arm of Hillsdale College, a Christian school in Michigan that DeSantis wants to use as a model for a public liberal arts college in his state.

In fact, there is a growing nationwide movement to reallocate public funds to private schools, including many religious schools using the same rhetoric of “parental freedom” that the anti-trans campaigns deploy. The Supreme Court opened the door for it, especially with its decision in 2021 in *Carson v. Makin*, which struck down a restriction on public tuition assistance funds going to religious schools. Although billions of dollars are at stake, the shifts in funding have gotten far less attention than anti-trans bills and the attacks on CRT and school libraries. The right wing is building a potentially massive edifice of religious, pro-market, and highly profitable education institutions in the same states where anti-trans hysteria has taken root, but the two issues are rarely discussed together.

The anti-trans, anti-public-education campaign also threatens to unload a Trojan horse of new surveillance techniques in local jurisdictions, where they are most likely to go unnoticed. Florida and Texas have created especially horrific legal nightmares

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for trans youth and their families: In both states, school officials are required by law to inform parents when their children adopt a social gender identity at school that differs from their gender assigned at birth and also to inform the authorities when parents support gender-affirming care for their children.

Panic-driven policies also have indirect material consequences. One historical example: Nothing has been more responsible for killing a robust American middle class than the evisceration of unions, for which red-baiting was essential. In Florida, DeSantis is attacking the state's teachers' unions for opposing his education policies, and multiple teachers' unions have sued the state over a new law that makes organizing more difficult, maintaining that it is retaliation for that opposition. Teachers' unions in other states have also fought the plethora of anti-trans and anti-public-school policies.

The instigators: The attack on trans kids is backed by groups like Moms for Liberty, shown here protesting in Viera, Fla. (Paul Hennessy / SOPA Images / Lightrocket via Getty Images)

To fight back effectively, progressives need to engage in several distinct but equally important arenas: electoral politics, the law, and political and cultural analysis. It is urgent to defeat extremist legislation. But it is no less urgent to build a longer-term political framework that fully integrates sexuality and gender issues with efforts to redistribute wealth downward, reversing the trickle-up effects of a half-century of neoliberal policies.

For elections, with their inevitably short time horizons, progressives are most likely to rely on the broadest common denominator of opposition to anti-trans and anti-abortion campaigns: the strong individualist streak in American culture that rejects efforts to impose government control over deeply personal decisions. That strategy carried the day in the 2022 referendum in Kansas, when the coalition Kansans for Constitutional Freedom produced a stunning repudiation of restrictions on reproductive choice, a result echoed in the remarkable margin of victory this year for a pro-choice judge in Wisconsin.

In the next phase of the fight, legal challenges will dominate the news, bringing judicial venues to the forefront. Federal courts in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee, and West Virginia have already frozen enforcement of some of the most extreme laws. At least a few cases will likely reach the Supreme Court, where the outcomes in a post-*Dobbs* , almost post-law universe are hard to predict. On access to school bathrooms, for example, there are conflicting rulings from two US Courts of Appeal, making review by the Supreme Court within a year quite possible.

Although no one would know it from the state legislative debates focused on schools, federal law provides strong protections for trans people in workplaces covered by Title VII, which prohibits employment discrimination. Employers have accepted the ramifications of the 2020 Supreme Court decision that found gender identity discrimination to be a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title VII. Although the court did not rule specifically on bathroom access at work, the reality on the ground is that virtually no employers have resisted allowing workers to self-identify their gender for that purpose. (The exceptions consist of religious entities claiming an exemption from Title VII and employers with fewer than 15 employees, which are not covered by Title VII.)

Because separate federal laws prohibit sex discrimination in employment and in education, anti-trans voices will argue that schools and jobs present different issues. But there is no evidence of risks to cisgender minors from policies that protect their trans schoolmates from discrimination, and there is something fundamentally irrational about having an antidiscrimination principle control American workplaces and the opposite approach prevail in schools—or, more accurately, in schools in roughly half the states.

Trans plaintiffs who challenge laws that restrict access to medical care generally raise constitutional questions. Multiple arguments apply: a liberty-based claim to bodily integrity and autonomy; an antidiscrimination claim based on allowing persons assigned male at birth, but not female at birth, to obtain access to male hormones as part of medical care, and vice versa; and a parental rights claim on behalf of families who seek to obtain appropriate transition care for their children but have been blocked by state law from doing so. In some contexts, a state law may violate the First Amendment—obviously so in the proposals to ban drag shows, but also more generally in the suppression of an individual's expression of their gender.

In tandem with the constitutional themes used in elections, the invocation of the rights to liberty and autonomy resonates with the largest chunk of the public. Yet the arguments we might mobilize to win elections and to make our case in a court of law—though not wrong—are incomplete. As countless feminists and leftists have pointed out, reliance solely on privacy-type

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liberty claims can lead to a political cul-de-sac, a social location that accommodates shame and secrecy even as it sometimes—usually for the most well-off—also provides a bit of shelter. More expansive, equality-focused arguments can help assure basic safety and tolerance, but they are also grounded in individualist-centered claims of differential treatment in which persons whose gender presentation fits into the traditional binary or biological categories are treated as the norm. Gender variation is not a kind of pathology to be pitied, but a complicated mix of self-identification and self-discovery that varies from person to person.

What would a richer analysis of the current trans panic look like? If the past is any guide, discussions that use the same frames as those for legal issues are likely to devolve into a familiar contest between conservative orthodoxy and the norms of liberal constitutionalism. That approach so far falls short of pulling the institutional and material pieces together and situating the sexuality and gender issues at the center of a crisis of democracy. Such arguments are not for campaign ads or legal briefs, but advocates should not be limited to what works best in elections or satisfies the demands of legal analysis. More complex ideas need venues where they can gain traction and be refined—in progressive media, in other segments of civil society, and among allies.

This kind of frame expansion will not magically eliminate what can seem to many people like the strangeness of understanding gender as complex rather than as a simple and permanent binary. Gender transition is not new, however; what is new is its social visibility. It will one day fit into the mosaic of life experiences in the way that once-unthinkable marriages between men or between women now do. The genie of gender fluidity is out of the bottle, and no amount of legislation is going to put it back.

Meanwhile, progressives should not forfeit the opportunity to confront both the right-wing narrative of divinely prescribed gender and the lefty trope of the off-point or pointless culture war. Sexuality and gender issues are no longer secondary, if they ever were. Together with race, they are the right's leading edge for the foreseeable future.

With a divided national government, no political segment is making much headway in Washington. Meanwhile, there is a stress test for democracy happening in the states, and the right is carving out its own territory—literally, figuratively, and legally.

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Section: NEWS

PUSHBACK IN SCHOOLS Conservative group gains Ed. Council seats, stirring policy tensions

Cayla Bamberger news Education Reporter

Parents backed by a group pressing for more rigorous programs and selective admissions practices captured a significant foothold in this year's city education council elections, fueling the often contentious debate over some of the city's more progressive education policies.

The organization, Parent Leaders for Accelerated Curriculum and Education, or PLACE, pushed back against a progressive wave that had been gaining strength over the last several years in New York.

The group, while focusing much of its campaign rhetoric on education policy, has come under fire for the polarizing views of its leadership, which often waded into culture war issues such as critical race theory.

PLACE-endorsed candidates will make up 40% of all elected seats for the next two years, according to figures released by the organization. The organization advocates for gifted and talented programs, and selective admissions criteria at public middle and high schools, including the single entrance exam to specialized programs such as Stuyvesant and Bronx Science.

The two schools of thought have clashed over such policies, as progressive advocates blame the longstanding practices for persistent racial and economic discrepancies at the city's most competitive schools.

PLACE described the election results as a "clear mandate" from local parents for more programs that separate children by their academic records and admissions processes based on grades and test scores, while other advocates and experts cautioned against reading too much into the results.

"It's problematic to see this as a trend," said Jeffrey Henig, a professor of political science and education at Columbia University's Teachers College. "It's not just turnout that's low, it's informational levels that's low on these elections. So it takes a while for people to take the hint they need to pay attention."

More than 350 seats were up for grabs this election cycle, which was only the second time period all parents could cast ballots. Previously, just three members per each school's parent association selected the panel.

While the councils are mostly advisory, members approve school zone boundaries and influence the capital plan, and set the tone of hotly contested education issues through public forums and resolutions.

Some endorsed candidates turned down PLACE's backing, but the group's picks won all elected seats on the Citywide

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Council on High Schools, as well as District 20 in southwest Brooklyn and District 26 in northeast Queens. Many of those neighborhoods also went for the conservative candidate in last year's gubernatorial race.

"The results of this election is a clear mandate from New York City Public School parents for expanded accelerated education opportunities and merit-based admissions," read a statement from PLACE. "It is now incumbent upon Chancellor [David] Banks to ensure that his superintendents and administration listen to these elected parent leaders. NYC families have spoken."

In statewide elections, PLACE has endorsed GOP candidates Lee Zeldin for governor, as well as George Santos and Nicole Malliotakis for Congress. Last month, though, it distanced itself from Santos in a statement that he will no longer be considered for future endorsements.

The group has also come under fire for some of its backers - and the positions of some of its leaders.

PLACE has received the praises of Moms for Liberty, designated an extremist organization this month. One of PLACE's co-presidents is Chien Kwok, who has been involved in online controversies from support for Kenosha gunman Kyle Rittenhouse to homophobic comments about a state senator. The other is Maud Maron, whose unsuccessful bid for Congress last year called to restrict transgender student athletes and alleged local schools teach critical race theory.

PLACE maintains those positions are outside the organization's scope: "The views

of individual members on issues and advocacies outside of PLACE NYC's mission do not represent the views of PLACE NYC," reads the website.

Henig, the Columbia professor, suggested national organizations will often use local groups across the country to push for a broader set of issues at the center of culture wars related to race and gender.

"PLACE is emphasizing primarily the issues of screening, gifted and talented education, and more advanced curricula," he said. "But some of the individuals in PLACE, and some of the organizations that are paying attention to PLACE, have a wider array of issues that they're hoping to use this to draw parents into."

Deborah Alexander, secretary of PLACE, described herself as a lifelong Democrat from the suburbs who moved to the city to raise children in a place of more diversity - but believes in grouping students learning at the same pace together.

"Reasonable minds can disagree," said Alexander. "We are an organization based on what we happen to believe is good education for New York City students."

How the vast majority of families feel about that vision remains unclear.

The families of 28,000 students voted in this year's elections, according to figures obtained by the Daily News - representing just 3% of the city's public school kids. "The weak power of the [Community Education Councils] makes it more likely that the bulk of parents will shrug and not bother to turn out," said Henig.

Criticism of the process escalated June 20 at Gracie Mansion, where a couple dozen parents rallied outside a reception hosted by Mayor Adams to celebrate parent representatives. The group called for a recount and audit of the city's practices during parent elections.

More than 19,100 parents cast ballots, data show. The city does not track the number of parents in its system to calculate a turnout rate, but said the number of voters was comparable to the pandemic-era election in 2021.

The parents accused the city of cracking down on campaign rules disproportionately on a Queens candidate, who was disqualified for allegedly accepting an endorsement on social media.

"All candidates must be held to the same standard, full stop," said Adriana Alicea, who ran for Community Education

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Council 28 and is a vocal critic of some City Hall directives.

Alicea and her supporters told the Daily News they had lodged complaints over the same issue about other candidates endorsed by PLACE, who agree with the administration on key issues from gifted and talented programs to selective high school admissions.

"You're controlling who you want to be seated, who you want to deal with," said Shirley Aubin, who is co-chairwoman of the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council. "That is not equitable."

Education officials cited state law that prohibits political endorsements, and said the group that endorsed Alicea, NYC KidsPAC, describes itself as a political action committee whereas other groups do not.

"We take any reported issues seriously," said public schools spokesman Nathaniel Styer, "and those that arose during the election were investigated and considered based on regulations and state law."

The Education Department says it stands by what they said was the successful administration of one of the country's largest parent leadership elections. More than 200 information sessions and 65 candidate forums were held over the past few months, and advertisements in 10 languages ran online and in ethnic media.

"Parent leadership in our public education system is an essential tool in making our schools responsive to the needs of our communities," read a statement from Chancellor David Banks. "Congratulations to the parents who have been elected to serve in these ever-important roles, and I look forward to working closely with them in the years ahead."

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June 26, 2023

PBS NewsHour for June 26, 2023

AMNA NAWAZ: Good evening. I'm Amna Nawaz.

GEOFF BENNETT: And I'm Geoff Bennett.

On the "NewsHour" tonight: Vladimir Putin tries to project a sense of order after a short-lived mutiny exposes instability in Russia.

AMNA NAWAZ: A dangerous heat wave plagues Texas, as the worsening effects of climate change become clearer.

GEOFF BENNETT: And we look at the first year of an African American studies program in high schools that's been a top target of the culture wars.

TONY GREEN, Teacher, Bishop O'Dowd High School: I don't think the course is political at all, any more or any less than American history is political.

(BREAK)

AMNA NAWAZ: Welcome to the "NewsHour."

Russian President Vladimir Putin is playing up national unity two days after an abortive uprising by mercenaries. He hailed them as patriots in a televised statement.

GEOFF BENNETT: But the statement did little to quiet the questions swirling about the Kremlin. They range from the Russian regime's stability to what happens next.

Russian President Vladimir Putin tonight addressed his nation for the first time since a short-lived rebellion marked the most significant threat to his 23-year rule. While thanking the mercenary forces for standing down, he had tough words for their leaders.

VLADIMIR PUTIN, Russian President (through translator): However, the organizers of the rebellion betrayed those who were lured into the crime. They lied to them, pushed them to shoot their own people. It was precisely this outcome, fratricide, that Russia's enemies wanted, both the neo-Nazis in Kyiv and their Western masters.

GEOFF BENNETT: Earlier today, President Joe Biden denied any U.S. role in the Wagner Group's short-lived rebellion against Russia.

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JOE BIDEN, President of the United States: We made clear we were not involved. We had nothing to do with it. This was part of a struggle within the Russian system.

GEOFF BENNETT: Meantime, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner Group chief whose forces seized a Russian city and marched toward Moscow, today said he acted to protect his fighters, not to overthrow Vladimir Putin.

YEVGENY PRIGOZHIN, Wagner Group Chief (through translator): In 24 hours, Wagner covered the same distance that the Russian forces could have covered on February 24, 2022, to Kyiv. If they had been as prepared as Wagner, the war could have been over in a day.

GEOFF BENNETT: It was a feud between military leaders that festered into a mutiny, and the images were striking.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

GEOFF BENNETT: Locals cheering the rebels as heroes, columns of armed men meeting little opposition as they journeyed within 125 miles of Moscow, and panicked authorities tearing up roads leading into the city.

Last seen on Saturday, Prigozhin was mobbed by jubilant crowds after striking a deal to avoid prosecution. Russia's Defense Ministry today released what appeared to be a show of unity, a video of its top minister, Sergei Shoigu, still with a job, at least for now. He was seen visiting troops in Ukraine, though it's unclear when the video was taken.

YEVGENY PRIGOZHIN: Shoigu, Gerasimov!

GEOFF BENNETT: For months, Prigozhin had railed against corruption and inaction among Moscow's armed forces, whom he fought alongside in Ukraine.

YEVGENY PRIGOZHIN (through translator): We have a 70 percent shortage of ammunition.

GEOFF BENNETT: A warlord known as Putin's chef for once running a catering company that fed the Kremlin, Prigozhin's private empire grew to span dozens of countries.

Much of his force in Ukraine is made up of former convicts. They spent eight months fighting to win control of Bakhmut in the war's bloodiest battle. His firm also provides private security services to leaders across Africa, where the U.N. accused it of conducting multiple massacres.

Today, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov assured Wagner-linked African nations that they still had Moscow's support.

SERGEY LAVROV, Russian Foreign Minister (through translator): Apart from relationships with Wagner, the Central African Republic and Mali have official governmental contacts with Russia. Following their appeal, several hundred Russian servicemen will continue to work in the Central African Republic as instructors.

GEOFF BENNETT: While, on Moscow's streets, an appearance of calm and order, as its mayor today canceled a terror alert. Some Russian residents say they're finally at ease.

NIKITA, Moscow Resident (through translator): I feel relief because there was no armed conflict. Apart from that, we didn't feel much panic. We survived far worse since 1985. We get used to everything.

GEOFF BENNETT: Others appeared to be unfazed.

MAXIM, Moscow Resident (through translator): I'm absolutely calm about the situation, because everything was quite predictable. So, when we are aware and constantly monitoring the news, everything could be predicted.

GEOFF BENNETT: But it was far from quiet on Russia's front in Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces claimed to capture another

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village in what's proving to be a slow and grinding counteroffensive.

For additional perspective on the short-lived Russian rebellion and what comes next, we are joined by Alina Polyakova, president and CEO of the Center for European Policy Analysis.

Thank you for being with us.

As we just reported, Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin said he called off the march on Moscow because he wanted to avoid Russian bloodshed and what he had in mind was more of a protest demonstration than an attempted coup. Still, what does this suggest about Vladimir Putin's hold on power? How stable is his regime?

ALINA POLYAKOVA, Director, Center for European Policy Analysis: Well, what we witnessed over the last several days has been nothing short of extraordinary.

And I think the most important thing we learn from this very strange sequence of events is that Putin is far weaker than we thought and his regime is much more fragile than we thought. And I think this challenge by an armed military group marching towards Moscow, it's truly, truly extraordinary, as I said.

It would be something akin to Blackwater, the U.S. private security company, suddenly taking up arms in the middle of the Iraq War, for example, and marching on Washington. And the response from the Kremlin initially was very, very muted. And I think that surprised quite a few people.

GEOFF BENNETT: In his speech this evening, Vladimir Putin addressed the Wagner fighters, and he said that they could join the regular military, go home or relocate to Belarus.

So it wasn't clear what this means for Prigozhin himself. Based on what you know of Yevgeny Prigozhin, will he truly just cede the floor, or will he regroup and wait for confrontation at a future date? I mean, he still has a significant amount of standing and influence.

ALINA POLYAKOVA: Well, to be honest, we don't know a lot as to what's been happening behind the scenes.

This deal that Prigozhin supposedly struck mediated by Belarus' dictator, Lukashenko, where he's going to be in exile in Belarus, it just doesn't make a huge amount of sense. Prior to Putin's address today, Prigozhin put out his own voice message on his social media, basically sounding defined and unapologetic and saying that everything they did was the right thing to do because it exposed the ineptitude of Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

And then what we saw Putin say later today, was, I think, a overcorrect, because he looked very weak. And in this very short speech, Putin basically tried to present himself as a strongman, saying that this -- they are traitors, this was a mutiny, and they will be dealt with.

But I think the damage has already been done. And we don't know where Prigozhin is. We don't know if he's actually in Belarus. We don't know if Wagner is still loyal to him. But, so far, I have not seen any evidence that Wagner is actually being dismantled or that its soldiers are in fact joining the former Russian military command.

GEOFF BENNETT: Officials across NATO member countries, one imagines, are scrambling right now to make sense of what's happening inside Russia ahead of the NATO summit next month.

How do Putin's newly apparent vulnerabilities affect the containment strategy for Russia as it relates to the West and NATO countries?

ALINA POLYAKOVA: I think we really need to be thinking about some serious contingency planning for a regime change in Russia.

Prior to these events over the weekend, the assumption was that Putin was going to be there through the war and he was

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going to be there at the end of the war, and that there was really no real challenge to his power and to his authority.

And I think we have seen something very, very different over these last few days. And I think that really speeds up the potential timeline for how the alliance needs to be thinking about a future Russia without Putin. And that may come through a coup attempt. This was not a coup attempt, as we now have learned.

But it certainly opens the door for a possibility like this in the near-term, versus the very, very long-term. And, to my mind, the right approach from the allies is to really use the summit that's just happening in a little over two weeks now to double down on support for Ukraine, because there's a real strategic opportunity here to show, through a sign of force, that the U.S., the -- Europe, we're not going anywhere, and we're going to outlast the Putin regime, because the Putin regime doesn't look like it's going to potentially last as long as we thought.

GEOFF BENNETT: Alina Polyakova, thank you so much for your insights.

ALINA POLYAKOVA: Thank you.

GEOFF BENNETT: And for more insight on what the revolt means for Russia's war in Ukraine, we turn to Samuel Bendett, a Russian military analyst for the Center for Naval Analyses.

Thank you for being with us.

Samuel, what lies ahead for the Wagner Group? Because Yevgeny Prigozhin has said that his fighters will never accept the options that Vladimir Putin put to them today, which is fight for Russia, go home or go to Belarus.

SAMUEL BENDETT, Center for Naval Analyses: Well, I think that's a good question.

This is something that a lot of us are trying to figure out. And these questions are probably going to reverberate for the next several weeks, if not months. Clearly, Wagner is not dismantled. Clearly, it's still a functioning organization. Clearly, there are officers in the Wagner Group that are still with Prigozhin.

And, clearly, Wagner is still a useful force internationally, especially in Africa, when it comes to many of Russia's geopolitical interests. So it isn't as simple as simply dismantling Wagner. There's a lot of money invested. There's a lot of effort invested.

There's a lot of discussions in the Russian government today whether or not private military companies like Wagner should even be allowed following what happened this weekend. But Prigozhin probably has his own allies in the Kremlin. And so the fight over its fate, it will continue.

GEOFF BENNETT: Well, on that point, how much does Putin need the Wagner Group to fight his war?

SAMUEL BENDETT: It depends at this point.

Clearly, Wagner was a good attacking force around Bakhmut, good in the sense that they could keep Ukrainian forces occupied in that particular city. But, right now, Russia is fighting a defensive war. It doesn't need Wagner forces to storm Ukrainian positions the way they have done in Bakhmut.

And so this is a question that it's up to the Ministry of Defense, it's up to the Kremlin, and it's up to Prigozhin's allies and foes, as they are now discussing how the country is going to move forward after this 72 hours.

GEOFF BENNETT: Is Ukraine well-positioned to take advantage of this moment? Might this be a decisive turn in their counteroffensive?

SAMUEL BENDETT: Anything is possible, but a lot of Russians were concerned that Ukraine will take advantage of what is happening in Russia this weekend.

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However, no significant Ukrainian breakthrough has materialized in the last 72 hours against the Russian positions. Even though Ukrainians have advanced somewhat against the Russian positions, there was no massive breakthrough that probably a lot of people were hoping for.

So it's not exactly clear what will happen to the advance going forward. But, right now, Russians seem to be holding firm, even if they're losing some of the territory to the attacking Ukrainian formations.

GEOFF BENNETT: From your vantage point, what might this revolt mean for morale among Russian troops, many of whom are conscripts and were conscripted into service unwillingly, reluctantly?

SAMUEL BENDETT: The morale can't be good, especially when the president officially pardons the Wagnerites, who have shut down Russian military aircraft and killed the pilots.

Probably there's a lot of bad feelings right now and there's a lot of anger and resentment at Wagner across the military, and especially within the MOD. There was bad blood between Wagner and military before this uprising, or mutiny, whatever it is going to be called, but the bad feelings are probably going to persist.

And so it's not exactly clear how much the military will welcome Wagner, even as the president welcomes Wagner soldiers into its ranks, although Prigozhin, in his audio message this morning, indicated that very few Wagnerites are going to join the military. So, again, a lot of questions and really not a lot of answers right now.

GEOFF BENNETT: And, lastly, Samuel in the 20 seconds or so we have left, what does the undermining of Vladimir Putin's authority mean for him as the leader of Russia's military? What's that do to his standing?

SAMUEL BENDETT: Well, certainly, the events of the weekend -- of the past week undermine his standing. They were bad optics for him in general. Certainly, he seemed weak.

And, certainly, there are issues within the government and the government's response to this crises that have to be considered. But we shouldn't necessarily rush to judgment and we shouldn't write Putin off quite yet. He can survive certain crises. And he's probably going to try and survive this one as well.

And, again, all roads lead to Putin at this point. And he is still the chief decision-maker and the one who is the arbiter of a lot of disputes and decisions in the government. So, we will have to see.

GEOFF BENNETT: Samuel Bendett with the Center for Naval Analyses, thanks so much for being with us.

SAMUEL BENDETT: Thank you.

AMNA NAWAZ: In the day's other headlines: The plea was guilty, the sentence was life in prison for the murders of five people at a Colorado Springs nightclub last fall.

The defendant entered guilty pleas at a livestreamed hearing, and survivors and victims relatives had their say.

In a Colorado courtroom today, Stephanie Clark confronted the person who shot and killed her 35-year-old sister, Ashley Paugh, and recalled telling her niece that her mom was gone.

STEPHANIE CLARK, Sister of Ashley Paugh: The lives you have shattered and the sadness, anger and grief my family and I have to endure is overwhelming.

Our lives are forever changed, and this is a whole other level of pain by the way she was taken from us. We never got to say our last goodbyes or "I love you"s before she was gone.

AMNA NAWAZ: Paugh was one of five people killed in the November 2022 mass shooting at Club Q, an LGBTQ nightclub

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in Colorado Springs.

The victims were Daniel Aston and Derrick Rump, both club employees, and Kelly Loving, Raymond Green Vance, and Ashley Paugh, all patrons.

The shooter, Anderson Lee Aldrich, who identifies as nonbinary, used in AR-15-style rifle in the attack. Now 23 years old, they pled guilty and received one life sentence for each person killed, adding up to hundreds of years in prison.

Kassandra Fierro was celebrating a friend's birthday on the night of the attack with her boyfriend of six years, Raymond Green Vance.

KASSANDRA FIERRO, Girlfriend of Raymond Green Vance: We, as victims, have to deal with the physical, emotional and psychological consequences of what this man has inflicted on us for the rest of our lives, for no reason other than the immense amount of hate this man has and chose to release on innocent people just trying to have a good night.

I ask you, Your Honor, to please give this assailant the maximum possible sentence.

AMNA NAWAZ: For months, families argued the shooter should acknowledge their targeting of the LGBTQ community.

But today's plea included no details for their motive, even as they pleaded no contest to bias-motivated crimes. The shooter could still be charged with federal hate crimes, as the impact from last year's mass shooting continues to ripple through this community.

Colorado no longer has a death penalty, but a conviction on federal charges could still mean a death sentence for the shooter.

In Florida, lawyers made closing arguments in a trial link to the 2018 Parkland school shootings that killed 14 students and three staffers. A former sheriff's deputy, Scot Peterson, is charged with child neglect for not confronting the gunman.

Today, prosecutors condemned Peterson's inaction. The defense argued he had followed protocol.

KRISTEN GOMES, Florida Assistant State Attorney: The defendant was taught, as all police officers in Broward County, likely in this entire country since Columbine, that you move towards the sounds of gunshots and there is no other job that you should be doing in that moment. Get in, cause a distraction, and save lives.

MARK EIGLARSH, Criminal Defense Attorney: Every officer that responded to that scene, whether it be the 36-year veterans or those with less experience, all did exactly what they're trained. They take tactical positions of cover, because only in cheesy movies does the cop just walk around without a bulletproof vest and somehow walks like he's 10-foot-tall and bulletproof.

AMNA NAWAZ: This is the first trial for any law enforcement officer in the U.S. related to a school shooting.

A new round of severe storms has claimed three more lives in parts of the Midwest. Video on Sunday captured a tornado outside Indianapolis as it ripped through at least 75 homes. A twister in Southern Indiana killed one man.

Meanwhile, high winds blew a tree onto a home in Central Arkansas. Two people died there.

In the Middle East, Israel's far right government approved plans today for another 5,000 homes in Jewish settlements across the occupied West Bank. The move defies U.S. appeals to halt expansion. It also follows a recent wave of violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians. It's not clear when construction will begin.

The annual Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, officially began today in Saudi Arabia, back at full capacity after years of pandemic restrictions. Some two million Muslims finished the ritual circuit around the Kaaba in Mecca, then headed to camp in a vast tent city in the desert.

Many said they overcame obstacles to their journey, including inflation.

ABU ANAS ABU RAHAL, Palestinian Pilgrim (through translator): for the sake of the Holy Mosque and seeing the Kaaba, saluting the prophet and standing on the pure Arafat Mountain, everything is worth it. But the economic conditions are really tough, and the prices are embarrassing.

AMNA NAWAZ: The Hajj is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world. All Muslims are required to make the pilgrimage at least once, if they're able to do so.

Back in this country, the Supreme Court cleared the way for resuming the legal challenge to Louisiana's congressional map. The Republican-drawn map has just one-majority Black district, and challengers say that violates the civil rights of Black residents, who make up one-third of the state's population. This month, the High Court struck down Alabama's congressional map on similar grounds.

And on Wall Street today, the week got off to a slow start, as tech stocks lead the way lower. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 12 points to close at 33714. The Nasdaq fell 156 points, or 1 percent. The S&P 500 slipped 19.

And a passing of note: John Goodenough, who helped create the widely used lithium ion battery, has died in Austin, Texas. Goodenough's work, along with others, revolutionized battery technology in the 1990s. Nearly 30 years later, he shared the Nobel Prize for chemistry for his accomplishments. John Goodenough was 100 years old.

Still to come on the "NewsHour": President Biden lays out his plan to expand access to broadband Internet; many major retailers pull back their LGBTQ merchandise after conservative backlash; and two film critics take a look at the most anticipated summer movies.

GEOFF BENNETT: Texas is entering its third week of a record-breaking heat wave. The heat index could top 120 degrees. And the sweltering weather is not limited to Texas. At least 45 million Americans across the Southern U.S. were under heat advisories over the weekend into today.

For a closer look, we're joined by Jeff Berardelli, chief meteorologist and climate specialist for WFLA-TV in Tampa, Florida.

Jeff, thanks so much for being with us.

So, this brutal heat wave, as we said, is entering week three. What's driving it?

JEFF BERARDELLI, Chief Meteorologist, WFLA-TV: Well, we have a very weird jet stream across the Northern Hemisphere, and especially right across North America.

Things have been stuck for weeks and weeks. And this heat dome has been stuck across especially Mexico. And, also, Texas has been on its northern end. And because of that, we're seeing what is an extreme heat wave, one of the worst heat waves ever in Mexico, and a very bad one also in the southern part of Texas, especially.

And that's going to be spreading to the north.

GEOFF BENNETT: So there's heat. We have also seen tornadoes and other sorts of extreme weather across the South. Is all of that connected?

JEFF BERARDELLI: Yes, when we have these heat domes, we call them rings of fire, because, on the north side of these rings of fire, we have the energy, the contrast between really hot and just warm and, at the same time, stronger winds in the upper atmosphere that tend to generate these big thunderstorms.

And then they follow that ring of fire, and they can produce tornadoes and also very, very strong squall lines that have extremely strong gusts of wind as well.

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GEOFF BENNETT: Jeff, help us understand the ways in which this heat wave is connected to climate change.

JEFF BERARDELLI: Well, every heat wave basically is connected nowadays to climate change.

Remember that the climate has warmed around two degrees Fahrenheit since around 1900. Now, that is when you consider both the land temperatures and the surface of the water. But land itself has increased by about double the average of the Earth's increase.

In Texas specifically, we have seen an increase of around three to five degrees during the summertime. So, the baseline of these heat waves starts a lot higher. It's a lot easier to achieve heat waves nowadays. Also, heat domes aggregate heat really, really well.

So we tend to emphasize the extremes even more than the averages. So, the averages go up by a couple to a few degrees. The extremes go up by several degrees. In addition to the intensity of these heat waves, we're also seeing them last longer and occur more frequently.

The connection between climate change and heat waves is a direct A-to-B connection. There's a lot of evidence for it. In fact, Climate Central is doing rapid attribution these type events and says that this particular event in Texas is at least five times more likely to be because of climate change.

And what's happened in Mexico may be very well the worst heat wave we have seen in modern history, because it's been going on for so long, not just it's intensity.

GEOFF BENNETT: So, Jeff, this persistent heat becomes increasingly dangerous, even potentially deadly, as we head into the July 4 holiday week.

How should people in the affected areas prepare?

JEFF BERARDELLI: They're going to have to spend less time outside, frequent breaks, drink lots of water.

I mean, this heat wave has been confined mainly to Texas, and especially Mexico, but it's going to be expanding north into the Southern Plains states, into the Mississippi Valley, all across the Deep South, and even to Florida. We're going to see temperatures that are going to affect a lot of people.

In fact, 100-degree temperatures will probably impact about 25 million people over the coming week, and 90-degree temperatures or greater will impact about 100 million people. Then you add to it all the humidity from the Gulf of Mexico, because a lot of this heat will be along the Gulf Coast, and you're talking about heat index, feels-like temperatures 115 to 120 in spots.

And that, of course, can be very dangerous.

GEOFF BENNETT: So, when might this let up? When can people start to expect some relief?

JEFF BERARDELLI: It's going to be a little while.

The worst of this heat wave is not done yet. In fact, we're expecting the worst of it to be the middle to the end of this week. It's going to let up a little bit as we head into the weekend. But, even over the weekend, we're still going to see some record highs. I think the worst is going to be probably Wednesday, Thursday into Friday.

So it's going to take a while for this to go away. But the bottom line is, in a warmed climate because of climate change, we're going to see more of these heat waves in the future, they're going to be more intense, and they're going to last for a longer period of time.

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GEOFF BENNETT: Jeff Berardelli is chief meteorologist and climate specialist for WFLA-TV in Tampa, Florida.

Thanks so much for being with us.

JEFF BERARDELLI: You're welcome.

AMNA NAWAZ: President Biden is kicking off efforts to expand high-speed Internet access to the 8.5 million homes and businesses without it.

Expanding affordable broadband access was a key component of his 2021 infrastructure bill. At the White House today, the president pledged a \$42 billion investment to get Americans up to speed by 2030.

JOE BIDEN, President of the United States: It's the biggest investment in high-speed Internet ever, because for today's economy to work for everyone, Internet access is just as important as electricity was or water or other basic services.

High-speed Internet isn't a luxury anymore. It's become an absolute necessity.

AMNA NAWAZ: And Laura Barron-Lopez has more on what all of this means.

Laura, good to see you.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Good to be here.

AMNA NAWAZ: So, this is ambitious, to say the least, right? The president equated it to electrifying the entire country in the 1930s. Who will this expanded broadband reach?

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: So today marks the official allocation of this money that comes from the bipartisan infrastructure law.

And the funds are going to go essentially all across the country. So they're going to go to every state, District of Columbia, all the territories, but 19 states, in particular, are going to receive more than \$1 billion to increase their broadband. And within those 19 states, I just want to highlight a few.

Missouri is going to get more than \$1.7 billion, California more than \$1.8 billion. And Texas is going to receive the most at about \$3.3 -- more than 3.3 billion. This is all based on local needs.

AMNA NAWAZ: So, the president says the goal is that every house has access by 2030. Will they actually reach that goal?

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: So, give or take, essentially, Amna.

Essentially, the White House provided reporters with a rough timeline. Now, a lot of things can get in the way of a timeline. But starting now, in June of 2023, this month, allocations are announced. States begin drafting their plans for projects. Then, December of 2023, the first state plans are due.

And 20 percent of the funds are going to start being distributed. Then, around spring of 2024, work is going to begin on some of the projects if they have received approval. Then, spring of 2025, final plans are due for states that haven't had their plans approved yet and the remaining funds will be sent out.

And as you can see, some of these projects are not going to get going and certainly not finished before the 2024 election.

AMNA NAWAZ: Well, when you talk about the millions of Americans who still don't have this kind of broadband access, who are we talking about? What are these communities like? And how does the administration make sure that people who need this service get it?

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LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: So, I spoke to Nicol Turner Lee at the Brookings Institution, and she told me that the federal estimate of about 7 percent of Americans receiving -- not receiving broadband access is probably an undercount.

NICOL TURNER LEE, Brookings Institution: The pandemic demonstrated that it's a lot of people. And it's not so much people that we suspected, the poor, people who live in tribal communities, people who are older, people who are foreign-born, people in rural America, but it also extended to people that we didn't even realize, people on the exurban side, people in suburban America who couldn't get online with their kids to actually learn, or teachers who couldn't teach because they lived in areas where they didn't have broadband or couldn't afford it.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: And so Nicol Turner Lee added that, when it comes to making sure that this reaches those people who don't have access at all, the ones that are the most in need of broadband access, that it really is going to come down to the administration and accountability, and then scrutinizing and interrogating those state plans.

AMNA NAWAZ: So we know that this was a critical part of that 2021 infrastructure plan, President Biden's vision behind that.

What about his reelection campaign? Where does this fit into that?

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: It's definitely important to the reelect, Amna, because, even though the White House and those on the president's campaign believe that the GOP attacks on LGBTQ rights and on abortion are going to be big Democratic motivators, they also know that there is an enthusiasm gap for the president, and that the way to address that, particularly on his handling of the economy, is to be out there talking about this, showing that some things are getting done.

So, making more progress towards actual shovels in the ground on these projects and blanketing the country with Cabinet officials, as well as himself, is going to be key to that.

AMNA NAWAZ: All right, Laura Barron-Lopez, our White House correspondent.

Thanks, Laura.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Thank you.

GEOFF BENNETT: June is Pride Month, a time when many companies show their support for in celebration of the LGBTQ+ community by launching Pride Month campaigns, displaying pride merchandise, and including LGBTQ+ people in ads and marketing.

But, this year, after weeks of political attacks, right-wing backlash has forced some companies to rethink Pride.

William Brangham has more.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: Geoff, some protesters have started calling out dozens of companies over their Pride campaigns.

In just the last few months, companies like Bud Light, Target, PetSmart, Nike, The North Face and Adidas have all faced right-wing protests over LGBTQ+ products and ads and partnerships. Activists have taken their criticism to social media and spread false information over Pride products targeting kids, like these at Target.

WOMAN: So, we are like 10 steps in before there is an entire Pride display for your children to see.

WOMAN: We have "Glad you came out" and "I'm so happy that you're queer" in the kids section. Are you kidding me?

MAN: Hey, ma'am, do you support this?

MAN: What did I just say?

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MAN: You support Pride propaganda?

WOMAN: Please...

(CROSSTALK)

MAN: Whoa. I'm buying this. Whoa. Let go.

WOMAN: We need you to -- you just said you're not buying it.

MAN: I'm going to buy it and burn it.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: Boycotts, employee harassment and threats of violence have prompted companies, including Target, to pull back some Pride initiatives.

For more on this backlash, we're joined by Bob Witeck. He is president of Witeck Communications, which is a firm specializing in LGBTQ+ marketing.

Bob, thank you so much for being here.

I know you have been in this business of consulting companies for 30 years. Would you say that there is a demonstrable uptick in these types of protests happening towards companies right now?

BOB WITECK, President, Witeck Communications: I'd say two things. One, we are in a moment.

But the backlash that we're witnessing is hardly spontaneous or authentic or organic. It's primarily instigated backlash. The feigned indignation, for example, against one beer was a calculated tactic. And it was used by anti-woke provocateurs, frankly, who had political agendas.

I think Budweiser tripped a wire that offered some an invitation to exploit.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: And is it your sense that this is -- again, I know you're arguing that this is a ginned-up and nonorganic movement. But you were telling us before that this has been going on in some fashion for many, many years.

BOB WITECK: About 30 years ago, when I began doing the work I do, I worked with American Airlines, and, 30 years ago, they faced an onslaught of right-wing backlash that, at the time, I believe was intended to change the direction of the culture.

What they witnessed was, if a corporation got behind the gay community, others would follow. They wanted to shame and frighten American Airlines out of the market, and they failed.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: I know you're not a social scientist, but if you believe that this is not an organic movement, what do you attribute all these attacks to?

BOB WITECK: Well, I think the political moment tells us that we're in a -- the United States is driven by division, and the so-called anti-woke activists are trying to find every wedge possible.

And they're wielding them in the hands of candidates to use it to attack drag shows, to attack books in schools, to attack trans kids. And they're taking on a variety of exploitable topics that do divide the American households.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: You mentioned this protest against Budweiser. And that was because Budweiser had done this partnership with a trans woman.

And that protest that came up seemed to dent Budweiser's sales. Did you hear from other companies who said, boy, looking at Budweiser's experience, we don't want to have that same thing happened to us?

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BOB WITECK: It did give other companies pause.

But they need to examine the case that Bud Light took. The brand sales already were slipping. And they made a miscalculation, I think, to try to expand consumer loyalty. And their timing -- and, worse, it was their response that seemed most amateurish. No brand or corporation would want to be in Bud Light's shoes when they offended almost everyone.

That was the problem, I think, that corporate reputation. It's not so much about sales, which are always going to be somewhat volatile. It's about standing and reputation.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: In that particular case, that was a protest against Bud Light's connection to a trans individual. And trans people do seem to be the target of a particular level of ire.

Have you -- have you seen that similarly?

BOB WITECK: Yes. Unfortunately, yes.

What it speaks to is the dehumanizing of a whole group of people. The LGBTQ community is not alien to this. We have -- we have felt it over many, many years. But trans people, particularly, are being put into a position to be so dehumanized that it's frightening, and many families and trans people, justifiably, are afraid.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: So when you're counseling companies, and they come to you, and they say we would like to appeal to this part of America, how -- but we don't want to suffer one of these boycotts.

How do you counsel them how to navigate that?

BOB WITECK: There are three things they often think about in the beginning.

First, what is it you stand for? What are your values? What are your principles? And if you know what those are, and you stick to them, you can weather almost any setback or any challenge. But, also, you have to invest your campaigns in those values.

When you show images and expressions of LGBTQ people, do it honestly, do it authentically, and do it for a purpose. And, finally, when you are challenged, stand up, because I think, at the end of the day, you will discover that the marketplace will imbue you with more trust and more integrity for the future.

The storms come and go, but your standing is going to be what you're going to be tested by.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: I understand that there has also been some criticism of corporate America from within the LGBTQ+ community, parts of it, that they have been cowardly or not standing up enough or not doing enough.

How serious is that criticism?

BOB WITECK: I think that is a sense of unity. What the community leaders want to do is embolden and stiffen the spines of corporate America, who are traditional allies and partners in the gay community.

They have been with us and on our side, I think, for decades. What they want to do is make sure they understand that fair-weather friends are no friends.

WILLIAM BRANGHAM: All right, Bob Witeck of Witeck Communications, thank you so much for being here.

BOB WITECK: Thank you.

AMNA NAWAZ: The school year is coming to a close and, with it, the first year of Advanced Placement African American

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studies, an interdisciplinary class by the College Board that's attracted praise by professors and also fierce opposition from some Republican politicians.

Laura is back now with a look inside one school, where she spoke with educators, students and experts.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: At Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, California, students file into Tony Green's classroom papered with imagery of civil rights and the Black power movement.

TONY GREEN, Teacher, Bishop O'Dowd High School: All right, so, you guys, take out your notebooks.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: This is Advanced Placement African American studies, a new pilot course.

TONY GREEN: The reason for this migration, so the furthest map to your right, OK, that's a map of all the lynchings that had taken place, OK, in the South.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: It's a curriculum that drew national media attention, when, 3,000 miles away in Florida, Republican Governor Ron DeSantis called it indoctrination and banned it from Florida schools.

GOV. RON DESANTIS (R-FL), Presidential Candidate: That is somebody pushing an agenda on our kids.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: But, in Oakland, juniors and seniors enrolled in the class don't see it that way.

LEILA ISMAIL, Student: I feel like it's very important as a person to know where your people came from and what they went through. And that isn't something that I found has been centered very much in other history courses I have taken.

DAVID GREENE, Student: The content of basic African American history content, they cover Martin Luther King, they cover Malcolm X, they cover the transatlantic slave trade, and then they end it right there, and they basically say, OK, if you cover these three pillars, we're basically done.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Instead, this four-part curriculum spans centuries, from ancient African kingdoms to the transatlantic slave trade, Reconstruction and the Harlem Renaissance, and modern civil rights movements.

TONY GREEN: I believe the -- probably, the primary thing that the students have taken away from the course is the level of leadership, intelligence and competence that people of African descent actually experienced during the history that we study.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Do you think that this course is political?

TONY GREEN: I don't think the course is political at all, any more or any less than American history is political.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: For Green, it's the capstone of more than 30 years teaching African American studies at this private Catholic school.

TONY GREEN: So, this book here, "The Mis-Education of the Negro," is the book that everybody starts with, because he talks at the turn of the century about how the study of African people and their descent is never covered, so we're totally miseducated about who we are.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Texts like these are under threat in a national Republican campaign attacking books and teachings about race and LGBTQ identity.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: Education, not indoctrination.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: It took root in Florida, where DeSantis, now a presidential contender, signed legislation to

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dictate how Black history is taught in the state.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: If you want to do things like gender ideology, go to Berkeley. Now, who would say that an important part of Black history is queer theory?

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Backing the effort is Moms for Liberty, a national organization challenging hundreds of books across the country.

JENNIFER PIPPIN, Moms for Liberty: We challenged to date 252 library books.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Jennifer Pippin is a founding chair of the group in Florida's Indian River County. She supported changing the AP curriculum.

JENNIFER PIPPIN: And when they polled that AP American history course, they saw that there was a lot of Critical Race Theory and also queer studies in there that had nothing to do with the African American teachings that were offered in the course.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: She claimed the course lacked objectivity.

JENNIFER PIPPIN: Look at both sides and let's have critical thinking with this. So what they were discussing was with the Black Lives Matter movement, where is the opposition? Where is the opposition? Is there a white lives matter movement?

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Since Florida's announcement, four other Republican-led states launched similar investigations into the class, which Green said does not teach Critical Race Theory or queer theory. It does teach about queer activists, like James Baldwin, who Willie Rogers calls a personal hero.

Rogers chose Baldwin as a subject for his final research project. As a singer, songwriter and music producer, he grew up admiring Baldwin's creative struggle. His mom, Adrienne, said she's seen a change in her son, including an interest in attending a historically Black college in the fall.

ADRIENNE ROGERS, Parent: I have just seen a lot of growth. He was actually learning, and he was enjoying learning.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: They said attacks on the AP class are misguided.

ADRIENNE ROGERS: They're thinking that, if you learn about Black history, that it might be teaching some people to be anti other races. And it's not.

WILLIE ROGERS, Student: To me, it just shows a lack of understanding for our culture and for the importance of having different perspectives in our history, the same way you have different perspectives in American history.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: Growing up in Oakland is to be surrounded by that history. And students got the chance to see it up close. They tasted gumbo, a dish born in West Africa, passed down by enslaved people and brought West.

They took a field trip to study housing discrimination and redlining in the city, visiting the birthplace of the Black Panther Party and historic Black-owned businesses like this diner. It's been eye-opening for junior Bella Makeig, who is worried about the censorship movement championed by DeSantis.

BELLA MAKEIG, Student: I'm learning much. And, honestly, it feels like it's been covered up. And I think a lot of it has on purpose. And I think that he wants to continue that and keep people ignorant. And I think this class is not helping him push his agenda, and that's why he's trying to silence this class.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: You think he's trying to cover up this particular history, Black history?

BELLA MAKEIG: Yes, I do.

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LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: The original curriculum given to Green and the other pilot teachers at the start of the school year has since been revised, but Florida has not reversed its decision. Green stands behind the original framework.

TONY GREEN: It's revolutionary, engaging and vitally important, especially in this day and age.

Social divisions have been a part of the entire colonial experience. Social divisions have been a part of slavery, right, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, right, the Black Codes, civil rights movement. So why would we possibly think that things would be any different right now, unless we work on erasing those social divisions? And the only way to do that is through education.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: What does it feel like as a Black man to be able to teach this course?

TONY GREEN: A lot of pride that we have come this far. We struggle. We still got a lot longer to go, but a lot of pride.

LAURA BARRON-LOPEZ: More students will have the chance to enroll in AP African American studies this fall, as it expands from 60 schools this year to more than 800.

For the "PBS NewsHour," I'm Laura Barron-Lopez in Oakland, California.

GEOFF BENNETT: It's another summer of movies, with big blockbusters returning to theater and some comedy and horror indie films too.

But will that combination be enough to finally draw people back to theaters?

Jeffrey Brown zooms in with two film critics for our arts and culture series, Canvas.

JEFFREY BROWN: As always, there are way too many movies out or out soon for us to cover, but we will offer a few suggestions with the help of Ann Hornaday, chief film critic of The Washington Post, and Aisha Harris, host of NPR's "Pop Culture Happy Hour" and author of the new book "Wannabe: Reckonings with the Pop Culture That Shapes Me."

Nice to see both of you.

Aisha, congratulations on your book. Let me start with you.

A couple of the big blockbusters. This is the season, right? So what's coming that you're looking forward to?

AISHA HARRIS, NPR: I think the blockbuster that I'm most excited about is "Barbie," which is directed by Greta Gerwig, and it is I.P. It's a franchise.

I know a lot of us critics, including myself, are little over the franchisification of everything, but I am excited about this because Greta Gerwig is one of the most interesting directors we have working right now. And the cast is amazing. You have Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling, Issa Rae, many, many other stars.

And Greta Gerwig and her co-writer, Noah Baumbach, seem like they are taking Barbie in a different direction and a little bit more of a subversive direction. So I'm excited for "Barbie" especially.

I'm also very curious about the new "Mission: Impossible." Of course, Tom Cruise is a reliable box office star. And I'm really excited for that, because it's one of those franchises that I think keeps getting better every new installment. And Tom Cruise is still really fun to watch.

JEFFREY BROWN: Ann, you're nodding your head with Tom Cruise, right?

ANN HORNADAY, Film Critic, The Washington Post: Avidly. Avidly.

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(LAUGHTER)

ANN HORNADAY: I am completely with Aisha on “Mission: Impossible.”

This franchise has proven to be so durable. And as she pointed out, it does get better and better. And I think we can attribute a lot of that to Tom Cruise.

JEFFREY BROWN: OK, have you got a couple of other biggie blockbusters for the summer?

ANN HORNADAY: Well, same day as “Barbie,” we’re going to get “Oppenheimer,” which is the biopic from Christopher Nolan about Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the nuclear bomb.

This is based on a masterful biography by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin, “American Prometheus,” which was just this really comprehensive look at Oppenheimer’s life and all the contradictions of his character and, of course, obviously having to do with his later remorse over developing the Bob, just a fascinating man of contradictions and paradoxes.

And I’m optimistic that Nolan will really embrace those. Cillian Murphy will play Oppenheimer, which I think looks like a stellar piece of casting. So I’m really optimistic for this one.

JEFFREY BROWN: How about a smaller film? You want to start us on our next round, Ann, an independent, something that gets less attention?

ANN HORNADAY: Absolutely.

I mean, this has been such a great year for first-time filmmakers. And one of them is this woman named Celine Song. And she has a new movie coming out called “Past Lives” starring Greta Lee about a young woman whose family emigrates from South Korea when she’s 12, and she has to leave her best friend and kind of schoolgirl crush behind.

She ends up moving to New York to become a writer. And she and her old flame played by Teo Yoo reconnect online. And this is just this acutely observed, delicate, sensitive, just I think a beautifully wrought drama. It’s a love story we don’t really see very often on screen. And Celine Song has just brought it to life with such subtlety and style and flair. I’m a huge fan.

JEFFREY BROWN: Aisha, do you have a couple of smaller or more independent films, something you’re really looking forward to?

AISHA HARRIS: Yes.

The first one I would say is “The Angry Black Girl and Her Monster.” It’s by newcomer Bomani J. Story. And the premise really intrigues me. It is about this young girl who loses her brother to gun violence. And she’s sort of this science nerd whiz kid. And she decides to mourn her brother and express her grief by creating this sort of Frankenstein-ish monster.

And Story has talked about sort of being inspired by the Frankenstein Mary Shelley story. And so I’m really curious to see how him taking this very -- this story that’s been told many, many times, and creating this very new piece of work will play out. So I’m really looking forward to that.

I’m also excited about something I did see at Sundance, “Theater Camp,” which is sort of a Christopher Guest-style comedy about a summer theater camp.

ACTRESS: You guys are so talented. So unbelievable. This will break you. This will fully destroy you.

ACTOR: Congratulations on being the most talented kids at camp.

AISHA HARRIS: And they have to sort of figure out what they’re going to do. The camp is in danger of shutting down

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because their director and their leader is ill.

And it's really, really funny. You have got Ben Platt, Molly Gordon. And if you're a theater nerd, like I am, I think you will appreciate how funny and spot-on this, like, parody of that world is.

JEFFREY BROWN: Ann, you mentioned Tom Cruise, and you went on about Tom Cruise.

Are there other actors, directors -- we talked about Christopher Nolan -- are there other people with films out this summer that you're really looking forward to?

ANN HORNADAY: Well, there's a big and a small.

I -- speaking of franchises, I'm also a fan of "The Equalizer," which is the Denzel Washington franchise, and this is a movie that's going to be coming later this summer, which I think is nice, because, by that time, I think we're often looking for something to see. And the big, big blockbusters have already played.

This will arrive a little bit later. And, again, I just think it's become a really reliable series. He's always amazing to watch. He's one of our last great movie stars. And I'm always interested to see what he will do.

And then there's a smaller movie coming out called "Problemista" from Julio Torres. And some people might not be familiar with his name, but he was the creator of a cult HBO show called "Los Espookys," which was this kind of surreal, really almost sui generis television show.

And this is his feature debut. He's playing a toy designer from El Salvador who comes to New York, and he's trying to get something going before his work visa expires.

ACTRESS: This sucks so much for you.

ANN HORNADAY: And Tilda Swinton plays his mercurial and idiosyncratic boss. And just the idea of Tilda Swinton, plus Julio Torres, is delicious to me.

JEFFREY BROWN: I just want to ask you both in the time we have left.

I mean, we are in the middle of a writers strike. It's not impacting the film's we're talking about, clearly. But how -- as people who love the movies, how worried are you both, Aisha, at this point?

AISHA HARRIS: I think, aside from being just generally concerned about these writers being able to make a living for what they do, I think I'm also just a little concerned about what projects by minority filmmakers and those who often have a harder time getting stories pushed through, how those projects will be affected in the long run, while they're kind of in limbo.

Are we going to see a slip back from the growth and representation we have been seeing because they are kind of locked in this battle right now? So that's my huge concern at this moment.

JEFFREY BROWN: And, Ann, one other question is, do we see people coming back to the theaters after pandemic?

ANN HORNADAY: Yes and no. The box office is rising. We're not at pre-pandemic levels yet. And the strike plays into this, because I think that we have these big hits like a "Top Gun: Maverick" or an "Avatar," but then there's a lull.

And I think what we have yet to get to is that steady cadence, that steady kind of ecosystem, where people feel all sorts of reasons to go to the movies, and not just for superheroes or for cartoons or for horror, but for a whole wide range of movies. We haven't hit that steady state.

And a glitch in the pipeline that a protracted strike means can actually affect that cadence down the line.

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JEFFREY BROWN: All right, Ann Hornaday, Aisha Harris, thank you both very much.

ANN HORNADAY: Thank you.

AISHA HARRIS: Thank you.

GEOFF BENNETT: I have to say I'm looking forward to the final Indiana Jones film out this Friday.

AMNA NAWAZ: Yes.

GEOFF BENNETT: How about you?

AMNA NAWAZ: So many great movies there.

I have to say, the one I have seen is "Theater Camp." I was not a theater nerd, but I loved it anyway. I was a different kind of nerd.

(LAUGHTER)

GEOFF BENNETT: And you can find the full list of movie recommendations online at [PBS.org/NewsHour](https://www.pbs.org/NewsHour).

AMNA NAWAZ: And that is the "NewsHour" for tonight. I'm Amna Nawaz.

GEOFF BENNETT: And I'm Geoff Bennett.

Thanks for spending part of your evening with us.

END

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NewsRoom

Conservatives shouldn't give liberals fodder to label the right..., 2023 WLNR 22052768

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Conservatives shouldn't give liberals fodder to label the right as 'fascists'
Groups like Moms for Liberty should know their every move will be scrutinized by the left in
this incredibly polarized environment.

Ingrid Jacques, USA TODAY

Let me begin by saying this: It was a horrible, indefensible decision by a local Moms for Liberty chapter in Indiana to use a quote from Adolf Hitler in its group newsletter.

The quote appeared at the top of the chapter's newsletter with zero context, and it said this: "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future."

I don't think for one second the group was advocating for Hitler or fascism. Rather, the quote is emblematic of what these conservative moms fear is happening in public schools around the country, as government officials double down on their belief that they know what's best for children – not parents.

It's also important to note that the quote was used by one chapter in one state. It's unfair, as some have, to declare that the entire organization has "no business" in politics because of the mistake of a single chapter.

Government knows best: Who knows what's best for kids? Hint: Biden and Democrats don't think it's parents

Anyone who has followed the work of Moms for Liberty in recent years and what they stand for, as I have, would understand that immediately. The group began as a small grassroots effort in early 2021 to advocate for parental rights during the pandemic's school lockdowns. Its mission is now more broad: "empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

Members' efforts are seen most visibly in public schools.

Moms for Liberty has grown to about 100,000 members, and with that growth has come more political influence, including attention from Republican presidential candidates.

Yet many people don't know the history of the group, nor care. And this local chapter gave the mainstream media and Democrats the perfect opportunity to smear them as fascists – which they jumped on immediately.

The chapter has apologized for using the quote, but the damage is already done.

Maybe we should stop calling each other fascists

Liberals love to paint Republicans as defenders of fascism. That word is thrown around often as a go-to label to silence debate.

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This is not a new phenomenon (conservative writer Jonah Goldberg wrote a whole book on the trend in 2009), but it has become a common way to smear rising Republican stars such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis who are pushing back against leftist tenets in schools and beyond.

Dangerous ideologies – whether fascism, national socialism or communism – are important to study because history has a way of repeating itself, and many of these ideas remain very much alive. However, any attention paid to a horrible tyrant guilty of genocide must be given carefully and with great context.

Groups such as Moms for Liberty should know their every move will be scrutinized by the left in this incredibly polarized environment. It was a few weeks ago that the Southern Poverty Law Center called Moms for Liberty an “extremist” group.

The power of language: Book ban debate plays into deepening divides. Are we either ‘fascists’ or ‘groomers’?

So Moms for Liberty ought to be well aware that they must be careful in what they say and do.

It's worth noting this Indiana chapter is just one of nearly 300 around the country, and certainly isn't representative of the whole organization. In this case, the chapter was trying to paint its opponents – and the leftist indoctrination the group fears – as fascists. In doing so, the label was turned on them.

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Maybe the lesson here is that we should stop calling each other fascists so flippantly.

This is about much more than Moms for Liberty

Let's be honest. This isn't just about Moms for Liberty. It's about the 2024 election and the ideological war between the left and right.

I don't think it's a coincidence that Moms for Liberty is hosting its national summit this week, and Republican candidates like DeSantis and former President Donald Trump are expected to make appearances.

Expect to see a lot of headlines lumping together these moms and candidates with words like “extremist” and “fascism.”

That's unfair. But it will keep happening. And groups such as Moms for Liberty shouldn't give liberals a perfect excuse to come after them.

Ingrid Jacques is a columnist at USA TODAY. Contact her at ijacques@usatoday.com or on Twitter: [@Ingrid_Jacques](https://twitter.com/Ingrid_Jacques)

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NewsRoom

Librarian conference includes training to battle book bans, 2023 WLNR 21953585

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Section: News

Librarian conference includes training to battle book bans

CLAIRE SAVAGE; Associated Press

CHICAGO - Book bans and how to fight them will be a major focus of the American Library Association's annual meeting this weekend in Chicago.

Librarians may attend sessions aimed at helping them confidently counter book challenges, fight legislative censorship, and ensure "access to information and the freedom to read." All day Saturday, attendees are invited to climb atop a giant chair to read their favorite banned book.

"With an unparalleled rise in challenges and bans and legislation suppressing access to books and learning materials in libraries, schools, and universities, it is more important than ever to join forces in the fight against banning books!" the event description reads.

The conference brings together authors, educators, and librarians as several states push to restrict access to books in schools and libraries, overwhelmingly those about race, ethnicity, and LGBTQ+ topics. The association in March released data showing a record 1,269 demands to censor library books in the US in 2022, a 20-year high.

"Addressing book censorship and protecting library users' intellectual freedom, protecting librarians' ability to provide for information in their communities, is at the forefront of this year's meeting," said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom and executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

"We have almost two dozen programs addressing intellectual freedom, advocacy ... attacks on public education and public libraries, all intended to equip our members with the knowledge they need to go out and advocate and defend the right to read in their libraries," she said.

Parents always have the right to choose what their children read, but they don't have the right to restrict access for the whole community, said Christine Emeran, director of the Youth Free Expression Program of the National Coalition Against Censorship, a First Amendment advocacy organization.

"You can't just concede to demands of a particular group of parents and to censor libraries," she said.

Emeran, who is scheduled to be featured in a panel discussion called "Help! They're coming for our books!" at the conference Sunday, began to notice an increase in book bans starting in 2021, at the beginning of President Joe Biden's term. She attributed the shift to "a cultural backlash" against changing views on LGBTQ+ issues, women's rights, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Librarian conference includes training to battle book bans, 2023 WLNR 21953585

Local libraries are calling in the National Coalition Against Censorship for help now more than ever. In the past, the organization assisted on a few book ban cases per year. “Now we’re getting two or three a week,” Emeran said.

”Librarians are under pressure and they’re feeling frustrated, discouraged,” said Emeran, who encouraged readers to support local libraries, attend school board meetings, and get involved in their communities to protect the right to read.

Groups such as Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education, and Citizens Defending Freedom have had an outsize effect on what is allowed to be read, she said.

”The majority may oppose censorship as a whole. But the problem is that the majority are silent,” Emeran said.

---- Index References ----

Company: National Coalition Against Censorship; AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Office for Intellectual Freedom; Freedom to Read Foundation; Moms for Liberty; No Left Turn in Education; Citizens Defending Freedom; National Coalition Against Censorship; American Library Association)

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NewsRoom

Fear, politics drive decisions in Wis. schools, 2023 WLNR 21953611

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Boston Globe A
2023 WLNR 21953611

Boston Globe (MA)
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June 25, 2023

Section: News

Fear, politics drive decisions in Wis. schools Students, teachers swept up in education struggle

Jess Bidgood; Globe Staff

HARTLAND, Wis. - Chase Eastman woke up at 5:30 one morning this month, relieved that the second of the five alarms he had set had stirred him. He pulled on the rainbow-cuffed hoodie he had worn every day in June, and, with the notes he would need for his science final tucked into his backpack, climbed into the car, determined to make his feelings very, very visible.

A 15-year-old freshman at Arrowhead High, Chase can't drive himself, so he sat in the passenger seat as a parent drove and beds of wild daisies flew by outside the window. He was about to join his first protest. At 6:45 a.m., a School Board committee was going to take up a proposed policy that would ban anything deemed "race-dividing" or "promoting a sexual or gender preference" from the walls of this high school in the conservative Milwaukee suburbs. If the policy passed as written, Black Lives Matter posters, Pride flags, and "safe space" stickers would all be taken down or scrubbed away.

Chase had been bullied before, like many of his friends in the Gay Straight Alliance at Arrowhead, and safe space stickers had lit the way toward a teacher he could trust to help him.

"If they're starting to take down those things telling us we're safe and OK," he said, "I'd just be scared."

Chase and a friend, Cat Cummings, had decided they needed a plan to stop the policy. Cat got rainbow pins online, hoping they would draw more attention to their cause. They hung up posters in the hallways to advertise an online petition started by Chase, putting up two more every time one got ripped down. And now they were going straight to the board, raising their own voices against an elected body that has lurched to the right as well-funded conservative groups here and across the country have pushed to remake education.

Classrooms all over have been turned into ideological battlegrounds, and the movement has arrived here in full force.

As the Eastman family car pulled up outside of the low-slung district office, Cat was already there, maroon hair glinting in the sunshine, asking who wanted handwritten signs like one with a Taylor Swift lyric, "Shade never made anybody less gay." So too was Ali McCloud, sporting a backpack and denim overalls. And Kieran Resch, who had already graduated, but showed up in a rainbow-striped shirt, hoping to make his school just a little better for the kids who would come after him. As they wrapped themselves in rainbow flags, lined up outside the door with their signs, and beamed at the local television cameras, Chase felt proud, even though it was not clear to the students whether the adults inside the boardroom really cared to listen.

"They know what they're doing," said Mitchell Mathews, a just-graduated senior in the Gay Straight Alliance who has tried

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to fight the board's conservative policies with little success, in an interview before the protest. "They're trying to erase this culture from the school."

Meanwhile, inside, the School Board members had taken their seats at a huge rectangular table, and the new proposal - known as Draft Policy 335 - glowed on their laptops. A conservative member named Chris Farris, who joined the board in 2021, spoke first, saying that the signs acknowledging students' differences would further divide them.

"We are one team," he said, "There's no division between gender, sexes, races, anything."

...

The new policy, if it passes, will be the latest win for the conservative majority on the Arrowhead Union High School Board of Education, which has waded further into hot-button issues in recent years after Republicans rallying around "parental rights" and transparency began winning seats amid the COVID-related battles over masks, vaccines, and in-person schooling. With the help of the local GOP and national groups, this new crop of candidates has expanded to take over nearby school boards, too, posting victories that have turned this area, Waukesha County, into a laboratory for conservative efforts to change education. And they see what has happened here as an unmitigated success.

As these local school boards have passed policies echoing the emerging national themes, they have reshaped aspects of school life, and with striking speed. Some students and teachers living through the resulting changes have described a climate of fear, one they said has stifled their ability to learn, singled out students in marginalized groups, and sent seasoned educators heading for the exits.

"School seemed to slowly turn more and more into being about politics and society rather than education," said Kieran Resch, the just-graduated senior who has urged the board, to no avail, to reject policies that he said would hurt transgender students like him.

"Now," he added, "school is about politics and fear and the parents."

The Boston Globe interviewed more than two dozen students, parents, and teachers in Waukesha County, seeking to examine the human consequences of the polarization of school life. Several teachers requested anonymity, fearing career reprisals for speaking to a reporter. Some students also wanted to go unnamed because they did not want to make themselves targets for bullying - a problem that has worsened, they said, as the School Board took up policies that, the students felt, could make life harder for LGTBQ students, at a time when national Republicans have trained their focus on curbing the rights of transgender and gay youth.

"It was definitely like being an ant under a magnifying glass," said Roo, a just-graduated senior who identifies as nonbinary and asked to go by first name only. "They didn't do anything to protect the kids at all."

...

Waukesha County looms large enough in the American political imagination that it has been featured on Twitter and in a New Yorker cartoon as an obscure but crucial election fulcrum; Wisconsin Republicans rely on these precincts to grind down the Democratic advantage in the narrowly divided state's two big cities and eke out statewide wins.

For decades, the Republican Party apparatus here had left traditionally nonpartisan school board races alone. School Board members like Kent Rice, a retired home inspector who considers himself conservative, won reelection to the Arrowhead School Board with low-key campaigns involving \$200 in funds and reused cardboard campaign signs, he said. But all of that changed when the Waukesha County Republicans decided to get more involved in local elections in the wake of the 2020 presidential election.

"They recruited a lot of people who I would consider to be ultra-conservative. They ended up wiping out a lot of people," Rice said. "They literally had a machine."

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Terry Dittrich, the chairman of the Waukesha County GOP, said the party was looking, at the time, for a way to show hyper-engaged supporters of President Donald Trump that they were advancing conservative causes locally.

"A lot of these people were not diehard Republicans. They came to the table and supported our efforts because they saw we were working for Trump," Dittrich said. "Our feeling was, we needed to do something to connect with those folks."

In late 2020 and early 2021, Dittrich and his GOP colleagues began examining members on the boards of the county's 19 school districts and other local offices, where elections are held in April, and "analyzed who were conservative and who were not," he said, realizing his party could do more. Through an initiative they created called WisRed, they went looking for candidates: vetting them with questions about "conservative issues" then training them and helping them file. There is also a PAC that has raised and spent tens of thousands of dollars.

At the same time, fights over mask and vaccine mandates had seemingly electrified conservative parents and put school administrators and educators under the microscope. Nationally, new groups like Moms for Liberty and the 1776 Project furthered that cause, offering up endorsements or outside spending.

In 2022, three new WisRed-backed candidates, plus two incumbents with the group's support, won seats on the Arrowhead board. Rice, the former board member, lost his seat.

All told, Dittrich says his candidates have won 381 out of the 426 races they have entered.

"I daresay that is the most successful local election initiative of any county in the country," he said, dismissing the fierce protests that their gains have engendered.

"They can't expect everybody to just roll over for their left ideas," he said. "The bottom line is, they're in the minority."

...

The resulting policies have often echoed from one district to another. Arrowhead's proposed Policy 335, for example, is similar to a rule that had been implemented in a nearby district, the one governing schools in the city of Waukesha, two years before. That shift began with a letter the Waukesha superintendent and deputy superintendent sent to teachers in August 2021.

"We need to ensure that what is posted in our rooms does not act as a barrier to any student, nor serve as a divisive symbol among staff," the letter said, calling for Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, "Anti-racist classroom," and other displays to be removed.

A battle ensued involving teachers, administrators, and parents that some here say has changed the fabric of the community and what it means to be an educator here.

At times, new policy "seemed to be designed to force educators to second-guess everything that they did," said Melissa Joy Tempel, who was placed on administrative leave after she complained on Twitter this year about the administration's decision not to let elementary school students sing a song called "Rainbowland" at their spring concert. The superintendent has since recommended she be terminated, she said.

Amy Menzel, an English teacher for seniors in the district, said she was baffled and worried when she received the letter and read about the signage restrictions. Teachers couldn't say they were anti-racist? And the Pride flag on her classroom wall? Would that have to go, too?

"There was fear," she said. "You didn't want to get in trouble for things."

Feeling guilty, Menzel took her signs down and left only blank space behind. Another teacher, Monica Whaley, cried as she took down signs she saw as familiar and welcoming. She used Goo Gone to scrape Pride flags off her district-provided laptop.

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"It felt like I was turning my back on all the kids who were confident enough in themselves to be able to come out in the classroom," said Whaley, who herself decided to come out at school. If she couldn't have symbols of acceptance, she figured, she could be one.

But other teachers refused to comply, including one who was brand new to the district and had just hung a Pride flag on the wall, along with a sign declaring Black lives sacred.

"I told them I'm not about to look these children in the eye and say that who they are is controversial," that teacher said. "My hands will not be taking that Pride flag down."

The teacher was ultimately punished with a daylong suspension that December. And the flag was removed.

Menzel and Whaley both left the District of Waukesha. The teacher who was suspended departed, too, as have others. But the crackdowns have continued; in January, the board passed a strict "parents' rights" resolution, and a directive on teachers' personal clothing banned them from wearing rainbow lanyards.

"I myself am gay," said one teacher, who swapped a striped rainbow lanyard for one with colored polka dots as a cheeky way of complying with the policy. "Where do you draw the line of saying, enough is enough, you're also kind of going after me a little bit?"

The sense of alienation was also powerful among students. One who watched the conservative takeover in Waukesha decided she did not want to return to school when it reopened after the lockdowns of 2020. That student, who asked to be known only by her first name, Quinn, had just come out as transgender, and did not think a board consumed by debate over masks and critical race theory would protect her.

"I'm kind of used to it at this point, knowing my humanity is debated," Quinn said. "As depressing as it is, it's just a normal part of life."

Quinn's mother, Christina, said it had all sent the message that her daughter may never really be accepted in Waukesha.

"I don't want to think about her moving away. But at the same time, it is becoming more evident that for her to be able to live as her true self, it's not going to be around here," she said.

...

As education issues loomed ever larger nationally, the new conservatives on the Arrowhead School Board moved quickly, installing a series of new rules, often plainly echoing policies imposed in other states or districts. First, in October 2021, came Policy 333, which banned "critical race theory" with language similar to restrictions taken up in states such as Wyoming and Idaho.

Then came a fight over Policy 651, a rule that required parents to give explicit written permission for staff to call minor students by different names or pronouns they had not been assigned at birth.

"This is a policy based in transparency," said board member Chris Farris at a contentious meeting on Sept. 14, 2022.

Students and parents had crowded into a school library where he spoke, warning that the policy would endanger the very students the board is charged with trying to protect.

One of them was Kieran Resch, who told his story. "The first two to three months that I identified as Kieran, I was not OK with telling my parents yet because that would completely flip my whole world upside down." He said that he had gone to his teachers instead.

"If they hadn't helped me through everything going on with my identity and in my head," he warned, "I might not be here

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today.”

The board heard him out, then voted 8-1 to pass the new policy as some parents in the audience shouted out in protest.

For Resch, it felt like nothing less than a betrayal, one that he said forced teachers to misgender pronouns when addressing students or to use the names transgender students had left behind - a practice known as “deadnaming.”

”They took this group of students, singled them out, and made their identities public for people to use against them,” Resch said in an e-mail to the Globe. He said fellow students barked at him in the halls, a common form of teasing, and made fun of the Pride patches on his backpack so often that he decided to take them off. After the policy passed, to avoid the teasing, he said, he started sitting in his car before school, instead of the cafeteria.

Other students said it felt like the policy had left them more vulnerable and unprotected.

”They’re the School Board, they’re supposed to care, that is why they are there,” Roo, a nonbinary student, said.

...

The board’s push for “greater transparency” was shaping another aspect of education at Arrowhead, too: materials used in the classroom. The ban on critical race theory, for example, was vague enough that it left teachers wondering what else might run afoul of the rules.

For students, it meant some books began to disappear from school shelves. There was “The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man,” which a senior-level English class was supposed to read before the administration discouraged it because accompanying materials discussed “white privilege.” Then, at a School Board meeting late last fall, members of the board said a list of possible titles for a sophomore year English class, which included novels about contemporary issues such as mental health and school gun violence, was “extremely dark” and called for further review.

Mitchell Mathews, the former senior in the Gay Straight Alliance, said he was upset when he learned one of his favorite books, “The Hate U Give,” which is about a fatal police shooting of an unarmed Black teenager, had attracted more scrutiny. He tried to choose essay topics he thought wouldn’t get anyone into trouble.

”Because of this School Board, everybody’s on edge,” Mathews said.

Recently, the school superintendent received an anonymous complaint that accused Mathews’s teacher of breaking the school’s policies by teaching “Othello,” a 400-year-old Shakespeare play. The title character of the play is Black, and, in an effort to bring the message of the play into the present, Mathews’s teacher had shown the class a television segment about a Cheerios commercial with a mixed-race couple.

In April, the superintendent of the district, Laura Myrah, reported the complaint to the School Board Policy Committee, and warned them that the climate of scrutiny could cost them a good educator.

It would soon cost them Myrah as well. She announced her early retirement in December.

...

That morning at Arrowhead, Chase and his friends ended their protest about Policy 335 a little after 7 a.m., since they needed to be in their desks to take final exams by 7:20. But inside the packed boardroom, the meeting grew heated and emotional.

”What if our school had white lives matter stickers all over it? What if we had straight pride?” Farris asked, as some parents attending the meeting shook their heads at what they saw as a deeply inappropriate comparison. “If that doesn’t make any sense, the opposite doesn’t either.”

The issue seemed to scramble standard partisan lines. Craig Thompson, a board member who identified himself as a

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sympathizer with the Tea Party but is not backed by WisRed, pushed back hard against the idea of banning anything, including the Pride flags and safe space stickers in question.

”The American way is not banning stuff,” he declared.

The principal, Adam Kurth, argued that any signage that helped vulnerable students is worthy of staying on the walls.

”We have students who are walking around our school, trying to decide if being alive is harder -” he told the board, as some parents’ eyes welled up with tears. “Being alone is tough. I have students trying to make a choice if that’s worth it.”

Ultimately, those arguments were not enough. The board voted 6-3 to refer the policy to its lawyer for further study; a revised version, which omits direct mention of rainbows, may be up for final approval in July.

Chase, who still has three more years at the school, plans to keep up the fight.

”We’re not just going to sit back,” he said, “and let it go through.”

Jess Bidgood can be reached at Jess.Bidgood@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@jessbidgood](https://twitter.com/jessbidgood).

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Global Politics (1GL73); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73); Wisconsin (1WI54))

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Other Indexing: (Arrowhead Union High School Board of Education; Gay Straight Alliance; Waukesha County Republicans; Republican Party; Arrowhead School Board; Moms for Liberty; School Board Policy Committee)

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Franklin Pride celebration not quiet this year, 2023 WLNR 21953395

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June 25, 2023

Section: Region

Franklin Pride celebration not quiet this year

EMILY COCHRANE NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

FRANKLIN, Tenn. - As dozens of cars snaked their way onto the grounds of a refurbished horse farm on a sweltering June afternoon in Franklin, a few volunteers stood at the entrance, cheerfully welcoming visitors to the local Pride festival.

The greeting, volunteers said, also gave them a chance to spot any person who didn't wave back or smile, someone who might harbor more malicious intentions.

There were bag searches and scans with a metal detector. Across the street, a man in a white nationalist fight club T-shirt carried a poster with a homophobic slur. A SWAT team waited on the outskirts of the celebration.

The layers of precaution underscored what had become an unexpectedly volatile situation not only in Franklin, a city 20 miles south of Nashville, but also across the country as rightwing activists have assailed established Pride celebrations and commemorations as a threat to children.

In Franklin, permission to hold the 2023 Pride event came only when Mayor Ken Moore chose to break a tie in favor of the festival. His vote capped a vitriolic debate over drag queens having performed in front of children the previous year, an issue that left the city's governing body deadlocked and exposed painful divisions in the community.

"On the edges, the far left and the far right are making a lot more noise than the people that are either right or left of center," Moore said in a recent interview. "And I think it's an opportunity for those in the right and left of center to organize and say, 'Hey, this is our community, too.'"

SHAKY GROUND

In the decades since the first march commemorated the Stonewall Inn uprising in 1970, Pride events have flourished. But this year, as several conservative states have pushed through legislation targeting LGBTQ+ rights and transition care for transgender minors, Pride Month is increasingly on shaky ground nationwide.

At the same time, some celebrations defiantly moved forward: Memphis Pride Fest booked its largest lineup yet of more than 50 drag performers, despite a Tennessee law targeting drag performances that has since been ruled unconstitutional.

In Franklin, Jed Coppenger, lead pastor at Redemption City Church, said he saw many in his congregation wrestle with what they felt comfortable seeing in schools and in public, as conservatives opposed books or media that featured LGBTQ+ people.

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"We've all been in the ocean when it pulled you, and you don't realize until you look back at the beach," said Coppenger, who said he personally opposed the festival. "There are definitely a lot of currents at play, and there are some new ones."

Franklin, founded in 1799 and now home to nearly 90,000 people, and surrounding Williamson County have proudly anchored their identity in an idyllic blend of American history and affluent development. Agricultural and equine industries coexist with large corporate and nearby manufacturing hubs. The patriotic bunting, historic churches and manicured downtown are offset by landmarks commemorating some of the bloodiest conflicts of the Civil War and the removal of the Chickasaw from their tribal lands.

The city, which is about 80% white and 6% Black, has retained deep Christian and conservative roots, while working to navigate its fast-paced economic growth and the nation's shifts on diversity and civil rights. Several community leaders highlighted the decision to add a statue of a Black soldier who fought for Union troops to downtown in 2021, rather than remove a statue of a Confederate soldier that has long loomed over the public square.

The demographic changes and population shifts brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, some residents said, are significant driving forces behind the intense conflict over Pride. Franklin offered transplants a chance to leave more expensive parts of the country and work in the lush greenery of Tennessee. It attracted some liberals to more affordable homes within the orbit of the Democratic stronghold of Nashville, while also drawing in conservatives seeking to escape progressive mandates and policies.

(An analysis of IRS data, compiled by the head of Williamson Inc., the county's chamber of commerce, showed that between 2020 and 2021, more than 1,500 onetime Californians had moved there from Orange County and Los Angeles County alone.)

Eric Stuckey, the city administrator whose staff oversaw the permitting process, said there is an inherent tension with people arriving with different expectations of what Franklin is and should be.

"I think what we have seen has been some of this idea of, do I want to protect it?" he said, referring to the city's character. "And what does 'protect it' mean?"

The 10 members of the Pride festival's board understood what it meant to grapple with change. Some had waited years to come out, while others had confronted discomfort from their peers and within themselves when their children said they were gay.

"My son came out and - I'm embarrassed to say this - that's when I really started deconstructing all the lessons of my childhood and realizing not only was that wrong, a bunch of other stuff was, too," said Ginny Bailey, 60, a board member who described her outspokenness and work with Pride as a way to pay forward the grace others had shown her. "It's been quite a journey."

Franklin held its first Pride in 2021, and before this year, organizers had never faced an issue getting a permit from the city. When they learned of complaints over last year's drag performances, its board agonized over how to respond. After several meetings, they reluctantly agreed to drop all drag from the entertainment lineup, though attendees could dress as they pleased.

But it did not satisfy their critics. Rumors swirled - on social media and at least one water aerobics class - about what sort of sex toys and debauchery a Pride festival could bring.

'PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE CHANGE'

"People do not like change - I don't like it either," said Rusty McCown, an Episcopalian priest in Franklin, where he has been open about his support for LGBTQ+ rights and staffed the church's Pride booth. "When those values are being pushed, it's easy to strike out."

In a pair of town hall meetings in March and April, residents and representatives from conservative groups such as Moms for Liberty, founded in early 2021 to protest pandemic-era restrictions in schools, demanded that city leaders deny the event's

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permit to force it to private property and for adults only. They referenced clips of the 2022 drag performances - one showed a performer known as "The Blair Bitch," squatting in costume to accept a dollar bill from a child - and warned of biblical and political consequences.

Defenders of the festival pleaded for a single day to demonstrate acceptance and understanding, saying the event had been grossly misconstrued. Nashville offered a far more risqué scene on an average Saturday night, they said, compared with their plans for a six-hour event.

The decision to allow the festival to go forward did little to quell anger among its detractors, who vowed to elect aldermen who would vote their way. But for Franklin Pride, it was a lifeline.

The controversy proved to be a draw to more supporters, with close to 7,000 people visiting the park by the end of the day, about 2,000 more than the previous year.

"It became very clear - everybody get your flags out and block the calendars," said Ed Lewis, a tech executive who had recently moved to Tennessee with his wife, Kate, and their children from Chicago to be closer to family.

Despite ominous online chatter leading up to the event, protests were muted. Seven people were asked to leave and one person was arrested after refusing to leave, Stuckey said, a decision that under the city permit was left to the discretion of the organizers and what they characterized as being disruptive. The concerns about agitators even led to one man being asked to leave his well-worn Bible at the entrance. He agreed to the request and wandered the grounds, before retrieving his Bible and joining the protesters across the street.

And at a shady tent, a group of teenagers blared pop songs, looped together friendship bracelets and did one another's makeup, blending rainbow eye shadow and studding sequins along their foreheads. Seated in a circle, they talked about the harassment they faced in school, their frustration with laws aimed at restricting LGBTQ+ rights and their fears that they would lose a lone day where it felt safe to openly be themselves.

"It's like this fight of constantly being visible, so I don't let my community down, but not being too visible that I annoy everybody," said Eli Givens, an 18-yearold high school graduate, adding that "the queer trans experience, especially in the South, is just constantly apologizing, like not wanting to be too much."

But on this Saturday, the teenagers snapped photos and talked about what it felt like to rest, without worrying about what someone else would say about them. And they talked about going to college and then maybe coming back to Tennessee, to prove this was still a place for them.

"It's like we've made the world's most time-consuming cake," said Lucie Pitt, a 19-yearold student at Loyola University in Chicago. "And we finally get to eat it."

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Times .

---- Index References ----

Company: Internal Revenue Service

News Subject: (Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Teenagers (1TE59))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Music (1MU57); Music Concert (1MU45))

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Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); Tennessee (1TE37); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

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June 25, 2023

Section: Perspective

The Rant
got something on your mind? tell us about it in 25 words or fewer.

County disrupting Chattanooga Tourism Co.'s money is like USA disrupting OPEC. Cartels don't like it. Exactly why it needs to be done.

Why are some City Council members leery of a Sister City-type relationship with a city in Ukraine? Chattanooga is known for helping people.

an open mind and caring heart lift us all. Anger, hate and revenge destroy humanity. What are you choosing?

Bennett's Father's day cartoon was right on the money because everyone has played Monopoly.

r.i.p., don LoFtis, a great county schools superintendent and a great soldier who earned several Bronze Stars for service in Vietnam. Thank you.

tFp, pLease put in the box scores of Lookout games.

Chattanooga Tourism Co. manufactured widespread panic. Demand to hand over all hotel-motel tax revenues feels very Tony Soprano-ish-y.

great tFp "Moms for Liberty" article last Sunday. After reading it, I can't decide if these folks are really carin' or just Karen.

repuBLiC parking causes another downtown business to lose a longtime customer. Me. Ridiculous parking scene downtown.

moms For LiBerty. Neighbors for Liberty. Liberty for them but taking it away from you.

i am in CompLete agreement with the writer of a letter last Sunday, "Trump's charges couldn't be clearer." Lock Trump up! He can share a cell with Joe Biden.

iF you Change the name from the Choo Choo to The Chalet (or most any other cutesy name), you will be spitting in the face of all citizens of Chattanooga. Unlike Nike, Just Don't Do It!

rep. ChuCk Fleischmann: How do you look at yourself in the mirror after condemning the judicial system of the United States? Shame on you.

gotta proBLem? Solution. Invent a program, apply for a grant, create a nonprofit, hire a buddy to run it and watch nothing

The Rant, 2023 WLNR 21953416

happen again and again.

peopLe, pLease. Hunter Biden pleaded guilty to two tax misdemeanors and a gun charge. Trump? Found guilty of sexual abuse; so far charged with falsifying business records, making false statements, obstruction, Espionage Act violations.

trump Was Born to be exactly what we see, nothing more or less. He's not the worst or the best, so leave him alone.

demoCratiC party is eternally grateful to Trump for his hatchet job on the GOP. And providing suitable temporary storage for critical national documents.

so, Biden's son gets a sweetheart deal and the left claims there is no bias. Right.

iF the u.s. JustiCe Department and the FBI are corrupt, why do certain Republicans demand they investigate Biden's family? Only corrupt when they find evidence against Republicans? Pleeze!

trump's indiCtment can't be a "witch hunt" when you actually get the witch.

that rainBoW FLag does not represent me. The American flag, to which I pledge allegiance, represents everyone.

redneCk FootBaLL coach-turned-U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville is holding essential military promotions hostage because of his deviant MAGA beliefs, thus harming our national defense.

iF the spLC Wants to see a hate group, they should check the mirror.

marsha, BiLL and ChuCk, evidently your parents never explained "guilt by association" to you.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; US JUSTICE DEPARTMENT.

News Subject: (Corruption, Bribery & Embezzlement (1EM51); Crime (1CR87); Fraud (1FR30); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Tennessee (1TE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (demoCratiC party; GOP; FBI; u.s. JustiCe Department)

Word Count: 515

End of Document

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NewsRoom

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Gazette (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22061338

Gazette, The (Colorado Springs, CO)
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June 25, 2023

Section: Wex

Activist groups pressure Philadelphia venues to cancel Moms for Liberty summit

Heather Hunter, Washington Examiner

The Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia is facing pressure from social justice groups to backtrack on agreeing to rent out one of its event spaces to the parental rights group Moms For Liberty on Thursday, June 29.

The organization's sold-out "Joyful Warriors Summit" is scheduled to be held at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown on June 29 through July 2, but the museum event will be the summit's opening day "Welcome to Philadelphia Reception" for summit attendees.

FOURTH OF JULY AIRFARE DOWN BY 27% FROM LAST YEAR

Pennsylvania State Sen. Nikil Saval, representing the Philadelphia area, wrote a letter last week to the museum calling Moms for Liberty "a hate group" and urged "the museum to cancel this event and stay true to its stated values."

New York Post columnist Karol Markowicz called out Saval on Sunday for pressuring the museum.

"Moms for Liberty are absolutely not a hate group, and attempts to shut them down is due to their effectiveness. How is it not a violation of their First Amendment rights that elected officials are trying to get their event canceled? How is this not government shutting down speech?" Markowicz said.

Several museum staff members recently expressed their opposition to the museum allowing the Moms for Liberty event.

"I've been working for the museum for four or five years now, and I've always been grateful to work someplace that has been so supportive of me as a queer person. But with this - I feel a great sense of betrayal," Ben Reed, a member of the LGBT community, said in an interview.

A petition of opposition from over 60% of the museum's staff to the event was submitted to the museum's President and CEO, Dr. R. Scott Stephenson. Despite the petition and the staff holding an emotionally-charged internal forum, Dr. Stephenson decided that he would not cancel the event.

"The Museum of the American Revolution strives to create an inclusive and accessible museum experience for visitors with a wide range of viewpoints and beliefs. Consistent with this mission, we make available after-hours and private rentals to groups that organize legally and safely, including federally recognized 501c4 non-profit organizations. Because fostering understanding within a democratic society is so central to our mission, rejecting visitors on the basis of ideology would, in fact, be antithetical to our purpose," a museum spokesperson said in a statement.

Activist groups pressure Philadelphia venues to cancel Moms..., 2023 WLNR 22061338

The statement went on to address staff concerns, “Our staff are the lifeblood of this work. We are aware that some members of our staff do not agree with the museum’s private booking, and we will continue to do all we can to listen with intention; to make sure they know they are valued; and to accommodate them when the event date arrives.”

Activists have also been putting pressure on the summit’s convention host, Marriott, to cancel its hosting of the parental rights group’s annual event.

A Change.org petition titled “MARRIOTT HOTELS - JUST SAY NO TO HATE!! Refuse the Moms for Liberty National Convention” has over 28,295 signatures, and is calling on the hotel chain to “deny groups like Moms for Liberty the ability to host a hate-conference in their facility.”

The author of the petition called the event “a violation of Marriott’s corporate policy and an insult to their LGBTQ employees and all Americans for them to allow Moms for Liberty to use their property.”

The conference speakers will include several 2024 presidential candidates, including former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former United Nations ambassador Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

On June 30, a coalition of organizations - People for the American Way, Campaign for Our Shared Future, PA STOP Moms for Liberty, Defense of Democracy, and ACT UP Philadelphia - are coordinating a protest with featured speaker State Sen. Nikil Saval outside the Marriott hosting the summit.

Activists protesting Moms for Liberty have a full weekend of protesting planned in Philadelphia.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE FROM THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER](#)

”We’ll be back at the Marriott dancing our hearts out to spread queer joy before Moms for Hate comes to down,” ACT Up Philadelphia tweeted.

In June, the Southern Poverty Law Center released its annual Year in Hate & Extremism report for 2022 and labeled several parental rights groups as “extremist” and particularly focused on Moms for Liberty.

Original Location: Activist groups pressure Philadelphia venues to cancel Moms for Liberty summit

Washington Examiner Videos

---- Index References ----

Company: NEW YORK POST CORPORATION; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; United Nations Publications

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Hotels (1HO42); Travel & Tourism (1TR07))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Marriott; Our Shared Future, PA; Defense of Democracy; New York Post; Southern Poverty Law Center; United Nations)

Keywords: (News)

Activist groups pressure Philadelphia venues to cancel Moms..., 2023 WLNR 22061338

Word Count: 735

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NewsRoom

When talent sees the next generation and flees in horror, 2023 WLNR 22004391

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Law., Guns, & Money (Blog) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22004391

Lawyers, Guns, and Money (Blog)
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June 25, 2023

When talent sees the next generation and flees in horror

Scott Lemieux

Jun 25, 2023

RFK Jr. knows exactly what his core audience is:

Democratic presidential candidate and rabid anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has decided to take his 2024 campaign to new, extremist levels.

Kennedy will be a guest speaker at a Moms for Liberty gathering in Philadelphia next week, an event dubbed the “Joyful Warriors National Summit,” the nonprofit announced Tuesday.

Moms for Liberty has been labeled an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, or SPLC, for disguising its attacks on schools, teachers, and the LGBTQ community as “parental rights.” The group is especially famous for pushing bans on books that discuss identity issues, including race, gender, and sexuality, or have sexual content; chapters of the group have run (sometimes successful) campaigns in schools across the country. It’s a broad ambush, “seeking to undermine public education holistically and to divide communities,” the SPLC’s Rachel Carroll Rivas told NPR earlier this month.

So why is Kennedy, who purports to care about issues of censorship, speaking at the summit? Perhaps because he’s running on the wrong ballot.

Other guest speakers at the Moms for Liberty summit include some of the top 2024 Republican candidates: twice-impeached and twice-indicted former President Donald Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, and anti-woke multimillionaire Vivek Ramaswamy. In fact, Kennedy appears to be the only Democrat on the list of guest speakers, which also includes far-right conspiracy theorists and the president of the right-wing think tank Heritage Foundation.

This isn’t a total shock for anyone who has familiarized themselves with Kennedy’s actual political views. The candidate has a long history of spreading conspiracy theories—including before Covid-19 saw a resurgence in anti-vaxxers—and his fringe ideas often come with a racist or homophobic twist.

Engaging in full-time pandering to alt-right cranks is a poor strategy for actually making a credible showing in the Democratic nomination process. If you are an alt-right crank yourself and your goal is to try to undermine Biden in the general, it makes perfect sense.

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When talent sees the next generation and flees in horror, 2023 WLNR 22004391

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HERITAGE FOUNDATION (THE)

News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Government (1GO80); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; NPR; Southern Poverty Law Center; Heritage Foundation)

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NewsRoom

Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 21972218

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Naperville Sun (Naperville, Ill.) 8
2023 WLNR 21972218

Naperville Sun, The (Naperville, IL)
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June 25, 2023

Section: News

Letters to the Editor

Moms for Liberty completely misrepresented in column

I am responding to the column by Tyler O'Neil of The Heritage Foundation published in the June 14 Naperville Sun.

Mr. O'Neil is entitled to his opinion but not to lies. In his column, Mr. O'Neil fails to mention that The Heritage Foundation funds Moms for Liberty (M4L) or his vested interest in attacking the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is false to say M4L is "grassroots," or "homeschooling moms."

M4L co-founder Bridget Ziegler works for the Leadership Institute founded by Council for National Policy, a strategy and funding organization for the Christian Right that uses "the doctrine of religious liberty to ... construct a Bible-based social, political, and religious order which denies the religious liberty of (their) enemies." (Cohn, June 2023)

O'Neil claims M4L is "plotted alongside the KKK." False. M4L is listed as an "anti-student inclusion movement/anti-government extremist group."

M4L has repeatedly attacked public school boards, libraries, teachers, and health care providers.

O'Neil claims M4L is a "parental rights movement" working for "the protection of children." Not all children. Marisa Fuentes of Rutgers said, "The language of 'protection of children' is code for 'White children should not be made to know how they benefit from centuries of violence, theft of land, and slavery.'"

Virulently anti-LGBTQ, M4L is particularly vicious to transgender people and those who love and care for them. M4L uses the terms "groomers, child mutilation advocates, leftists and Marxists." M4L uses propaganda to reframe race, gender, and sexuality as "race hustling," "pedophilia" and "pornography."

M4L groups (including the Naperville chapter) claim nonpartisanship but they are deeply funded, extreme-right political action groups. If the "Moms" are the foot soldiers for theocracy, today's GOP are the Christian Right's generals. Millions understood M4L's hate before Southern Poverty Law Center had a say.

It is disappointing the Naperville Sun would publish this "opinion."

Karen V. Peck, Naperville

Council missed its chance to do a lot of community good

Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 21972218

The Naperville City Council could have done so much for so many organizations and people in Naperville by distributing its \$13.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to groups that can help people instead of using it for capital improvement projects.

It could have been used for mental health treatment programs, food pantries, DuPage Pads, small businesses. There are so many worthwhile organizations.

Meanwhile, the Dupage County Board gives \$500,000 to food pantries.

Our city council had the opportunity to do so much for so many.

Charles Brown, Naperville

Share your views

Submit letters to the editor via email to suburbanletters@tribpub.com. Please include your name and town of residence for publication. Please include phone number and email address for confirmation. Letters should be no more than 250 to 300 words.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HERITAGE FOUNDATION (THE)

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Christianity (1CH94); Foundations (1FO95); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Philanthropy (1PH09); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Healthcare Services (1HE13); Psychiatric Services (1PS61))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Council for National Policy; KKK; Naperville Council; Naperville City Council; Dupage County Board; Southern Poverty Law Center; The Heritage Foundation)

Edition: Final NVS

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty's anti-LGBTQ stance misses 250 years of history, 2023 WLNR 21989669

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Phila. Inquirer E5
2023 WLNR 21989669

Philadelphia Inquirer (PA)
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June 25, 2023

Section: Editorial

Moms for Liberty's anti-LGBTQ stance misses 250 years of history The organization doesn't want you to know that LGBTQ people have played a part in every era of American history.

Jen Manion

I have spent over 20 years as a historian, bringing the stories of ordinary people living during the Revolutionary era to light. That's why I was appalled to learn that the Museum of the American Revolution is hosting the far-right, anti-LGBTQ, anti-government group Moms for Liberty on Thursday. We who study the past know the truth and can see this for the pernicious stunt that it is.

Moms for Liberty lobbies for book bans and aims to dictate how history is taught, stripping it of any mention of slavery, racism, and LGBTQ people. The group got its start fighting mask mandates and the teaching of critical race theory. It spreads anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, falsely labels LGBTQ people as "groomers," and led Florida's hateful campaign against LGBTQ teachers. It openly harasses transgender and nonbinary young people and their families, advocating new laws and policies to restrict their lives and freedoms.

The group claims an affinity with America's founding, yet they have failed this test in historical symbolism. Revolutionary Philadelphia was at the forefront of scientific inquiry, education, publishing, medicine, and government - all things that Moms for Liberty lobbies against.

Moms for Liberty is fighting to strip LGBTQ people of our place in the nation's past - and by extension, the nation's present and future. It doesn't want you to know that we have played a part in every era of American history. People in early America experienced same-sex love and relationships, expressed themselves through drag, and changed their gender identity. Newspapers provide a crucial source for evidence of this often-hidden aspect of the past.

Newspaper articles about the growing tension between the North American colonies and the British crown were reported alongside dramatic stories of "female husbands" - people assigned the female sex at birth who lived as men and married women. In May 1766, London's Public Advertiser printed the notice from Lord Chamberlain's office about the movement of "a quantity of ammunition, and Part of the Troops destined for North America" on the very same page that it also noted the death of "the famous Sarah Paul, who went thro' a Variety of Adventures in Men's Clothes, which made a great Eclat about seven Years ago, when she married another young Woman, and was distinguished by the Appellation of the Female Husband." While living as a man, they went by the name Samuel Bundy.

North American papers embraced these accounts as well. The Pennsylvania Gazette, printed by Ben Franklin in the Franklin Court Printing Office, reported on Charles Hamilton, who was detained in Chester in July 1752 while en route to Philadelphia under suspicion "that the Doctor was a women' in mens clothes." Since there was no explicit law against

Moms for Liberty's anti-LGBTQ stance misses 250 years of history, 2023 WLNR 21989669

cross-dressing, authorities reported they would only keep Hamilton in prison “till we see whether any Body appears against her, if not she will be discharged.”

Knowing that female husbands, along with other LGBTQ people, have always existed, resisted, and found love and friendship is a powerful message for us all. The National Park Service has gradually incorporated more LGBTQ history into its educational content, recognizing Independence National Historical Park and Valley Forge as important sites of LGBTQ heritage. The Library Company of Philadelphia hosted an exhibit called “That’s So Gay: Outing Early America” on LGBTQ history and literature.

The past 20 years of U.S. Supreme Court rulings on LGBTQ rights - from decriminalizing sodomy (2003) to legalizing same-sex marriage (2015) to banning employment discrimination (2020) - have given many of us joy and relief. These gains are now in jeopardy. If you think LGBTQ rights are settled and that our basic health, safety, and freedom are not threatened by Moms for Liberty and the larger movement it represents, think again.

Moms for Liberty is just the latest group to target LGBTQ people for political gain, using the so-called protection of children as their justification. In 1977, after Dade County, Fla., passed a gay rights ordinance, right-wing activists formed a coalition called “Save Our Children,” with Anita Bryant as the spokesperson. Hyperbolic homophobia held sway in American politics well into the 1990s and beyond.

Our educational and cultural institutions are continuing to be targeted by a tyrannical minority that has seen great success because most straight people - even those with LGBTQ friends and relatives - are not doing enough to stop them.

Philadelphia was the birthplace of democracy. Early LGBTQ leaders knew the importance of this history, choosing to march in front of Independence Hall on the Fourth of July annually from 1965 to 1969, demanding a “Homosexual Bill of Rights” and equal participation in American democracy. They wanted America to live up to its promise.

Moms for Liberty is also making a statement by gathering in Philadelphia. As one of America’s most racially diverse cities, with a vibrant LGBTQ community and where 81.4% of people voted Democrat in the last presidential election, it’s not a natural fit for a right-wing extremist organization.

The Museum of the American Revolution has a responsibility to defend the history and practice of American democracy, not harbor those who seek to destroy it.

Jen Manion is a professor of history and sexuality and women’s and gender studies at Amherst College, and the author of “Female Husbands: A Trans History” (2020) and “Liberty’s Prisoners: Carceral Culture in Early America” (2015).

---- Index References ----

Company: LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA; National Forestry and Grassland Administration

News Subject: (Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Franklin Court Printing Office; U.S. Supreme Court; Library Company of Philadelphia; National Park Service)

Word Count: 877

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NewsRoom

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 21954146

NewsRoom

6/25/23 Sentinel-Rec. (Hot Springs, Ark.) 4B
2023 WLNR 21954146

Sentinel-Record, The (Hot Springs, AR)
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June 25, 2023

Section: Viewpoints

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Library board

Dear editor:

There's a lot of excitement going on about Act 372 and its effect on our library and our county.

I sat in on a quorum court meeting on June 12 to see what would happen about the nomination of Amy Shipman to the Garland County Library Board. (She was conveniently absent; she evidently needed a rest.) After some procedural kerfuffling, the nomination was taken up. There was an objection from Judge Young that he had seen an interview with her in The Sentinel-Record (Jan. 25) when she was a Lakeside High School Library media specialist. She seemed overly concerned about what might happen to her students if this law went into effect, that it would somehow harm them. (I'm not sure just how.)

I briefly spoke against the nomination, pointing out that my primary consideration was for the kids, that, until the last six decades, all over the world and throughout history, with few exceptions (e.g., Greece, Afghanistan), children have been protected from knowledge of sex. In some societies, it was only at puberty that they were taken apart to be initiated into adulthood and informed about sex, usually finalized by a sacred ceremony. It was not to be treated as a joke or made public, as we do now. Maybe there was much wisdom in that approach that we might well be wise to consider.

There is currently a policy at the library for a "registered borrower in good standing" to protest a book's presence in the library. The protester "must file a Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Materials form," which s/he is handed with a one-page explanation of the policy and a three-page supplement, THE FREEDOM TO READ. The form goes to the librarian or designated qualified substitute, for evaluation. If the patron is unsatisfied with the decision, it goes before the full Library Board with a written request. Their decision is final unless overruled by a court! (If you have the funds to hire legal counsel.) If the book was shelved in the Juvenile section and the request for removal is granted, it is relocated to the appropriate shelf in the adult section. Wow!

After reading her interview, I am concerned that Ms. Shipman might not be the best reviewer of the appropriateness of books for the library in our community. I would hope that she will be.

With all the craziness that has been going on in our society lately with normalization of LGBTQ+ preferences, drag queen happy hours with the kids, and conning kids into transgender surgery, I am extremely grateful that, to date, our librarian has chosen to limit his creativity to lending out fishing rods and starting a community garden. Thank you, Lord!

Pat King

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 21954146

Hot Springs

Can doesn't mean should

Dear editor:

Four tourists wanted to visit the Titanic and paid \$1 million to do so. A million-dollar funeral and I am not shocked.

Humans have never learned just because you can do something, doesn't mean you should do it. Hence, the tragic pitfalls of A.I. I do believe we are at a cliff and the powers that be think they can control the uncontrollable and the unpredictability of A.I.

I pray for those tourists' families and friends. I pray for humanity. I pray these idiots in Washington do not start a war with China. God have mercy.

Michael P. Lucas

Hot Springs

Grateful for the Muses

Dear editor:

Last weekend "The Sound of Muses" created by the Muses Creative Artistry Project once again created a musical, magical afternoon for our community.

The songs, the elegant ladies costumes and the handsome tuxedoed gents made the illusion of participating in the grand ballroom scene of a movie set.

The seven-piece band was ideal for the show, never overwhelming the beautiful voices as each selection represented a hit from a favorite Broadway musical. My favorite is "Do You Love Me?" from "The Fiddler On the Roof," expertly voiced by soprano Jeanne Bennett and baritone Stacey Murdock. The three dancers had limited space in which to showcase their graceful moves however you could imagine they were in a chorus line of more as they twirled, spun and leaped across the small space allowed: all this while other cast members surrounded them on this small stage.

Shirley Chauvin

Hot Springs

Compromised president

Dear editor:

No one is above the law, except if your name is Biden, or Clinton, or at least if you are a Democrat.

In November of 2022, President Joe Biden vowed to use his power to prevent former President Donald Trump from returning to the White House. While Biden made sure to claim he would only do so via legit efforts of our Constitution. It appears he is doing much more than that. Trump is currently facing a myriad of charges related to the supposed mishandling of classified documents before leaving office and taking them to his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida. He had the right to declassify these documents and stated multiple times that he had done so. The charges from Biden's DOJ are blatantly political. Yet the "hate Trump" crowd refuses to accept that. Biden himself has been caught illegally storing classified documents in several nonsecure locations. These docs are not from his current time as president, but from his time as vice president when he had no declassifying authority.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 21954146

Biden is a compromised man. A corrupt man, if you are following the news from the oversight committee. He consequently cannot stand up to China, nor can he stop funding the Ukraine. That corruption along with his refusal to seal our Southern border will soon result in his impeachment. Motions have already started in Congress. So, who is the bad man: the man who has been involved with millions of dollars in bribes and sold out our country, or the red-blooded American who wears the MAGA hat? The man that the Dems are so fearful of that they feel they need to try to find a way to put him in jail so he cannot be reelected? I'm guessing that Mr. Trump can relate to Mr. Navalny sitting in jail in Russia ... but this is America, we will not tolerate a wannabe dictator like Biden.

Excerpts from this post are from The Congressional Insider.

Allan Asleson

Hot Springs

A few observations

Dear editor:

Liz Robbins, Adam Webb, and Melinda Gassaway - now there are three good eggs. Liz keeps us abreast of the past and the present at the Historical Society. Adam does such a great job at our library that there is nothing left to add. And then Melinda, despite an occasional thumbs-down, continues to remind us of the great and the good in our community. These three are certainly treasures in Hot Springs.

Don't you just love groups with such names as "Moms for Liberty"? The purpose of such groups is to deny the liberty of people who disagree with others. Recently, Moms for Liberty showed up to protest the recognition by the Pulaski County Special School District of Pride Month. Those "Moms" must have forgotten that the Teacher of the Year is gay.

Here in Hot Springs, we had our Pride Parade, Unfortunately, some guy was yelling and waving a sign and finally assaulted someone and was arrested for it as visitors drove down Central, not a way to convince tourists to come here and spend their money. I believe the guy said he had spoken to his pastor. I'm not sure if that was before or after his arrest, but I'm pretty sure is not a communicant at St. Luke's.

And speaking of pastors, did you see that the SBC still won't allow female pastors? Surely people realize that Kamala Harris is female.

By the way, the Pride Parade went right by the statue of the Confederate soldier. He is facing north, but he is also there for all of our tourists to see, and again probably not the best look for tourists. It's time, 160 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, to move the statue. A cemetery would be a grand place for it.

Ken Cook

Hot Springs

---- **Index References** ----

Industry: (Celebrities (1CE65); Entertainment (1EN08); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Live Entertainment (1LI85); Music (1MU57))

Region: (Asia (1AS61))

Language: EN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 21954146

Other Indexing: (Garland County Library Board; Lakeside High School Library; White House; Congress; SBC)

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2023 WLNR 21972584

Springfield News-Leader (Springfield, MO)
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June 25, 2023

Nixa Public Schools to create 'standing committee' for future library book challenges
A Nixa district official said: "Finding a community member to serve on the committee has been difficult." So far, members have been school employees.

Claudette Riley, Springfield News-Leader

For more than a year, Nixa Public Schools has fielded book challenges from patrons and action during meetings this past week suggest more are expected.

The school board met three times this week: a special meeting to decide the level of access to seven books, a full-day retreat — which included discussion of ways to streamline and improve the book challenge process — and the regular monthly meeting.

District officials called for the creation of a standing committee to review future challenges and a revamped format to review books, curriculum and other materials before they enter the school or after they are challenged.

"They are going to have a consistent committee," said Zac Rantz, chief communication officer.

Asked if the committee will including community members as well as district employees, he said that is unclear and that efforts to get unbiased citizens to serve on recent book review committees were a challenge.

"Finding a community member to serve on the committee has been difficult. The people that have stepped up to volunteer have been people who either would like the book gone or would like it kept. They are already stepping into the situation with a very specific viewpoint," he said.

Rantz noted that in the past different committees had reviewed books with similar themes — including multiple books in a series from the same author — and came up with inconsistent recommendations.

"They are trying to streamline the process to make sure who is looking at it is looking at each individual (book) from the same perspective," he said. "They are going to develop a form ... with specific questions."

He said the overarching goal is to have transparency in the process. The form will include guidelines that are in line with district and state expectations and can be used to guide evaluation of any proposed materials and the reviews prompted by a formal challenge.

"This is a process for anything. We are focused on books right now but we also have to think about this as a broad process for any curricular item that anybody is going to bring to the district or would like reviewed if it is already in the district so it will adhere to all the needs of the school district."

Nixa Public Schools to create 'standing committee' for future..., 2023 WLNR 21972584

At the special meeting, the board voted to remove two books flagged by staff conducting a review of the library collection in response to a new Missouri law that makes it illegal to provide minors with sexually explicit material, especially if it is visual.

Two of the four books challenged by patrons were removed by the board and the other two were restricted, which means a student will be required to secure parent permission to access.

Only "The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale," by Art Spiegelman, flagged for review by district staff, will remain on library shelves without restriction.

In a statement following the meeting, U-Turn in Education — a group formed by Nixa parents and patrons who are against censorship — also made it clear this issue is likely to continue. The group said, in part: "We will continue to work with our schools and community to advocate for the retention of intellectual freedom and a comprehensive range of educational opportunities for all."

Push for further restrictions, rating system

In the past year, a smattering of other books have been removed or restricted either at the review committee level or as a result of appeals to the board.

At the June 20 meeting, board member Heather Zoromski said the four challenged books up for discussion had collectively been checked out 52 times in the past five years.

"Ten-ish kids a year are checking these books out, 0.5% of the student body, and we are spending a lot of time on this and I am looking forward to when we can spend time on things that can impact the whole student body," she said.

Zoromski said any attempt to remove every book with a "controversial theme" will create a slippery slope.

"We hear that some of these topics should not be taught at school and they should be left for home discussion, which I totally respect and agree, but I also think the important difference is what is being actively taught in the classroom and what is required reading versus a book that is in the library."

Cameron Eoff, a parent who moved his family from Springfield to Nixa, said a "standard litmus test" should apply to books available in schools.

"This is simply a content issue. Sexually explicit, graphic, obscene adult material should be looked at through the lens of age-appropriateness and parental content. Try this test: Should your teachers read the book to their students in class, should they show it depicted in video form?" Eoff said.

"More importantly, consider what else this might be about. The agendas of leftists are always about something other than what is actually said. In the cries of book-banning what I believe what we're really seeing is a backdoor attempt at some perverse form of sex ed, perhaps even worse this movement may be anti-family, the anything goes, anywhere, anytime crowd wants to keep publicly funded institutions between parents and their children as the only arbiter of content."

More: Nixa school board removes or restricts six books, keeps Pulitzer-winning 'Maus' in place

Eoff said the school board should filter content so "busy parents can make better-informed decisions."

Currently, parents in Nixa and many other Missouri districts can limit or block access to specific books in the library just by notifying the school.

Board member Bridget Bidinger said it would be easier for parents to use that system if books, like movies, had a rating system.

This is a suggestion that the national group Moms For Liberty and others have advocated. Earlier this year in Willard, school

Nixa Public Schools to create 'standing committee' for future..., 2023 WLNR 21972584

board president Kip Baker suggested patrons petition Gov. Mike Parson to create a rating system for library books.

"We have that with movies, we have that with music. It's something that legislators should potentially consider in the future," Bidinger said. "The other problem with that however is that we have 9,500 books in the library and I feel that that puts the onus on the parents to understand all of the books."

More: Willard school board bans book, suggests governor create rating system to restrict access

In the April election, voters favored candidates who had voted to remove or restrict access to books this spring or been vocal in their support of such action. The candidates who spoke against removing the challenged books were not elected.

Board member Alex Bryant disagreed with a student speaker at the June 20 meeting who suggested that the district could show trust in student by not restricting books. "Restrictions show students that you care about them, that they are valued and you want to protect them from things they can't see and they don't know."

He said it is the job of parents, and the school board, to stand up for the values of the community.

"I don't think this is going to be the last one of these meetings that we have," he said. "I imagine there is going to be a lot more books that are being looked at, challenged and I just hope we can do it civilly."

Claudette Riley covers education for the News-Leader. Email tips and story ideas to criley@news-leader.com.

This article originally appeared on Springfield News-Leader: Nixa Public Schools to create 'standing committee' for future library book challenges

---- Index References ----

Company: Nixa Public Schools

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Missouri (1MI10); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (U-Turn in Education; Moms For Liberty; Nixa Public Schools)

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Arkansas Times
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June 24, 2023

Guns at library meetings and a rightward lurch for Asa Hutchinson suggest that maybe we're SCRW'd

Austin Bailey

Jun 24, 2023

The latest development in the war on the Saline County Library might make you wonder if Saline County Republican Women have a few SCRWs loose.

Saline County Republican Women (SCRW) ask that you handle your guns responsibly at their library meeting(!)

A meeting announcement posted to their Facebook page is catching some negative attention. Bringing firearms to a library meeting? At least they're asking that all gun slinging be done responsibly.

Their Facebook post brought to mind that famous guns+librarians clash in Cabot last year, when Moms for Liberty officer Missy Bosch famously mused about shooting a school librarian.

No harm, no foul, though. Bosch didn't face criminal charges, and Moms for Liberty rides high. Arkansas Secretary of Education Jacob Olivawill be a featured speaker at the Moms For Liberty summer convention in Philadelphia next month.

News broke this week that former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who's attempting to position himself as the sane alternative to Donald Trump in a race to claim the Republican presidential bid, will be on hand to rock the cradle of liberty, too.

Surprise! The sane alternative to Donald Trump might not be so sane, after all.

Remember that time Gov. Hutchinson vetoed a bill denying medical gender-affirming care to transgender youth? Just this week that call was vindicated, when a federal judge ruled the Arkansas bill went too far and violated civil rights.

We can appreciate Hutchinson's careful conservative hot take below — that while he has his own ideas about all this, government shouldn't make the calls — while also noting that Hutchinson will share the dais with two widely disrespected trans haters at the Philly event.

2. God created two genders and children should not be confused on this. But if there is confusion then parents — not the government — should guide the children.

— Gov. Asa Hutchinson (@AsaHutchinson) June 23, 2023

Guns at library meetings and a rightward lurch for Asa..., 2023 WLNR 21924230

Hutchinson is scheduled for a Saturday, July 1, morning session with James Lindsay, who appears on the Southern Poverty Law Center's list of shame for "general hate," and Jaimee Michelle of Gays Against Groomers fame, who conflates gender-affirming care with Nazi experiments.

Maybe Hutchinson is aiming to be the voice of reason at the breakfast session. If so, we predict he'll face a tough crowd.

The post Guns at library meetings and a rightward lurch for Asa Hutchinson suggest that maybe we're SCRW'd appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Gun Rights & Regulations (1GU97); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Keywords: (Arkansas Blog); (News); (Asa Hutchinson); (Jacob Oliva); (Moms for Liberty); (SAFE Act); (Saline County Republican Women)

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NewsRoom

Saturday News: "Russia Slides Into Civil War..."Is Putin..., 2023 WLNR 21900168

NewsRoom

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June 24, 2023

Saturday News: "Russia Slides Into Civil War..."Is Putin facing his Czar Nicholas II moment?"; One Year Later, "The devastating impact of Dobbs, by...

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Jun 24, 2023

Saturday News: "Russia Slides Into Civil War..."Is Putin facing his Czar Nicholas II moment?"; One Year Later, "The devastating impact of Dobbs, by the numbers"; "Trump spoke at a fundraiser for Jan. 6 defendants"; "This isn't the first time Moms for Liberty has quoted Hitler"

Home2019 ElectionsSaturday News: "Russia Slides Into Civil War..."Is Putin facing his Czar Nicholas...

by Lowell

Here are a few international, national and Virginia news headlines, political and otherwise, for Saturday, June 24.

Inside the search for \$900 billion to fight climate changeAnalysis: Paris climate summit gives fresh impetus to development bank reformEnergy Change Sweeps the North Sea ("The offshore wind industry continues to grow as nations look to change Europe's oil and gas hub into a major source of renewable energy.")A Crisis Erupts in Russia ("The Kremlin is accusing a Russian mercenary of an attempted coup—a stunning turn that could change the course of the war in Ukraine.")Putin calls on Wagner group to halt 'rebellion,' says organizers will be punishedRussia Issues Arrest Warrant for Wagner Chief on Charges of MutinyRussia Slides Into Civil War ("Is Putin facing His Czar Nicholas II moment?")Wagner mercenary chief says Russia's war in Ukraine based on liesRussia tightens security as Wagner chief accused of mutinyPutin in crisis: Wagner chief Prigozhin declares war on Russian military leadershipGoogle News Blocked in Russia as Feud With Mercenary Leader IntensifiesPutin Denounces Wagner 'Treason' as Feud Erupts Into RevoltPutin is at risk of losing his iron grip on power. The next 24 hours are critical ("The Russian president is facing the most serious threat to his hold on power in all the 23 years he's run the nuclear state. And it is staggering to behold the veneer of total control he has maintained all that time – the ultimate selling point of his autocracy – crumble overnight...This is now an existential choice for Russia's elite – between the president's faltering regime, and the dark, mercenary Frankenstein it created to do its dirty work, which has turned on its masters.")What to Know About Prigozhin and Putin's Twisted Relationship ("The Russian president once relied on the mercenary boss, but is Prigozhin a dead man walking now?")Samuel Alito scandal shows why conservative justices on the Supreme Court are so whinySupreme Court rejects Texas effort to force Biden administration to change deportation policyPence: Democrats are trying to 'bully' Supreme Court Justices Alito, Thomas (Seriously, f*** Pence.)The Supreme Court may be running out of patience for Trump's worst judges ("The Court's decision in United States v. Texas stops rogue judges from seizing control of law enforcement.")One Year After the Fall of Roe, Republicans Are Full Steam Ahead With

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National Abortion Ban The end of Roe, one year later ("The devastating impact of Dobbs, by the numbers.") Biden Warns That Republicans Are Not Finished on Abortion 'The Impossible Became Possible': The Women Celebrating a Year Without Roe Protests planned across US to mark one year since loss of abortion rights ("Overturning of federal abortion rights has led to complete abortion bans, lesser care for patients and upended training for doctors") Kamala Harris's 2024 Role Crystallizes Around Abortion Rights ("The Biden-Harris ticket is going all in on the one-year anniversary of the Dobbs decision, betting the Republican assault on reproductive rights will continue to galvanize voters in the presidential election.") Pedestrian deaths hit highest number in more than 40 years: report (Appalling.) Analysis: Donald Trump's war on truth confronts another test with voters Exclusive: Special counsel trades immunity for fake elector testimony as Jan 6 probe heats up Former Trump Campaign Official in Talks to Cooperate in Jan. 6 Inquiry Trump spoke at a fundraiser for Jan. 6 defendants (That alone should be disqualifying.) Trump posts \$5.6 million security payment as he appeals E. Jean Carroll sexual abuse verdict Billionaire-funded group driving effort to erode democracy in key US states (Evil.) Graham says Biden impeachment without due process would be 'dead on arrival' Garland Pushes Back at G.O.P. Claims of Bias in Hunter Biden Investigation Two of the Most Deranged Members of Congress Are Now Nemeses Speaker McCarthy supports expunging Trump's impeachments over Ukraine and Jan. 6 McCarthy huddles with House Freedom Caucus and urges consensus and compromise ahead of major spending fights (McCarthy is an absolute disgrace to America.) NHL joins MLB in advising teams to halt wearing 'Pride' jerseys We Muslims Used to Be the Culture War Scapegoats. Why Are Some of Us Joining the L.G.B.T.Q. Pile-On? Elon Musk Keeps Lying About One Very Specific Thing No Labels Exposed: Here's a List of Donors Funding Its Effort To Disrupt the 2024 Race Pro-RFK Jr. Super PAC Has Deep Ties to Marjorie Taylor Greene, George Santos Giuliani sanctioned for failing to produce records in defamation case Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs strips county prosecutors of authority to pursue abortion cases Florida's anti-drag law is likely unconstitutional, federal judge rules. A growing pattern The Memo: Trailing DeSantis declines to hit Trump head-on This isn't the first time Moms for Liberty has quoted Hitler Ron DeSantis: My Supreme Court Picks Would Be Just Like Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito (Any Republican president's picks would be like Thomas or Alito; so do NOT elect them!) Elise Stefanik Is a Nuisance On Her Way to Becoming a General Blight Titan sub CEO dismissed safety warnings as 'baseless cries', emails show Marking One Year Without Roe, DCCC Launches Campaign to Hold Jen Kiggans Accountable for Anti-Abortion Extremism ("One year later, vulnerable House Republicans continue their push for a national abortion ban") The Most Interesting Results From Virginia's Legislative Primaries and What They Mean Families Face a Child Care Crisis, 2 Virginia Lawmakers Are Trying to Prevent It Was VA Sen. Chap Petersen's Loss to Saddam Salim Tuesday Night a Political "Suicide," "Murder-Suicide" or What? Also, Compare/Contrast to Sen. Creigh Deeds' Narrow Primary Victory. (Ben Tribbett, Laura Stokes, Sam Shirazi and Cindy Cunningham weigh in...)[UPDATE: Maureen Coffey and Susan Cunningham Appear to Be the Preliminary Winners] Awaiting Arlington County Board Democratic Primary "Ranked Choice Voting" Results... Winners Emerge From Democratic Primary For Arlington Board Coffey, Cunningham win Democratic primary for Arlington County Board (Good that at least Maureen Coffey won!) The Clinch Coalition Calls for Increased Transparency, Public Input in Nuclear Power Proposals by Gov. Youngkin, Other Elected Officials (One potential nuclear plant site is "located only 800 feet from the Wise County Christian School") Mountain Valley Pipeline gets final permit needed to resume construction Hey Amanda ... Woman-Up and Let It Go This 'Little Saigon' shaped their childhood. Now they fear for its future. ("At Eden Center in Virginia, young Vietnamese Americans say they want officials to do more to protect a strip mall that's become a Vietnamese cultural district.") D.C.-area forecast: Warmer weekend, with scattered late-day showers or storms

Sign up for the Blue Virginia weekly newsletter

Previous article [UPDATE: Maureen Coffey and Susan Cunningham Appear to Be the Preliminary Winners] Awaiting Arlington County Board Democratic Primary "Ranked Choice Voting" Results...

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News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65))

Industry: (Chemicals (1CH04); Industrial Detergents (1IN51); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92); Specialty Chemicals (1SP72); Transportation (1TR48); Transportation New Technology (1TR05))

Region: (CIS Countries (1CI64); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Russia (1RU33))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Czar Nicholas II; Trump; Hitler)

Keywords: (2019 Elections); (Abortion); (Arlington); (climate); (Daily Feature); (Donald Trump); (Joe Biden); (Kevin McCarthy); (Maureen Coffey); (Ron DeSantis); (Russia); (Susan Cunningham); (Ukraine); (Virginia); (Vladimir Putin); (Wagner Group)

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NewsRoom

History lesson for Moms for Liberty: Hitler was bad, 2023 WLNR 21845816

NewsRoom

6/24/23 Columbus Dispatch (Ohio) A10
2023 WLNR 21845816

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June 24, 2023

Section: News

History lesson for Moms for Liberty: Hitler was bad

June 24, 2023

Members of an Indiana chapter of the group Moms for Liberty just found out that Adolf Hitler, the German Nazi leader who oversaw the systemic murder of 6million Jews, was a bad person.

Apparently previously unaware of Hitler’s role in the Holocaust and in starting World War II, the Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty – a national right-wing “parents rights” group that opposes the teaching of LGBTQ+ issues or America’s history of racism – used a quote from one of the most infamous dictators in global history near the top of its most recent newsletter.

As if to ensure that newsletter readers would not think the group had quoted Hitler accidentally, the quote appeared with attribution – the italicized words “Adolf Hitler.”

Florida-based Moms for Liberty, whose members have gained notoriety for disrupting school board meetings across the country to protest inclusive curricula, was recently labeled an anti-government extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. That point was highlighted in the Hamilton County newsletter, with the words “Moms for Liberty will not be intimidated by hate groups!” appearing directly under the quote from Adolf Hitler.

It remains unclear whether all residents in this county north of Indianapolis are incapable of recognizing irony or if this is just an isolated incident.

By Wednesday night, as attention to the quote grew, the Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty took quick action, updating the newsletter to make clear that they most definitely agree with the words from history’s most notorious antisemite. This was added to the front page of the newsletter, following the word “Context”: “The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.”

Again, the irony of using a quote from a dictator to warn people about “an overreaching government” was apparently lost on the Moms for Liberty chapter, prompting suspicions that the area water supply might be tainted.

On Thursday morning, presumably after Moms for Liberty national leaders paged through one of the history books they have tried to ban from public schools, the Indiana chapter released a statement boldly condemning a historical figure who is synonymous with genocide and hate.

”We condemn Adolf Hitler and his dark place in human history,” the statement read, more than 80 years after Hitler and his

History lesson for Moms for Liberty: Hitler was bad, 2023 WLNR 21845816

Nazi regime implemented a plan to exterminate European Jews. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and we express our deepest apology.”

Historical experts and people just casually aware of the atrocities committed by Hitler briefly agreed that “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter” is arguably one of the funniest sentences ever written. That was until the national Moms for Liberty Twitter account tweeted about the situation and wrote: “The chapter shouldn’t have quoted Hitler without condemning him at the same time.”

Asked via Twitter if it might be better to just not quote Hitler, the group did not respond.

Follow USA TODAY columnist Rex Huppke on Twitter @RexHuppke and Facebook facebook.com/RexIsAJerk

Rex Huppke

Columnist

USA TODAY

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Online Social Media (1ON38); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

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NewsRoom

City pool closures a disgrace, 2023 WLNR 21889839

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21889839

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June 24, 2023

Section: News

City pool closures a disgrace

In the last week, there have been several TV news stories reporting that almost half of the city's public swimming pools are closed for either repairs, renovation or staff shortages. Jacksonville city leaders can find time and money to dredge a river despite uncertain economic, environmental and financial issues or meet with billionaires about public funding for a billion-dollar stadium project but can't manage 30-something swimming pools.

A "staffing shortage" means that offering \$14 an hour doesn't cut it in the current market. So, find the money and increase the pay scale to attract qualified candidates. Hundreds of millions can be found for big-name projects that keep political contributors and their friends' content.

Whoever is managing (or mismanaging) the Parks & Recreation Department needs to be replaced with a competent individual. Ditto for whomever is supposed to supervise that manager. The department has had since about mid-September 2022 to perform repairs and testing on all the pools yet has apparently failed at almost 50% of those tasks. That is a failure of management on at least two levels.

It's sad that average taxpayers and voters are ignored, and no urgency or action seems to be coming from elected leaders, their appointees or other city supervisors and managers. In the for-profit business world, those pool lights would be on every night so the work could continue 24/7 until completed.

Adults can weather the closures, but our children may have been adversely affected by COVID lockdowns, diminished social life or stunted emotional growth – and no one that I've heard about has called for accountability. Maybe the new mayor and her administration can demonstrate some skills and leadership in this area by fixing the issue immediately.

Alec Lawson, Jacksonville

What will be the real cost?

We're told the new stadium will cost \$1.2 billion and take two years to complete. But what guarantee will the public have that the final cost is actually going to be \$1.2 billion and take only two years?

A year after I moved to Hawaii in 2007, the mayor of Honolulu convinced the public to build a railroad from the west side of Oahu to Waikiki for \$3.1 billion and said it would take only five years to complete. No sooner was the project approved when the price tag jumped to \$5.5 billion. Now, 15 years later, not only is the rail line unfinished, but the projected final cost is also going to be close to \$15 billion.

What will cost \$1.2 billion now and take two years could eventually cost \$2.4 billion and take three years to complete, if not

City pool closures a disgrace, 2023 WLNR 21889839

longer. If Mr. Khan wants a new stadium for his football team, let him pay for it. Or at most, sign an agreement that the public is only going to pay \$800 million.

Wim Blee, Jacksonville

Take a lesson from ‘Grandma Lee’

Recently, Opal Lee, a retired schoolteacher known as the “Grandmother of Juneteenth” reflected that honest education about this country’s past is critical. “We can’t hide the truth. The good, the bad, the ugly,” she said. “They need to know.”

Authoritarian politicians such as Ron DeSantis and “thought-control bullies” like Moms for Liberty should remember these words as they ban books and penalize honest discussions about our nation’s history of sexism, racism, antisemitism or bigotry.

Achieving real freedom and inclusiveness for all Americans is an ongoing struggle dependent on the free exchange of ideas. There is no escaping the true facts of our past. Through the study of our shared history, we can understand and appreciate how we are shaped by those who came before us. This will facilitate a better future for all.

Karen Adler, Jacksonville

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Banking (1BA20); Commercial Banking Services (1CO19); Entertainment (1EN08); Financial Services (1FI37); Land Transportation (1LA43); Passenger Railroads (1PA89); Passenger Transportation (1PA35); Project Finance (1PR11); Railroads (1RA98); Swimming Pools (1SW47); Transportation (1TR48))

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June 24, 2023

Librarian gathering in Chicago includes training to battle book bans in communities and schools

The American Library Association's annual meeting conference is underway in Chicago, where librarians are expected to discuss topics including coun...

Claire Savage

The American Library Association's annual meeting conference is underway in Chicago, where librarians are expected to discuss topics including countering book challenges, fighting legislative censorship and ensuring information access and the freedom to read

Book bans and how to fight them will be a major focus of the American Library Association's annual meeting this weekend in Chicago.

Librarians may attend sessions aimed at helping them confidently counter book challenges, fight legislative censorship and ensure "access to information and the freedom to read." All day Saturday, attendees are invited to climb atop a giant chair to read their favorite banned book.

"With an unparalleled rise in challenges and bans and legislation suppressing access to books and learning materials in libraries, schools, and universities, it is more important than ever to join forces in the fight against banning books!" the event description reads.

The conference brings together authors, educators and librarians as several states push to restrict access to books in schools and libraries, overwhelmingly those about race, ethnicity and LGBTQ+ topics. The association in March released data showing a record 1,269 demands to censor library books in the U.S. in 2022, a 20-year high.

"Addressing book censorship and protecting library users' intellectual freedom, protecting librarians' ability to provide for information in their communities, is at the forefront of this year's meeting," said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom and executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

"We have almost two dozen programs addressing intellectual freedom, advocacy ... attacks on public education and public libraries, all intended to equip our members with the knowledge they need to go out and advocate and defend the right to read in their libraries," she said.

Parents always have the right to choose what their children read, but they don't have the right to restrict access for the whole community, said Christine Emeran, director of the Youth Free Expression Program of the National Coalition Against Censorship, a First Amendment advocacy organization.

Librarian gathering in Chicago includes training to battle..., 2023 WLNR 21838258

"You can't just concede to demands of a particular group of parents and to censor libraries," she said.

Emeran, who is scheduled to be featured in a panel discussion called "Help! They're coming for our books!" at the conference Sunday, began to notice an increase in book bans starting in 2021, at the beginning of President Joe Biden's term. She attributed the shift to "a cultural backlash" against changing views on LGBTQ+ issues, women's rights and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Local libraries are calling in the National Coalition Against Censorship for help now more than ever. In the past, the organization assisted on a few book ban cases per year. "Now we're getting two or three a week," Emeran said.

"Librarians are under pressure and they're feeling frustrated, discouraged," said Emeran, who encouraged readers to support local libraries, attend school board meetings and get involved in their communities to protect the right to read.

Groups such as Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education and Citizens Defending Freedom have had an outsized effect on what is allowed to be read, she said.

"The majority may oppose censorship as a whole. But the problem is that the majority are silent," Emeran said.

—
Savage is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

---- Index References ----

Company: National Coalition Against Censorship; AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Freedom to Read Foundation; Youth Free Expression Program; Moms for Liberty; National Coalition Against Censorship; American Library Association)

Word Count: 572

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NewsRoom

Indiana mothers' group apologizes for Hitler quote, 2023 WLNR 21948120

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2023 WLNR 21948120Israel National News (Israel)
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June 24, 2023

Section: Arutz Sheva News

**Indiana mothers' group apologizes for Hitler quote
Moms For Liberty chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in its newsletter.**

An Indiana chapter of Moms For Liberty, a group that has advocated for book bans in school districts across the country, apologized for quoting Adolf Hitler in a newsletter this week. The group's chapter in Hamilton County, north of Indianapolis, released the first edition of its newsletter, The Parent Brigade, on Wednesday. Atop its masthead was a quotation attributed to Hitler reading, "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future." On Thursday, the chapter's president apologized for the quotation. An amended version of the newsletter with "context" for the quotation was posted online before the whole quote was later deleted and the newsletter reposted without it. "We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history," the group's chair, Paige Miller, wrote in a statement posted to social media. "We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology." Founded in 2021 in Florida to oppose what it calls indoctrination in public education, Moms For Liberty now has dozens of chapters nationwide, a growing national profile and an uneasy relationship with Jewish-themed books. At least one of its national chairs is Jewish, and the group has publicly supported haredi yeshivas that are under fire for allegedly falling short of secular education requirements and other standards. But Moms For Liberty members have also been a driving force behind the removal of Jewish and Holocaust-themed books from schools, including a successful effort to remove an adaptation of Anne Frank's diary from a Florida school district. Chapters have also aligned themselves with extremist groups like the Proud Boys, and the left-leaning Southern Poverty Law Center has called them a hate group, sparking criticism from Republicans. The quotation in question is sourced to a 1935 speech Hitler gave introducing the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws. It was previously quoted publicly in 2021, when Mary Miller, a Republican congresswoman, recited a version of the quotation during a rally shortly before the storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 of that year. Miller, who said "Hitler was right and the thing," initially defended her use of the quotation before apologizing. On Twitter, Moms for Liberty responded to the email by writing, "Everyone knows Hitler is bad," and calling coverage of the quotation "intentional dishonesty in reporting," though it added that, "The chapter shouldn't have quoted Hitler without condemning him at the same time." Moms For Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice responded to the quote with a statement that seemed to compare US President Joe Biden to Hitler. "Our Moms condemn Hitler and all he represents," Justice tweeted above a screenshot of an article about Biden criticizing parents-rights activists. Alongside a picture of a finger pointing at the article, she wrote, "Controlling the minds of the youth through government schools was done by Hitler, Lenin and Mao. Millions have died because of these monsters. They thought they owned the children. Sound familiar?" The kerfuffle occurred as Moms For Liberty prepared to host its first-ever annual summit. Several candidates for president are scheduled to make appearances, including Republicans Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, along with Democratic candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Most of the group's activism nationally has revolved around fighting discussion of LGBTQ identity in schools, as well as matters related to race. The other items in the Hamilton County newsletter had included criticism of a local high school receiving an award from the It Gets Better Foundation, which advocates for LGBTQ youth. Immediately below the Hitler quote, there was another line from the group's national co-founders, Justice and Tina Deskovich: "Moms For Liberty will not be intimidated by hate groups!" Among the figures condemning the newsletter is Miles Nelson, the Jewish Democratic nominee for mayor of Carmel, Indiana, which is located in Hamilton County. Nelson tweeted, "This hate speech has no place in our community."

Indiana mothers' group apologizes for Hitler quote, 2023 WLNR 21948120

The chair of the county Republican Party, Mario Massillamany, also condemned the newsletter, telling the Indianapolis Star, "I don't think that we as a society can say enough about the atrocities that the poor Jewish people had to go through." According to an Indiana public radio report, the "context" the group provided for the quote had stated, "The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government."

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Judaism (1JU93); Legislation (1LE97); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms For Liberty; Proud Boys; It Gets Better Foundation; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 753

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NewsRoom

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

NewsRoom

6/23/23 AP Alerts 17:40:38

AP Alerts

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June 23, 2023

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

The Associated Press

Here are the latest Top News stories from The Canadian Press. All times are Eastern unless otherwise stated. Coverage plans are included when available. Entries are subject to change as news develops.

IF YOU NEED HELP, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO mainslots@thecanadianpress.com and we'll get back to you right away.

TOP HEADLINES:

U.S. Coast Guard to lead Titan investigation

Charity get donations after deadly bus crash

Quebec wildfires: Cree community orders evacuation

New Brunswick premier loses another cabinet member

More threats mean more security at Pride events

Why Taylor Swift's tour might be skipping Canada

TOP NEWS STORIES:

U.S. Coast Guard to lead Titan investigation

Titanic-Search-Cda

DARTMOUTH, , -- The U.S. Coast Guard will lead the investigation into the catastrophic implosion of the Titan submersible, which broke apart and sank to the ocean floor during an expedition to the Titanic. Wire: Atlantic, National. Photos: 1

—

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

Charity get donations after deadly bus crash

Mba-Crash-Donations

Dauphin, Man., -- The legacies of some of the 16 seniors killed in a bus crash are living on in a western Manitoba community, as their clothing and leftover food are donated to those in need. By Kelly Geraldine Malone. Wire: National. Photos: 1

–

Quebec wildfires: Cree community orders evacuation

Que-Forest-Fires

Montreal, Quebec, Canada -- A Cree community in northern Quebec was being evacuated Friday because of heavy smoke from a nearby forest fire. By Jacob Serebrin. Wire: National. Photos: 1

See also:

Family escapes wildfire, aims to build back safer

NS-Wildfire-Rebuild

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada -- The church musician often napped after service. But on this Sunday in late May, it was a short rest. By Brett Bundale. Wire: Business, Atlantic. Photos: 1

–

New Brunswick premier loses another cabinet member

NB-Minister-Resigns

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada -- Multiple media are reporting that New Brunswick Labour Minister Trevor Holder has resigned from the cabinet of Premier Blaine Higgs. Wire: Atlantic. Photos: 1

–

More threats mean more security at Pride events

PRIDE-Security

For the first time in its decade-long history, the Pride festival in Timmins, Ont., had to budget for security this year. By Nicole Thompson. Wire: Lifestyle, National. Photos: 1

See also:

LBGTQ in America: pride, prejudice and politics

PRIDE-US-Rights

Washington, Washington, D.C., United States -- Harleigh Walker is just an ordinary American high school kid, but with one important difference: how she's spending her summer vacation. By James McCarten. Wire: National. Photos: 1

–

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

New public space being built under Centre Block

Parliament-Renovations

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada -- A massive overhaul of Centre Block on Parliament Hill is expected to be completed by 2031 and open to the public by 2032. By Liam Fox. Wire: National. Photos: 1

—

Minister aiming for better Access to Info service

Access-Reform

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada -- The federal minister responsible for the much-criticized access-to-information system says her focus is on improving service amid growing calls to go further and do a major rewrite of the transparency law. Wire: National.

—

Saskatchewan immigration employees fired

Sask-Immigration

Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada -- Saskatchewan's immigration ministry has fired more employees for inappropriately accessing client records. Wire: Prairies/BC. Photos: 1

—

N.S. MLA says whistleblowers deserved protection

NS-Auditor-General

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada -- A member of the Nova Scotia legislature from Cape Breton says employees who came forward with complaints of financial mismanagement at a local employment agency should have been protected. Wire: Atlantic. Photos: 1

—

New Ontario rules to ban 'floating accommodations'

Ont-Floating-Accommodations

Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- Ontario is aiming to ban so-called floating accommodations from provincial waterways, with new regulations set to take effect July 1. Wire: Ontario/Quebec. Photos: 1

—

Man dies after early-morning shooting in Calgary

Alta-Calgary-Shooting

Calgary, Alberta, Canada -- Calgary police say they are investigating a fatal shooting in the southeast community of Forest Lawn. Wire: Prairies/BC. Photos: 1

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

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Bradford says ‘action’ key to fixing Toronto

Ont-Bradford-Profile

Toronto, -- Brad Bradford’s campaign to be Toronto’s next mayor has, at several moments, captured the public’s attention. By Kiernan Green. Wire: Ontario/Quebec. Photos: 1

–
'Baby Shark' bath toy recalled in Canada

Canada-Toy-Recall

A “Baby Shark” bath toy has been recalled in Canada because its plastic fin may cause lacerations. Wire: Lifestyle. Photos: 1

–
Bison herd to remain in Banff National Park

Banff-Bison

Banff, Alberta, Canada -- A final report on a five-year project to bring plains bison back to Banff National Park in Alberta says the herd will stay on the mountain landscape. Wire: National. Photos: 1

–
Inflation likely fell below 4% in May: economists

Inflation-Preview

Ottawa, -- Forecasters are expecting the Bank of Canada to move ahead with another interest rate hike in July, even as they expect the annual inflation rate to slow significantly. By Nojoud Al Mallees. Wire: Business. Photos: 1

–
What to know about Canada’s new wage-fixing ban

Wage-Fixing

Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- New rules prohibiting wage-fixing and no-poaching agreements kick in Friday in an effort to crack down on companies undermining competition at employees’ expense. By Sammy Hudes. Wire: Business. Photos: 1

–
Questions swirl around future of tech conference

Collision-Tech-Conference

Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- When the global tech community descends on Toronto next week for the Collision conference, there will be chatter about the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, which many predict is poised to disrupt all sectors of the economy, and the wave of layoffs that has shaken the industry. By Tara Deschamps. Wire: Business. Photos: 1

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

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Jamie Irving resigns from Postmedia board

CRAFT-Postmedia-Irving

Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- Postmedia Network Canada Corp. says Jamie Irving has resigned as executive chair of the media conglomerate's board. Wire: Business, Atlantic. Photos: 1

–
Why Taylor Swift's tour might be skipping Canada

MUSIC-Taylor-Swift-Canada

Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- Taylor Swift's Canadian fans were left heartbroken and confused this week as they tried to understand why the pop superstar seems prepared to skip their country on her Eras Tour. By David Friend. Wire: Entertainment. Photos: 1

–
Connor Bedard's NHL draft journey nearly complete

HKN-Draft-Bedard

Connor Bedard was about to jet off to a sunny destination. By Joshua Clipperton. Wire: Sports. Photos: 1

–
Three Canadians to ride together in Tour de France

CYC-Tour-France-IPT

Canadians Michael Woods, Hugo Houle and Guillaume Boivin will ride together in Israel-Premier Tech's entry for the Tour de France. By Neil Davidson. Wire: Sports. Photos: 1

–
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE STORIES:

The LJI is a federally funded program to add coverage in under-covered areas or on under-covered issues. This content is delivered on the CP wire in the "Y" or spare news category, or you can register to access it at <https://lji-ijl.ca>. This content is created and submitted by participating publishers and is not edited by The Canadian Press. Please credit stories to the reporter, their media outlet and the Local Journalism Initiative. Questions should be directed to LJI supervising editor Amy Logan at amy.logan@thecanadianpress.com. Below is a sample of the dozens of stories moved daily:

Provincial policies hamper Peel Region's climate fight

LJI-ON-Peel-climate-policies-PC-changes

A non-profit organization breaking ground in Peel is hoping to strengthen climate initiatives across the region. However, two major pieces of provincial legislation from Ontario's PC government will drastically hamper these environmental efforts. 3,500 words. Rachel Morgan/The Pointer

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

Women rally to allow Manitoba inmates to sell beadwork again

LJI-MBA-prison bead work

Just over a month after a popular beading program at a women's prison was abruptly halted, a group of concerned citizens has written to Manitoba's Justice Minister Kelvin Goertzen, and started a petition, asking that the program be reinstated. 650 words. Dave Baxter/Winnipeg Sun

Most Canadians on board with government cash for zero-emission shipping, poll shows

LJI-BC-ShippingEmissions-GreenCooridors

Canadians are generally pretty foggy about how much shipping emissions are fuelling the climate crisis. But as soon as they learn that the sector produces a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, the majority are on board with government investment in zero-emission ports, an Abacus Data poll indicates. 600 words. Rochelle Baker/Canada's National Observer

FROM AP:

TOP STORIES

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB — The search for a missing Titanic-bound submersible has become an investigation and salvage mission that will take an indefinite amount of time, officials said, as tributes from around the world poured in for the five people killed when the vessel imploded deep in the North Atlantic. The announcement that all aboard perished when the submersible imploded near the site of the iconic shipwreck brought a tragic end to a five-day saga. By Patrick Whittle. SENT: 1,010 words, photos, video. WITH: TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-LAWS — Tourist sub's implosion draws attention to murky regulations of deep-sea expeditions. SENT: 910 words, photos. Also see MORE ON TITANIC-TOURIST SUB below.

ELECTION 2024-ABORTION-BIDEN — President Joe Biden is banking on reproductive rights to be a galvanizing issue for voters in the 2024 presidential election as he collects a trio of top-level endorsements and hosts a rally to mark the approaching anniversary of the Supreme Court decision overturning federal abortion protections. By Colleen Long. SENT: 1,040 words, photos. UPCOMING: 1,100 words after 4 p.m. event.

RUSSIA-POLITICAL INFIGHTING — After spending more than two decades building a rigidly controlled political system, Russian President Vladimir Putin is silently watching increasingly raucous infighting that has emerged among top members of his entourage amid the war in Ukraine. While it doesn't pose any immediate threat to Putin's power, some analysts say his failure to squelch the squabbles between Yevgeny Prigozhin, the maverick head of the Wagner private military contractor, and the military brass heralds potential shifts in Russia's political scene and sets the stage for more internal battles. SENT: 1,330 words, photos.

PFAS-DRINKING WATER-SETTLEMENT — Chemical manufacturer 3M Co. will pay at least \$10.3 billion to settle lawsuits over contamination of many U.S. public drinking water systems with potentially harmful compounds used in firefighting foam and a host of consumer products, the company said. By Environmental Writer John Flesher. SENT: 600

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words, photo.

HAJJ-HIGH COSTS — Saudi Arabia is hosting its biggest Hajj pilgrimage in three years. But for many pilgrims, and for many others who couldn't make it, global inflation and economic crises made it more of a strain to carry out Islam's spiritual trip of a lifetime. With people balking at the cost, a few countries struggled to fill their quota of pilgrims this year, a startling sign when demand usually outstrips the supply of pilgrimage spots many times over. SENT: 1,070 words, photos. With **HAJJ** — Nearly 1.5 million foreign pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia so far for annual Hajj pilgrimage.

NBA-DRAFT — Victor Wembanyama was the presumed No. 1 pick for months, the rare certainty in an NBA draft process that's often a guessing game. Yet as the clock above the stage he was facing ticked all the way down to zero, butterflies set in. "Longest five minutes of my life," Wembanyama said. The San Antonio Spurs are confident he will be worth the wait. SENT: 960 words, photos.

MORE ON TITANIC-TOURIST SUB

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-EXPLAINER — The latest on the Titan submersible tragedy and what's next in the recovery efforts. SENT: 590 words, photos, videos.

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-PASSENGERS — A Titanic expert, an adventurer, a CEO, and a father and son were killed in Titan's implosion. SENT: 1,100 words, photos, videos.

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-PILOTS' WIFE — Wife of pilot in fatal sub implosion descended from couple who died on Titanic, report says. SENT: 280 words, photo.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR — Russia-appointed officials in Crimea said that a bridge between the Moscow-annexed peninsula and Russia-occupied areas in southern Ukraine was hit by missiles, threatening a key supply link to Russian forces. SENT: 830 words, photos.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR-DENMARK TALKS — Denmark will host a meeting of national security advisers from Western countries backing Ukraine and countries that have refused to condemn the Russian invasion, officials said. SENT: 260 words.

SPOTLIGHTING VOICES

HAITI-UPROOTED — A gang rampaged through the Cite Soleil slum, killing and raping and setting fire to hundreds of wood-and-tin homes. Forced out of the neighborhood, one family of four lived on the streets of Port-au-Prince until they were struck by a truck as they slept. Two brothers died in that accident. Jean-Kere Almicar opened his home to their distraught parents, then another family, then another, until there were nearly 200 people camped out in his front yard and nearby. They are among more than 165,000 Haitians who have fled their homes amid a surge in gang violence. SENT: 1,000 words, photos, video.

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CHINA-LAWYERS — A disbarred Chinese human rights lawyer has been forced to move 13 times in two months as part of a pattern of harassment against him and three other prominent rights advocates in Beijing that is further squeezing China's battered civil rights community. All four are prominent independent legal advocates, a rare source of help for people in China facing political charges, or trying to access benefits denied by often unaccountable bureaucracies. SENT: 850 words, photos.

NIGERIA-FORCES EVICTIONS — Hundreds of people remain homeless in Nigeria's capital of Abuja after losing their shanties to government bulldozers. Authorities say the demolitions seek to rid the city of crime and restore Abuja's master plan, but they have put the lives of many Nigerians who fled the fighting in the country's northeast and for years sheltered in the improvised displacement camps at risk. SENT: 820 words, photos.

MORE NEWS

UPCYCLE FOOD — The US has tons of leftover food. Upcycling seeks to turn would-be trash into ice cream and pizza. SENT: 610 words, photos, video.

SCI--BEE DEATHS -- Nearly half of US honeybee colonies died last year. Struggling beekeepers stabilize the population. SENT: 820 words, photos, video.

TROPICAL-WEATHER-BRET — Tropical Storm Bret brought winds and heavy rain early Friday to islands in the eastern Caribbean that shut down to prepare for potential landslides and flooding. SENT: 390 words, photo.

NEW ZEALAND-ARDERN-BOOK — Former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is writing a book that will focus on leadership and making a difference. SENT: 320 words, photo.

WASHINGTON/ POLITICS

INDIA-MODI-PRESS — Narendra Modi did something very unusual at the White House — he took questions from journalists. It's a rare occurrence for the Indian prime minister who avoids unscripted moments and has presided over a steady decline in press freedom in his country. SENT: 770 words, photos.

ELECTION 2024-CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVES — A year after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, some of the Republican Party's most powerful evangelical Christian voices are gathering to celebrate. At the Faith & Freedom Coalition's annual conference in Washington, GOP presidential candidates will be urged to keep pushing for stronger abortion restrictions. By Will Weissert and Michelle L. Price. SENT: 920 words, photos. UPCOMING: 1,100 words after conference begins at 9:30 a.m.

MOMS FOR LIBERTY-HITLER QUOTE — An Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, which an anti-hate watchdog recently labeled as extremist, is apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after using a quote attributed to the Nazi leader in its inaugural newsletter. SENT: 610 words.

NATIONAL

Top News Advisory for Friday, June 23

ABORTION PILL-WYOMING — Abortion pills will remain legal in Wyoming for now, after a judge ruled that the state's first-in-the-nation law to ban them won't take effect July 1 as planned while a lawsuit proceeds. Attorneys for Wyoming failed to show that the ban wouldn't harm the plaintiffs before their lawsuit is resolved, the judge ruled. By Mead Gruver. SENT: 670 words, photo.

NASHVILLE-SCHOOL-SHOOTING — More than a dozen parents at The Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, have written about the stress, terror and sadness in the wake of the March shooting. The descriptions are meant to compel a judge not to allow the release of the shooter's writings and other documents. SENT: 830 words, photos.

OKLAHOMA-EXECUTION-SANCHEZ — An Oklahoma death row inmate scheduled to be executed in September for the 1996 killing of a University of Oklahoma dance student says he plans to reject his chance for a clemency hearing and that there is little hope the governor would spare his life. SENT: 630 words, photos.

I-95-COLLAPSE — Interstate 95 is set to reopen to traffic less than two weeks after a deadly collapse in Philadelphia shut down a heavily traveled stretch of the East Coast's main north-south highway. Crews worked around the clock and are poised to finish ahead of schedule. SENT: 320 words, photo.

INTERNATIONAL

SOUTH AFRICA-ILLEGAL MINERS-DEAD — At least 31 people were believed to have died in a gas explosion in a disused mine shaft in South Africa that happened last month but was only now coming to light, authorities said Friday. SENT: 250 words.

CHINA-STEEL MILL BLAST — An explosion at a steel mill in China's northeast killed four people and left five hospitalized with injuries, the Yingkou city government said. The disaster occurred less than 12 hours after an explosion blamed on cooking gas killed 31 people in a barbecue restaurant in Yinchuan, a city in China's northwest. SENT: 100 words.

INDIA-MONSOON FLOODS — Tens of thousands of people have taken shelter in government-run relief camps as heavy monsoon rains batter villages in India's northeast. One person has died in the floodwaters. SENT: 300 words, photo.

GERMANY-JEWISH CAMPUS — Germany's biggest Jewish educational and cultural complex since the Holocaust is set to open in Berlin, five years after the groundbreaking. SENT: 860 words, photos.

HONDURAS-PRISON RIOT-FUNERALS — Fear simmered among the small knot of relatives gathered for the wake of a mother and daughter who were among 46 women inmates slaughtered in this week's prison riot in Honduras. Relatives wept openly but said they feared the Barrio 18 gang that carried out the massacre might come after the victims' families as well. SENT: 800 words, photos.

AUSTRALIA-RUSSIA — A suspected lone Russian diplomat is apparently squatting on the site of Moscow's proposed embassy after the Australian government vetoed the plan on security grounds. SENT: 620 words, photos.

TWITTER-EU-RULES — A top European Union official is in Silicon Valley to check whether Twitter is ready to comply with the bloc's tough new digital rulebook, a set of sweeping new standards that the world's biggest online platforms all must obey in just two months. SENT: 550 words, photos.

HEALTH & SCIENCE

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ABORTION-DOCTOR'S DECISION — Many maternal care doctors in states that have restrictive abortion laws are facing the choice of whether to stay or leave after last year's Supreme Court decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The doctors are weighing tough questions about medical ethics, their own families and whether they can provide good care without risking their careers or winding up in prison. By Science Writer Laura Ungar. SENT: 1,370 words, photos.

DRUG OVERDOSES-ANIMAL DRUG — A powerful animal sedative in the illicit drug supply is complicating the U.S. response to the opioid crisis, scrambling longstanding methods for reversing overdoses and treating addiction. Xylazine can cause severe skin wounds, but whether it is leading to more deaths — as suggested by officials in Washington — is not yet clear. By Health Writer Matthew Perrone. SENT: 1,320 words, photos, video.

BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FINANCIAL-MARKETS — Shares slipped in Europe and Asia on Friday, a day after several central banks around the world cranked interest rates higher in their fight against inflation. By Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach. SENT: 660 words, photos.

GLOBAL CLIMATE-FINANCE — After all the talking, time for tangible solutions? World leaders and finance bosses were set to release a “to-do list” to help developing countries better tackle climate change and poverty, a long-sought goal of the two-day summit in Paris that wraps up. SENT: 780 words, photos.

SPORTS

MLB DRAFT-BLACK PLAYERS — The percentage of Black players in Major League Baseball has been on the decline for decades, but prospects at MLB's Draft Combine this week think that may soon change. A recent study found Black players represented just 6.2% of players on MLB opening day rosters, down from last year's previous record low of 7.2%. SENT: 1,020 words, photos.

---- Index References ----

Company: Faith & Freedom Coalition; 3M COMPANY; The University of Oklahoma; European Union; ABACUS DATA SYSTEMS, INC.; CANADIAN PRESS ENTERPRISES INC.; POSTMEDIA NETWORK CANADA CORP.; SAN ANTONIO SPURS; Winnipeg Sun; BANK OF CANADA; Commonwealth of Australia

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); European Union (1EU94); Floods (1FL85); Legal (1LE33); Natural Disasters (1NA67); Prisons (1PR87); Social Issues (1SO05); World Organizations (1IN77))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56))

Region: (Africa (1AF90); Alberta (1AL33); Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Asia (1AS61); Australasia (1AU56); Australia (1AU55); CIS Countries (1CI64); Canada (1CA33); Caribbean (1CA06); Central America (1CE62); Central Europe (1CE50); China (1CH15); Denmark (1DE14); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Eurozone Countries (1EU86); Far East (1FA27); France (1FR23); Germany (1GE16); Gulf States (1GU47); Haiti (1HA10); Honduras (1HO08); India (1IN24); Indian Subcontinent (1IN32); Latin America (1LA15); Manitoba (1MA25);

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Mediterranean (1ME20); Middle East (1MI23); New Brunswick (1NE67); Nigeria (1NI88); North America (1NO39); Northern Europe (1NO01); Nova Scotia (1NO53); Oceania (1OC40); Oklahoma (1OK58); Ontario (1ON96); Quebec (1QU30); Russia (1RU33); Saskatchewan (1SA93); Saudi Arabia (1SA38); Scandinavia (1SC27); Southern Asia (1SO52); Tennessee (1TE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Ukraine (1UK09); West Africa (1WE48); Western Europe (1WE41); Wyoming (1WY84))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (U.S. Coast Guard; Local Journalism Initiative; Supreme Court; Saudi Arabia; Republican Party; The Covenant School; Yingkou city government; Faith & Freedom Coalition; 3M Co.; University of Oklahoma; European Union; Abacus Data; The Canadian Press; Postmedia Network Canada Corp.; San Antonio Spurs; Winnipeg Sun; Bank of Canada; Australian government)

Word Count: 3379

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NewsRoom

Woke Hillary Clinton campaigner is slammed for branding..., 2023 WLNR 21798108

NewsRoom

6/23/23 Daily Mail Online (U.K.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21798108

Daily Mail Online (UK)
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June 23, 2023

Woke Hillary Clinton campaigner is slammed for branding parents who support SHSATs, and gifted and talented programs 'far right', as reading and ma...

Germania Rodriguez Poleo For Dailymail.Com

Woke Hillary Clinton campaigner is slammed for branding parents who support SHSATs, and gifted and talented programs 'far right', as reading and math scores tank

A Hillary Clinton campaigner has received backlash online after claiming that parents who support admission tests and gifted programs are part of the 'far right.'

Amanda Litman reacted to the results of a New York City parent council election Candidates endorsed by Parent Leaders for Accelerated Curriculum and Education won a majority of seats Critics say gifted programs and admission tests lead to segregation in schools

Amanda Litman made the comments last week while reacting to the results of a New York City parent council election that saw candidates endorsed by Parent Leaders for Accelerated Curriculum and Education (PLACE) win a majority of seats.

PLACE supports academic screenings policies like the Specialized High School Admissions Test, or SHSAT, as well as expanding accelerated curriculum options and gifted and talented programs, which critics say leads to segregation. The group also opposes lottery-based admissions and Critical Race Theory.

'The far right's effort to take over schools is not limited to battlegrounds or red states - they just won 40 percent of the elected education roles in NYC,' Litman tweeted.

Litman's tweet sparked wide criticism, with many taking issue with her labeling of the parent organization.

One comment read: 'far right' == people who dont want to teach math is racist, lower test standards.'

Another added: 'Academic success is far-right? What a strange world you inhabit.'

A third said: 'yeah you've diluted that label, no one cares anymore.'

'I'm a cofounder,' said Yiatin Chu. 'PLACE is a group of parent volunteers who advocate for rigorous accelerated education, which should be nonpartisan. There nothing far right or left about our advocacy.'

Litman, who worked as a digital strategist for Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, co-founded Run For Something, which recruits and supports progressives running for office.

Woke Hillary Clinton campaigner is slammed for branding..., 2023 WLNR 21798108

PLACE endorsed 147 candidates across New York's five boroughs and their candidates won a majority of seats in about half a dozen parent councils, as reported by Chalkbeat, with 115 of them winning their races.

The election was seen as another battleground for a national debate about what should be taught in the classroom.

As the country continues being divided on the issue, newly released math and reading scores of 13-year-olds fell dramatically during the coronavirus pandemic.

Average math scores for 13-year-olds fell nine points from the 2019-2020 academic year to the 2022-23 year, according to the Nation's Report Card, from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Average reading scores fell four points over the same period, during which the pandemic wrought havoc on the nation's education system, shuttering classrooms and forcing children to study online.

Responding to the backlash, Litman doubled down on her characterization of the group.

'Lottttta verified accounts in my mentions big mad at my characterization of these folks but when Moms for Liberty is cheering you on, I feel pretty confident about who you are & which kids you think are worth fighting for,' she tweeted.

Litman's response included a Tweet by Moms for Liberty addressing her 'far-right' comments.

'American parents are coming together across party lines to reclaim and reform public education,' the organization wrote.

'People like Amanda are scared that the teachers union won't be able to control our schools anymore so she is trying to discredit parents and advocates.'

Launched by a group of conservative Florida moms, the group has landed national media attention for its efforts to fight COVID safety measures in schools, ban certain books and limit discussion about race and LGBTQ identities.

Moms for Liberty was named by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a 'hate group' alongside other parental rights organizations.

The co-founders went on to say that 'name-calling' parents who want to be part of their children's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' further exposes 'what the battle is all about.'

'Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees?' they said.

'We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.'

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Run for Something

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Woke Hillary Clinton campaigner is slammed for branding..., 2023 WLNR 21798108

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center; Run For Something) (Hillary Clinton)

Word Count: 667

End of Document

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6/23/23 Daily Mail Online (U.K.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21802078

Daily Mail Online (UK)
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June 23, 2023

Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty is forced to apologize for using ‘inspirational’ quote from HITLER on cover of its inaugural newsletter

Noa Half For Dailymail.Com

An Indiana chapter of the conservative parents group ‘Moms for Liberty,’ apologized on Thursday for quoting Adolf Hitler in their June 2023 newsletter.

The quote, believed to be from a 1935 Hitler rally as part of Nazi efforts to indoctrinate the youth, was placed on the front cover directly below the masthead, and read: ‘He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future.’

The quote, believed to be from a 1935 speech by Hitler, was placed on the front cover, and read: ‘He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future’ After The Indianapolis Star reported on the quote, the local Moms for Liberty chapter updated the newsletter to add a ‘context’ section After being labeled ‘extremist’ by anti-hate watchdog, the chapter had replaced the Hitler quote with the chair’s apology

After The Indianapolis Star reported on the quote, the local Moms for Liberty chapter chairwoman Paige Miller updated the newsletter to add a ‘context’ section, explaining why they felt it was appropriate to share a Hitler quote as inspiration to their members.

‘The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert,’ the updated version read. ‘If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.’

But after being labeled as ‘extremist’ by an anti-hate watchdog organization, the group felt compelled to remove the quote and apologize.

By Thursday morning, the chapter had revised its newly launched newsletter, ‘The Parent Brigade,’ replacing the Hitler quote with the chair’s apology.

‘We condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history,’ the statement from chapter chairwoman Paige Miller reads. ‘We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology.’

The official National Moms For Liberty account also took to twitter and Instagram to call out the Star’s reporting as ‘intentional dishonesty,’ claiming the news outlet took the quote out of context.

‘Everyone knows Hitler is bad,’ it began. ‘This is intentional dishonesty in reporting, but we aren’t surprised- all they want is clicks. Do better.’

Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty is forced to apologize..., 2023 WLNR 21802078

'The chapter shouldn't have quoted Hitler without condemning him at the same time. They have issued a statement of apology to clear up any confusion.

'Parents are passionate about protecting future generations from tyranny, but Hitler did not need to be quoted to make that point,' the statement from co-founders Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice read.

This specific Hitler quote has often been used by conservative Christian groups as a warning of 'what they experience as liberal or left-wing attempts to indoctrinate children,' said Mark Pitcavage, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism to the Associated Press.

In 2014, for example, a church group in Alabama removed a billboard after using the quote next to images of children. And last year, a Colorado school board member faced calls to resign after posting the quote on Facebook.

'They use it as a way to get people's attention,' Pitcavage said to AP. 'Regardless, you should never use Adolf Hitler quotes to get your point across.'

But others who viewed the quote as a tacit endorsement of Hitler and his beliefs by Moms For Liberty.

Moms for Liberty was founded in early 2021 by three conservative women in Florida, Tina Descovich, Tiffany Justice and Bridget Ziegler - and quickly expanded its presence with local chapters across the country.

The parent group has faced criticism and landed national media attention for its efforts to fight COVID safety measures in schools, ban books, limit discussion about race and LGBTQ identities and populate local school boards with conservatives.

Just this month, the Florida-based Moms for Liberty were the latest to be added to a list of 'hate and anti-government groups.'

A new report from the Southern Poverty Law Center has added it, among others, to their 'Hate Map' as part of the release of their 'Year In Hate and Extremism 2022' report.

In previous years, groups to be included on the list were akin to neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan the addition of anti-government groups the list has increased from 733 'hate groups' in 2021 to 1225 'hate and anti-government extremist groups' for 2022.

Moms for Liberty has also come under increasing national scrutiny as it has become a power player in Republican politics.

'It's disappointing, but not surprising, that the largest anti-student inclusion movement organization has allegedly used a quote from one of the appalling figureheads in history,' said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research, reporting and analysis for the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, to AP.

DailyMail.com has reached out to co-founder Tina Descovich but she has not returned the phone call.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE - ISRAEL R.A.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty is forced to apologize..., 2023 WLNR 21802078

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (National Moms For Liberty; Ku Klux Klan; Southern Poverty Law Center; Anti-Defamation League) (Adolf Hitler)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty group behind state book bans slammed..., 2023 WLNR 21800029

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2023 WLNR 21800029

Daily Mirror Online (UK)
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June 23, 2023

Moms for Liberty group behind state book bans slammed for flyer quoting Hitler Recently labelled an extremist organization by watchdog groups, Moms for Liberty is now apologizing after issuing a newsletter quoting Adolf Hitler...

By, Yelena Mandenberg

Recently labelled an extremist organization by watchdog groups, Moms for Liberty is now apologizing after issuing a newsletter quoting Adolf Hitler on the front page

The Hamilton County, Indiana, chapter of Moms for Liberty, an extremist group that's become known throughout the country for supporting book bans, was forced to issue an apology Thursday morning after they used a quote from Adolf Hitler on the front page of their newsletter.

The newsletter, called "The Parent Brigade," was sent to a variety of groups and politicians and featured a Hitler quote on the front that said, "He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future."

The writers of the newsletter explain they did not realize they were quoting Hitler, which is on track for the group as they continue to try and ban books that educate families about the Holocaust -often admitting to not having read the material themselves.

The group opposes any difficult-to-swallow historical content in the curriculum and has compiled a list of nearly 200 books containing themes of race, sexuality, war, ethnicity, or even mentions of sex or nudity, even in a historical and educational context.

Conservative Mom group quotes Hitler -then takes it back amidst supporting book bans

After the initial public outcry, the group was forced to remove the quote from their page and issued an apology.

"We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history," the statement from chapter chairwoman Paige Miller reads. "We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology."

Although the group has tried to distance itself from support of Nazi ideology, their actions have been hailed by watchdog groups as similar to the ones taken in 1930s Germany, where there was a similar outcry against books that teach the public about race, sexuality, pacifism, marxism, or contain nude art, among others.

Late Wednesday night, the newsletter's front page was updated to include what was described as "context" for the Hitler quote.

"The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert," the update says. "If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching

Moms for Liberty group behind state book bans slammed..., 2023 WLNR 21800029

government,” said the organisation in an attempt to justify quoting the German dictator who perpetrated the murder of six million Jewish individuals and started a war that devastated Europe.

Matt McNally, a Democrat running for Indiana’s 39th Congressional District, said the group’s move makes clear that Moms for Liberty has “no business” in politics.

”No group that quotes Nazis should be anywhere near our children or have any influence in our community,” McNally tweeted. “It is time for our community leaders to stop acquiescing to them and make clear that their hateful rhetoric will not be tolerated.”

Apology issued only after critiques in the media shunned the group’s use of Nazi quotes

”I think Adolf Hitler is terrible, and I would never quote Adolf Hitler or the Nazis in any shape or form other than saying they are bad or terrible,” said Mario Massillamany, chairman of the Hamilton County Republican party.

”That was a terrible page in our world history and I don’t think that we as a society can say enough about the atrocities that the poor Jewish people had to go through,” continues Massillamany, deliberately ignoring the other groups targeted by Hitler’s regime that are also often targeted by the ‘Moms for Liberty’ circle.

Massillamany has previously shown his support for the conservative action group, which is focused on creating bans and outlawing speech they deem inappropriate.

In the same breath, Massillamany wrote that “restrictions on speech, government overreach and the growing disrespect for the rule of the law should concern every American. I, for one, will not stand by and watch while America is destroyed by the leftists and status quo politicians.”

Below the Hitler quote on the original front page, Moms for Liberty national co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich, penned a message with the headline: “Moms for Liberty will not be intimidated by hate groups!”

This appears to be in response to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which labelled the Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing “parents’ rights” organizations as extremist groups in its annual report, which they released earlier this month.

Group announces endorsement for 270 candidates who will promote book bans throughout the US

This week, ‘Moms for Liberty’ said it had endorsed 270 candidates running in school board elections who will promote the book bans.

Among the list of banned books is Maus, by Art Spiegelman, which has been banned in several school districts before -and then became a bestseller all over again. The list distributed by ‘Moms for Liberty’ also includes titles like The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, and plenty of other authors who describe their difficult experiences coming to terms with race, class, sexuality, and war. They’ve even got a Judy Blume novel listed.

The group mostly cites ‘nudity’ or ‘curse words’ as reasons to ban the books, saying they are inappropriate for children, but anyone looking at the book list can notice a common theme. Spiegelman, the author of the now partially banned partially bestselling novel Maus, said it best -he got the impression that the perpetrators of these book bans were asking, “Why can’t they teach a nicer Holocaust”

”It’s disappointing, but not surprising, that the largest anti-student inclusion movement organization has allegedly used a quote from one of the appalling figureheads in history,” said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research, reporting and analysis for the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Moms for Liberty group behind state book bans slammed..., 2023 WLNR 21800029

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 952

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NewsRoom

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

NewsRoom

6/23/23 The Guardian (U.K.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21791528

Guardian (UK)
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June 23, 2023

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in law as Biden signs contraception protection – as it happened

White House spokesperson says Congress must pass law restoring protections of Roe as US president signs executive order protecting contraception access

Maya Yang(now); Richard Luscombe (earlier)

White House spokesperson says Congress must pass law restoring protections of Roe as US president signs executive order protecting contraception access

block-time published-time 9.04pm BST

Closing Summary

It is slightly past 4pm in Washington DC. Here is a wrap up of the day's key events:

The supreme court has rejected Texas and Louisiana's challenge to Biden deportation policy prioritizing groups of unauthorized immigrants, including suspected terrorists, convicts and those caught at the border for deportation. The states wanted the authority to fight the policy in court. The court holds that the states do not have legal standing to challenge the policy, another win for the Biden administration, especially since conservative justice Samuel Alito was the only dissent.

Joe Biden signed an executive order Friday to protect access to contraception, one day before the anniversary of the supreme court decision that struck down the federal right to an abortion. In a statement, the president highlighted reproductive health as a top priority of his administration in the wake of the *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling from the conservative-led court that reversed the *Roe v Wade* abortion protections in place for half a century.

Two Russian intelligence officers who attempted to interfere in a local election as part of Moscow's "global malign influence operations" were sanctioned Friday by the US government. Yegor Sergeevich Popov and Aleksei Borisovich Sukhodolov, both members of Russia's federal security service, worked to undermine democratic processes in the US and other countries through a network of co-conspirators, the treasury department said in a statement, reported by Reuters.

Special counsel Jack Smith has offered limited immunity to at least two Republican fake electors in return for their testimonies to a grand jury over Donald Trump's alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 election, according to a new CNN report. Sources familiar with the matter told CNN that in instances where prosecutors granted immunity to witnesses, "the special counsel's office arrived at the courthouse in Washington ready to compel their testimony after the witnesses indicated they would decline to answer questions under the fifth amendment."

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reaffirmed the Biden-Harris administration's support for reproductive healthcare rights. Speaking to reporters on Friday, Jean-Pierre said: "President Biden and Vice-President Harris stand with the majority of Americans who believe the right to choose is fundamental. As the president has made clear, the only way to ensure women in every state have access to abortion is for Congress to pass a law, restoring the protections of Roe."

Florida governor and presidential candidate Ron DeSantis has rolled out a list of 15 endorsements from South Carolina lawmakers on Thursday. According to the Associated Press which reviewed the list, the endorsement includes 11 state House members and four state senators.

Several reproductive rights organizations have announced their endorsement of the Biden-Harris administration in the upcoming 2024 presidential election. The organizations include Planned Parenthood, NARAL (National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws) Pro-Choice America, and EMILY's List, a political action committee dedicated to electing Democratic pro-choice women into office.

That's it from me, Maya Yang, as we wrap up the blog for today. Thank you for following along.

block-time updated-time Updated at 9.07pm BST

block-time published-time 8.55pm BST

Florida governor and presidential candidate Ron DeSantis has rolled out a list of 15 endorsements from South Carolina lawmakers on Thursday.

According to the Associated Press which reviewed the list, the endorsement includes 11 state House members and four state senators.

"Governor DeSantis' leadership has made Florida a refuge for those seeking freedom in a nation where it is under attack," said state senator Josh Kimbrell, one of DeSantis's endorsers, the Hill reports.

"No Republican in the country has beaten the radical left more than governor DeSantis, and he is the only candidate in this race who can defeat Joe Biden, put energy back in the executive, and deliver on a bold conservative agenda that Republicans across South Carolina are looking for," he added.

On Thursday, DeSantis campaigned in North Augusta, South Carolina, drawing a crowd of supporters whom he told, "You run this process, you compete and you respect the outcome of the process... I think I'm going to be the nominee no matter what happens I'm going to work to beat Joe Biden, that's what you have to do."

Gov. Ron DeSantis, R-Fla., high-fives voters as he walks towards the stage during his campaign stop at Riverview Park Activities Center in North Augusta, S.C., Thursday, June 22, 2023. Photograph: Katie Goodale/AP

block-time published-time 8.47pm BST

GOP presidential hopeful Chris Christie got booed on stage as he delivered his address at the Freedom and Faith Coalition in Washington DC.

In his address, the former New Jersey governor criticized Donald Trump, saying:

"I'm running because he has let us down. He has let us down because he's unwilling to take any responsibility of the mistakes that were made, any of the faults that he has and any of the things he has done. And that is not leadership, everybody. That is a failure of leadership."

In response, the crowd quickly booed Christie.

"You can boo all you want. But here's the thing: Our faith teaches us that people have to take responsibility for what they

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

do,” Christie continued.

enltrChris Christie battles boos as he goes after Donald Trump at the Faith & Freedom Coalition conference: “I’m running because he has let us down ... You can boo all you want. But here’s the thing: Our faith teaches us that people have to take responsibility for what they do.” pic.twitter.com/Ak5YomhKAA

— The Recount (@therecount) June 23, 2023

He addressed the boos in a later interview with CNN, saying:

”I knew that’s what was going to happen when I accepted the invitation but I’m not changing my message and pandering to anybody. The truth matters and I’m telling the truth about Donald Trump...” Christie told host Dana Bash.

enltr2024 presidential candidate Chris Christie (R) on getting booed for criticizing Trump at today’s Faith & Freedom Coalition conference: “I knew that’s what was going to happen when I accepted the invitation... The truth matters and I’m telling the truth about Donald Trump.” pic.twitter.com/SMJIPkbY41

— The Recount (@therecount) June 23, 2023

block-time published-time 8.34pm BST

This is the third executive order that Biden has passed to protect abortion access since the rollback of Roe v Wade last June.

Read more on his first and second executive order here:

Related: Joe Biden signs executive order protecting access to abortion

Related: Biden signs second executive order to protect US abortion access

block-time published-time 8.15pm BST

Several reproductive rights organizations have announced their endorsement of the Biden-Harris administration in the upcoming 2024 presidential election.

The organizations include Planned Parenthood, NARAL (National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws) Pro-Choice America, and EMILYs List, a political action committee dedicated to electing Democratic pro-choice women into office.

”President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have been committed to fighting back against the onslaught of attacks against our reproductive freedom. And we need them to continue this critical work.

Abortion is health care... We need leaders who are committed to protecting our freedoms, not taking them away. That is why we must re-elect President Biden and Vice President Harris: people we can trust to keep rebuilding a path forward, because we know the journey to rebuilding our rights will be met with challenges,” said Alexis McGill Johnson, president and CEO of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

NARAL-Pro Choice America echoed similar sentiments, with its president Mini Timmaraju saying:

”President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are the strongest advocates for reproductive freedom ever to occupy the White House, and NARAL Pro-Choice America proudly endorses their reelection. It’s as simple as this: Abortion matters to Americans. In elections since the Supreme Court took away our right to abortion, voters have mobilized in massive numbers to elect Democrats who will fight to restore it...”

EMILYs List president Laphonza Butler released the following statement:

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

"When the Dobbs decision ended a constitutional right for the first time in this country's history, we were grateful to have leaders in the White House like President Biden and Vice President Harris, who have been vocal advocates for abortion rights across the government and across the country... For her work as a groundbreaker, tireless advocate for reproductive freedom, and inspiring change-maker, EMILYs List is thrilled to endorse Vice President Kamala Harris for reelection."

block-time published-time 7.39pm BST

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre pushed back against claims that president Joe Biden's latest executive action on expanding contraception access is "largely symbolic", saying:

"It builds on the progress that we believe that we have made already and expanding contraception access for women. If you think about the Affordable Care Act, it helped millions of women save billions of dollars on birth control that they need and want. And so we understand that there are gaps still as it relates to that and so that's what this executive order does today.

It does a couple of things. It's strengthening access to affordable high quality contraception and family planning services, and increased contraception options. It lowers out-of-pocket costs. It maximizes contraception access through the following ways: insurance coverage for those covered under the Affordable Care Act ... Medicaid, Medicare, federal funded healthcare programs, including community health centers ...

So we don't believe this is symbolic. We believe that this is another step to really deal with this gap that we're seeing across the country and to do everything that we can to continue to fight for fundamental rights."

block-time updated-time Updated at 8.34pm BST

block-time published-time 7.18pm BST

In response to a question from a reporter on whether president Joe Biden calling China's president Xi Jinping a "dictator" is the "official position" of the White House, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said:

"The president spoke for himself. I'm just not going to go beyond what he said... The president is going to speak candidly. That will never change."

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.20pm BST

block-time published-time 6.52pm BST

White House says Congress must pass law to restore protections of Roe

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reaffirmed the Biden-Harris administration's support for reproductive healthcare rights.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, Jean-Pierre said:

"President Biden and vice president Harris stand with the majority of Americans who believe the right to choose is fundamental. As the president has made clear, the only way to ensure women in every state have access to abortion is for Congress to pass a law, restoring the protections of Roe."

Jean-Pierre also spoke of Biden's new executive order on furthering contraception access, saying:

"Access to contraception has become more important than ever following the Supreme court's decision and ensuing crisis for women's health. And today's action helps ensure that women can make decisions about their own health lives and also their families."

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.16pm BST

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

block-time published-time 6.29pm BST

Attorney general Merrick Garland has responded to concerns from Republicans over the justice department's integrity, saying, "Nothing could be further from the truth."

In a press briefing on Friday, a reporter asked Garland:

"Republicans in Congress have flirted with the idea with holding the FBI director in contempt, it's become a talking point on the campaign trail, the alleged corruption in the FBI and federal law enforcement agencies. Do the American people have cause to be concerned about the integrity of components of this justice department and...how they're acting?"

In response, Garland said:

"I certainly understand that some have chose to attack the integrity of the justice department as components and its employees by claiming that we do not treat like cases alike. This constitutes an attack on an institution that is essential to American democracy... Nothing could be further from the truth..."

We make our cases based on the facts and the law. These are not just words. These are what we live by..."

enltrGarland: "Some have chose to attack the integrity of the Justice Department by claiming that we do not treat cases alike. This constitutes an attack on an institution that is essential to American democracy... Nothing could be further from the truth." pic.twitter.com/fHkHPUiNyn

— Greg Price (@greg_price11) June 23, 2023

block-time published-time 6.05pm BST

Mike Pence pledged to end gender-affirming services amongst minors during his Faith and Freedom Coalition address today in Washington DC.

"When I am President, American families will have a champion in the White House!

We will give every parent the right to choose where their child goes to school, we will end the gender ideology that is running rampant in our schools and we will ban chemical and surgical gender transition treatment for kids under the age of 18!" he said.

enltrWhen I am President, American families will have a champion in the White House! We will give every parent the right to choose where their child goes to school, we will end the gender ideology that is running rampant in our schools and we will ban chemical and surgical gender... pic.twitter.com/DzgcAFRF8

— Mike Pence (@Mike_Pence) June 23, 2023

Pence's comments come amid multiple Republicans' pledges to end 'wokeism,' should they become president, including presidential candidate and Florida governor Ron DeSantis.

block-time published-time 5.48pm BST

Special counsel offered limited immunity in return for fake electors testimony - report

Special counsel Jack Smith has offered limited immunity to at least two Republican fake electors in return for their testimonies to a grand jury over Donald Trump's alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 election, according to a new CNN report.

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Sources familiar with the matter told CNN that in instances where prosecutors granted immunity to witnesses, “The special counsel’s office arrived at the courthouse in Washington ready to compel their testimony after the witnesses indicated they would decline to answer questions under the Fifth Amendment.”

Within the last two weeks, at least one other witness spoke with federal investigators outside of the federal grand jury with an agreement that the witness be granted limited immunity from prosecution, CNN reports.

The testimonies in recent days have largely surrounded fake electors’ schemes that were designed by attorneys affiliated with the Trump campaign three years ago.

According to sources familiar with the matter who spoke to CNN, “The numbers, profile of the witnesses and prosecutor tactics suggest a probe picking up its pace.”

Jack Smith. Photograph: Charles Dharapak/AP

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.54pm BST

block-time published-time 5.29pm BST

An Arizona Republican election official has filed a lawsuit against unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate and staunch Donald Trump supporter Kari Lake who claims that she lost the 2022 race due to fraud.

In an op-ed published in the Arizona Republic, Maricopa county recorder Stephen Richer said that as a result of Lake’s false claims, he has faced “violent vitriol and other dire consequences.”

”Rather than accept political defeat, rather than get a new job, she has sought to undermine confidence in our elections and has mobilized millions of her followers against me,” Richer wrote.

”She has gone far outside of the bounds of protected free speech as guaranteed under the First Amendment and the Arizona Constitution.

That’s why I’m suing Kari Lake, her campaign and her political action committee for engaging in a concerted campaign to defame, threaten and isolate me,” he added.

The lawsuit, filed in Maricopa county, Arizona on Thursday, names Lake, her political campaign, as well as her fundraising group as defendants.

According to the lawsuit, Richer is seeking unspecified monetary damages, as well as the removal of all false claims from Lake’s social media.

block-time published-time 5.09pm BST

The American Civil Liberties Union has issued a statement in response to the supreme court’s rejection of Texas and Louisiana’s challenge to the Biden administration’s deportation policy.

”This decision soundly rejects the misguided attempt by Texas and Louisiana to force the government to implement the most draconian immigration enforcement policy,” said Omar Jadwat, director of the ACLU’s Immigrants’ Rights Project.

In the case which ACLU filed an amicus brief, the supreme court ruled that the states lacked the standing to “order the Executive Branch to alter its arrest policy so as to make more arrests.”

block-time published-time 4.53pm BST

Republican presidential candidate Mike Pence appeared undeterred from his staunch anti-abortion stance, according to a new

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

interview with Politico.

The Guardian's Martin Pengelly reports from Washington:

Speaking one year since the US supreme court removed the federal right to abortion, Mike Pence said candidates for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination should stand firm on the electorally unpopular issue and take a hard line on bringing in national limits.

"For me, for our campaign, we're going to stand where we've always stood, and that is without apology for the right to life," the former congressman, Indiana governor and vice-president to Donald Trump told Politico.

Later, addressing the Faith & Freedom conference in Washington, Pence said every Republican candidate "should support a ban on abortions before 15 weeks, as a minimum nationwide standard".

Claiming this was a "reasonable and mainstream standard", Pence said:

"American abortion policy has more in common with China and North Korea than it does with the nations of Europe – and it is time for that to change."

For the full story, click here:

Related: Pence tells Republicans to take hard line on abortion despite electoral liability

block-time published-time 4.35pm BST

An Indiana chapter of the right-wing nonprofit Moms for Liberty has apologized for using an Adolf Hitler quote in its newsletter.

Earlier this week, the Hamilton county chapter of the far-right group, which the the watchdog Southern Poverty Law Center designated as "extremist," published a newsletter which featured the quote, "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future" and cited Hitler.

Following swift backlash online, the group which advocated for increased parental rights apologized and attempted to clarify its actions.

"We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history," chapter chair Paige Miller said in a statement on a revised version of the newsletter.

"We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology," she added.

enltrThis Hitler quote from Moms for Liberty was on the top of the front page. Good lord.
<https://t.co/asSQaaHCLQpic.twitter.com/VrZLIFnyvK>

— Ben Collins (@oneunderscore __) June 22, 2023

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.41pm BST

block-time published-time 4.18pm BST

The newest Republican candidate Will Hurd said that he will not sign a Republican National Committee loyalty pledge towards the GOP presidential nominee.

Hurd, a former Texas congressman and harsh critic of Donald Trump, told CNN in a new interview that he will not pledge his allegiance to whoever the GOP nominee is for the 2024 presidential race.

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

"I won't be signing any kind of pledges, and I don't think that parties should be trying to rig who should be on a debate stage," Hurd said.

"I am not in the business of lying to the American people in order to get a microphone, and I'm not going to support Donald Trump," he added.

"And so I can't honestly say I'm going to sign something even if he may or may not be the nominee," Hurd continued.

Hurd's comments follows RNC chair Ronna McDaniel's calls for a loyalty pledge.

McDaniel told Fox News this week, "It's the Republican Party nomination and the pledge is staying," the Hill reports.

block-time updated-time Updated at 4.20pm BST

block-time published-time 4.01pm BST

US sanctions Russians over election interference

Two Russian intelligence officers who attempted to interfere in a local election as part of Moscow's "global malign influence operations" were sanctioned Friday by the US government.

Yegor Sergeyeovich Popov and Aleksei Borisovich Sukhodolov, both members of Russia's federal security service, worked to undermine democratic processes in the US and other countries through a network of co-conspirators, the treasury department said in a statement, reported by Reuters.

They are alleged to worked with Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov, a Russian charged last year by the justice department with conducting a multi-year effort to use political groups in Florida, Georgia and California to interfere in elections.

Treasury department official Brian Nelson said in the statement:

The US will not tolerate threats to our democracy, and today's action builds on the whole of government approach to protect our system of representative government.

The department did not specify which election the two Russians are accused of attempting to influence.

block-time published-time 3.52pm BST

The supreme court has not yet issued its widely anticipated decision on race-based affirmative action in college admissions, or several other significant cases. But even with the panel still in session, Republican presidential hopefuls are weighing in on its future and their hopes for the court.

Speaking at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's Road to Majority conference in Washington DC this morning, entrepreneur and 2024 candidate Vivek Ramaswamy praised America as a meritocratic nation.

enltrEntrepreneur and 2024 candidate Vivek Ramaswamy gets some audience members on their feet as he speaks at the Road to Majority conference in DC. pic.twitter.com/ZSk5rJbmhd

— Joan Greve (@joanegreve) June 23, 2023

"You do get ahead in this country based not on the color of your skin, but on the content of your character and your contributions," Ramaswamy said.

"That's why I expect the supreme court in the coming days to end affirmative action in college."

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

The line was met with applause from the conservative crowd.

block-time published-time 3.45pm BST

Biden signs executive order to protect contraception

Joe Biden was signing an executive order Friday to protect access to contraception, one day before the anniversary of the supreme court decision that struck down the federal right to an abortion.

In a statement, the president highlighted reproductive health as a top priority of his administration in the wake of the Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization ruling from the conservative-led court that reversed the Roe v Wade abortion protections in place for half a century:

Contraception is an essential component of reproductive health care that has only become more important in the wake of Dobbs and the ensuing crisis in women's access to healthcare.

Biden is seeking to enhance strengthen access to "affordable, high quality contraception and family planning services," the statement says. It's his third executive order on reproductive health care access since the Dobbs ruling.

The measures include expanding access and services through Medicaid, improving coverage of contraception through Medicare and seeking ways to compel private health insurance companies to provide contraception and family planning services as needed.

Biden and vice-president Kamala Harris are set to speak at reproductive rights event at the Mayflower hotel in Washington DC, scheduled for 4pm.

block-time published-time 3.21pm BST

It's Brett Kavanaugh again with the day's third ruling, writing the 5-4 majority opinion in the case of Coinbase v Bielski, a case about cryptocurrency. And the final ruling this morning is the case of Samia v US, another non-biggie, so to speak.

We'll have some more details of those coming up, but essentially the court has whiffed again on dropping its rulings on any of the most-watched, most significant cases of the current session.

The next decision day is next Tuesday. There are 11 cases still to be decided, including civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights, affirmative action in colleges and universities, and perhaps most significant of all, the fate of Joe Biden 's program for student debt relief.

block-time updated-time Updated at 3.22pm BST

block-time published-time 3.14pm BST

Supreme court rejects Texas and Louisiana challenge to Biden deportation policy

Justice Brett Kavanaugh has written the second ruling of the day, an 8-1 majority in the case of US v Texas.

The state was joined by Louisiana in challenging a Biden administration policy prioritizing groups of unauthorized immigrants, including suspected terrorists, convicts, and those caught at the border for deportation. The states wanted the authority to fight the policy in court.

The court holds that the states do not have legal standing to challenge the policy, another win for the Biden administration, especially since conservative justice Samuel Alito was the only dissent.

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

Kavanaugh calls it an “extraordinarily unusual lawsuit”.

Although Texas and Louisiana do not have a right to sue here, he says, “we do not suggest that federal courts may never entertain cases involving the executive branch’s alleged failure to make more arrests or bring more prosecutions,” he wrote, according to Scotusblog.

Here’s that ruling.

block-time updated-time Updated at 3.24pm BST

block-time published-time 3.08pm BST

Supreme court immigration ruling backs Biden administration

The first supreme court decision of the day is in. It’s the case of United States v Hansen, a 7-2 ruling that concerns a man who ran an allegedly illegal adoption scheme to gain citizenship for foreign nationals.

It’s not one of the “big” cases. But it is being seen as win for the Biden administration in its defense of a law that criminalizes the solicitation or encouragement of improper immigration. More details to come, but here’s the ruling in full.

block-time published-time 2.45pm BST

We’re thinking that we are likely to see one or more of the “big” supreme court decisions coming down this morning, after yesterday’s batch – while still significant – weren’t among the most talked about.

The highlight of Thursday’s opinions was a ruling against the Navajo nation on water rights, and the court soon closed up shop for the day after delivering only four of the 18 cases still outstanding at that stage.

Clarence Thomas. Photograph: Reuters

Here’s an excellent guide to the 14 left to come from veteran supreme court analyst Amy Howe. Two of them relate to affirmative action, and how race plays a role in the college admissions process.

And while we’re waiting for this morning’s developments, have a read of some more high court news from my colleague Stephanie Kirchgassner about mounting pressure on conservative justice Clarence Thomas over ethics controversies:

Related: Harlan Crow on collision course with Senate over Clarence Thomas gifts

block-time published-time 2.31pm BST

Good morning US politics blog readers, and welcome to our Friday edition rounding out an eventful week in Washington DC and elsewhere.

This morning we’re expecting to see a batch more decisions coming down from the supreme court as the clock ticks towards the end of its current session next week.

By our reckoning, there are 14 cases that the justices still have to release opinions on. They include “blockbusters” covering civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights, affirmative action in colleges and universities, and perhaps most significant of all, the fate of Joe Biden’s program for student debt relief.

The court opens for business at 10am ET, and we’ll be here to bring you decisions as they’re announced.

Here’s what else were watching:

White House restates call for abortion to be enshrined in..., 2023 WLNR 21791528

It's day three of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi 's state visit, after he was pressed on his human rights record on Thursday. Later this morning, Modi and Biden will meet leaders of US and Indian businesses as one of the final acts of his trip.

Mike Pence is reportedly gearing up for an appearance alongside other Republican presidential hopefuls at the conservative Faith & Freedom Coalition's Road to Majority conference in Washington DC. The former vice-president is expected to call for even tighter abortion restrictions nationwide, Politico reports.

Speaker Kevin McCarthy is feeling the heat from moderates after Republican House extremists pushed through measures this week to censure California Democrat Adam Schiff for investigating Donald Trump , and sent dead-on-arrival impeachment articles for Biden, introduced by Colorado rightwinger Lauren Boebert , for committee debate.

---- Index References ----

Company: Faith & Freedom Coalition; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Planned Parenthood of Greater New York Action Fund, Inc; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Republican National Committee Inc; ACLU Pennsylvania; United States of America

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Government (1GO80); Government Institutions (1GO90); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); National Judiciaries (1NA65); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56); Contraception (1CO66); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Women's Health (1WO30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arizona (1AR13); Asia (1AS61); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Florida (1FL79); Indiana (1IN12); Louisiana (1LO72); North America (1NO39); South Carolina (1SO63); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (White House; Congress; US supreme court; NARAL-Pro Choice America; National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws; Justice Department; North Korea; Republican Party; United States; California Democrat; Faith and Freedom Coalition; FBI; Planned Parenthood Action Fund; Southern Poverty Law Center; Republican National Committee; American Civil Liberties Union; US government)

Word Count: 4677

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NewsRoom

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6/23/23 Independent Online (U.K.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
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Independent Online (UK)
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June 23, 2023

Far-right group Moms for Liberty tries to explain use of Hitler quote 'The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert,' the extremist group tried to explain

Rachel Sharp

The Indiana chapter of extremist group Moms for Liberty has been forced to explain why the first page of its newsletter carries a quote from Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.

"He alone who owns the youth, gains the future," the quote reads on the front of its June issue.

The quote was correctly attributed to Hitler, who was responsible for the murders of six million Jewish people and five million other victims including Romany people, gay people and Soviet prisoners of war.

The group later took to its Facebook page to make some sort of an attempt to explain the shocking decision to reference to a murderous Nazi.

"The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert," it read.

"If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government."

The move to showcase a Hitler quote comes as the group secured Democratic presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as a speaker at its event, The Joyful Warriors National Summit, next week.

Other speakers at the event include GOP candidates Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis.

Moms for Liberty was recently classified as an "anti-government extremist" group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which found in a recent report that it was among a handful of groups pushing to undermine public education and restrict access to books, classroom materials and honest discussions of race, racism, LGBT+ people and gender and sexuality.

"Hate and anti-government extremist groups are intent on staging public spectacles of hatred" to threaten LGBT+ people and other vulnerable communities and minority groups, said Susan Corke, director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project.

Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich pushed back on the label in a statement shared with The Independent where they said the group is "devoted to empowering parents to be a part of their child's public school education."

Far-right group Moms for Liberty tries to explain use of Hitler quote, 2023 WLNR 21778247

”Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child’s education as ‘hate groups’ or ‘bigoted’ just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school – parents or government employees?” they added.

”We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.”

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 403

End of Document

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NewsRoom

AP News Digest 3:15 am, 2023 WLNR 21726353

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June 23, 2023

AP News Digest 3:15 am

Via AP news wire

Here are the AP's latest coverage plans, top stories and promotable content. All times EDT. For up-to-the minute information on AP's coverage, visit Coverage Plan.

TOP STORIES

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB — The search for a missing Titanic-bound submersible has become an investigation and salvage mission that will take an indefinite amount of time, officials said, as tributes from around the world poured in for the five people killed when the vessel imploded deep in the North Atlantic. The announcement that all aboard perished when the submersible imploded near the site of the iconic shipwreck brought a tragic end to a five-day saga that included an urgent around-the-clock search and a worldwide vigil for the vessel known as the Titan. By Patrick Whittle. SENT: 1,090 words, photos, videos. WITH: **TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-LAWS** — Tourist sub's implosion draws attention to murky regulations of deep-sea expeditions. SENT: 910 words, photos. Also see **MORE ON TITANIC-TOURIST SUB** below.

ELECTION 2024-ABORTION-BIDEN — President Joe Biden is banking on reproductive rights to be a galvanizing issue for voters in the 2024 presidential election as he collects a trio of top-level endorsements and hosts a rally to mark the approaching anniversary of the Supreme Court decision overturning federal abortion protections. By Colleen Long. SENT: 910 words, photo. UPCOMING: 1,100 words after 4 p.m. event.

ABORTION PILL-WYOMING — Abortion pills will remain legal in Wyoming for now, after a judge ruled that the state's first-in-the-nation law to ban them won't take effect July 1 as planned while a lawsuit proceeds. Attorneys for Wyoming failed to show that the ban wouldn't harm the plaintiffs before their lawsuit is resolved, Teton County Judge Melissa Owens ruled after hearing arguments from both sides. Meanwhile, those plaintiffs "have clearly showed probable success on the merits," Owens said. By Mead Gruver. SENT: 670 words, photo.

PFAS-DRINKING WATER-SETTLEMENT — Chemical manufacturer 3M Co. will pay at least \$10.3 billion to settle lawsuits over contamination of many U.S. public drinking water systems with potentially harmful compounds used in firefighting foam and a host of consumer products, the company said. By Environmental Writer John Flesher. SENT: 600 words, photo.

HAJJ-HIGH COSTS — Saudi Arabia is hosting its biggest Hajj pilgrimage in three years But for many pilgrims, and for

AP News Digest 3:15 am, 2023 WLNR 21726353

many others who couldn't make it, global inflation and economic crises made it more of a strain to carry out Islam's spiritual trip of a lifetime. With people balking at the cost, a few countries struggled to fill their quota of pilgrims this year, a startling sign when demand usually outstrips the supply of pilgrimage spots many times over. SENT: 1,070 words, photos. With HAJJ — Nearly 1.5 million foreign pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia so far for annual Hajj pilgrimage.

NBA-DRAFT — Victor Wembanyama was the presumed No. 1 pick for months, the rare certainty in an NBA draft process that's often a guessing game. Yet as the clock above the stage he was facing ticked all the way down to zero, butterflies set in. "Longest five minutes of my life," Wembanyama said. The San Antonio Spurs are confident he will be worth the wait. SENT: 960 words, photos.

MORE ON TITANIC-TOURIST SUB

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-EXPLAINER — The latest on the Titan submersible tragedy and what's next in the recovery efforts. SENT: 590 words, photos, videos.

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-PASSENGERS — A Titanic expert, an adventurer, a CEO, and a father and son were killed in Titan's implosion. SENT: 1,100 words, photos, videos.

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-PILOTS' WIFE — Wife of pilot in fatal sub implosion descended from couple who died on Titanic, report says. SENT: 280 words, photo.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR — Russia-appointed officials in Crimea said that a bridge between the Moscow-annexed peninsula and Russia-occupied areas in southern Ukraine was hit by missiles, threatening a key supply link to Russian forces. — SENT: 830 words, photos.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR-DENMARK TALKS — Denmark will host a meeting of national security advisers from Western countries backing Ukraine and countries that have refused to condemn the Russian invasion, officials said. SENT: 260 words.

SPOTLIGHTING VOICES

HAITI-UPROOTED — A gang rampaged through the Cite Soleil slum, killing and raping and setting fire to hundreds of wood-and-tin homes. Forced out of the neighborhood, one family of four lived on the streets of Port-au-Prince until they were struck by a truck as they slept. Two brothers in that accident. Jean-Kere Almicar opened his home to their distraught parents, then another family, then another, until there were nearly 200 people camped out in his front yard and nearby. They are among more than 165,000 Haitians who have fled their homes amid a surge in gang violence. SENT: 1,000 words, photos, video.

CHINA-LAWYERS — A disbarred Chinese human rights lawyer has been forced to move 13 times in two months as part of a pattern of harassment against him and three other prominent rights advocates in Beijing that is further squeezing China's battered civil rights community. All four are prominent independent legal advocates, a rare source of help for people in China

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facing political charges, or trying to access benefits denied by often unaccountable bureaucracies. SENT: 850 words, photos.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS-SUBWAY VOICE --The voice is familiar to many millions of New York City subway riders. For more than a decade, Bernie Wagenblast's voice has been ringing through bustling underground tunnels to herald an approaching train or remind the hurried masses to please stand away from the platform edge. Wagenblast has been using that deep, sonorous voice to inform and guide. Now, as a transgender woman, she uses it to inspire, mindful of the social and political upheaval in some parts of the United States. SENT: 850 words, video, photos.

MORE NEWS

SCI--BEE DEATHS --Nearly half of US honeybee colonies died last year. Struggling beekeepers stabilize population. SENT: 820 words, photos, video.

UPCYCLE FOOD — The US has tons of leftover food. Upcycling seeks to turn would-be trash into ice cream and pizza. SENT: 610 words, photos, video.

CONCERT-HAIL-FANS-HURT --Firefighters say seven people were taken to the hospital and up to 90 people were treated for injuries after hail pummeled concertgoers at Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver. SENT: 140 words, photos.

TROPICAL-WEATHER-BRET — A hurricane watch was issued for St. Lucia as Tropical Storm Bret barreled toward the eastern Caribbean at near-hurricane strength. SENT: 405 words, photo.

CHINA-RESTAURANT-EXPLOSION – China's president has ordered a national safety campaign after a massive cooking gas explosion at a barbecue restaurant killed 31 people. SENT: 690 words, photos, video.

WASHINGTON/ POLITICS

INDIA-MODI-PRESS — Narendra Modi did something very unusual on at the White House — he took questions from journalists. It's a rare occurrence for the Indian prime minister who avoids unscripted moments and has presided over a steady decline in press freedom in his country. SENT: 770 words, photos.

ELECTION 2024-CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVES — A year after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, some of the Republican Party's most powerful evangelical Christian voices are gathering to celebrate. At the Faith & Freedom Coalition's annual conference in Washington, GOP presidential candidates will be urged to keep pushing for stronger abortion restrictions. By Will Weissert and Michelle L. Price. SENT: 920 words, photos. UPCOMING: 1,100 words after conference begins at 9:30 a.m.

MOMS FOR LIBERTY-HITLER QUOTE — An Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, which an anti-hate watchdog recently labeled as extremist, is apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after using a quote attributed to the Nazi leader in its inaugural newsletter. SENT: 610 words.

NATIONAL

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NASHVILLE-SCHOOL-SHOOTING — More than a dozen parents at The Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, have written about the stress, terror and sadness in the wake of the March shooting. The descriptions are meant to compel a judge not to allow the release of the shooter's writings and other documents. SENT: 830 words, photos.

OKLAHOMA-EXECUTION-SANCHEZ — An Oklahoma death row inmate scheduled to be executed in September for the 1996 killing of a University of Oklahoma dance student says he plans to reject his chance for a clemency hearing. Anthony Sanchez said in a telephone interview from death row Thursday there is little hope the governor would spare his life. SENT: 630 words, photos.

I-95-COLLAPSE — Interstate 95 is set to reopen to traffic less than two weeks after a deadly collapse in Philadelphia shut down a heavily traveled stretch of the East Coast's main north-south highway. Crews worked around the clock and are poised to finish ahead of schedule. SENT: 320 words, photo.

INTERNATIONAL

ISRAEL-BAN KI-MOON — Former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says Israel is inching toward apartheid and drifting further away from the hopes of creating a Palestinian state. SENT: 670 words, photos.

HONDURAS-PRISON RIOT-FUNERALS — Fear simmered among the small knot of relatives gathered for the wake of a mother and daughter who were among 46 women inmates slaughtered in this week's prison riot in Honduras. Relatives wept openly but said they feared the Barrio 18 gang that carried out the massacre might come after the victims' families as well. SENT: 800 words, photos.

GERMANY-JEWISH CAMPUS — Germany's biggest Jewish educational and cultural complex since the Holocaust is set to open in Berlin, five years after the groundbreaking. SENT: 860 words, photos.

GREECE-ELECTIONS — Greeks return to the polls Sunday for a second general election in five weeks, with the conservative front-runners eyeing a landslide win after toppling strongholds dominated by their opponents for decades. SENT: 790 words, photos.

AUSTRALIA-RUSSIA — A suspected lone Russian diplomat is apparently squatting on the site of Moscow's proposed embassy after the Australian government vetoed the plan on security grounds. SENT: 620 words, photos.

TWITTER-EU-RULES — A top European Union official is in Silicon Valley to check whether Twitter is ready to comply with the bloc's tough new digital rulebook, a set of sweeping new standards that the world's biggest online platforms all must obey in just two months. SENT: 550 words, photos.

BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FINANCIAL-MARKETS — Asian shares sank sharply after several central banks around the world cranked interest rates higher in their fight against inflation. By Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach. SENT: 680 words, photos.

GLOBAL CLIMATE-FINANCE — The aim of a two-day climate and finance summit in Paris was to set up concrete measures to help poor and developing countries better tackle issues like poverty and climate change. Activists want rich countries to commit to debt relief, including cancellation of loans. One young activist said wealthier nations must

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acknowledge how current financial structures are reproducing the old colonial structure. SENT: 560 words, photos.

HOW TO REACH US

At the Nerve Center, Vincent Willis and Lorian Belanger can be reached at 800-845-8450 (ext. 1600). For photos, Masayo Yoshida (ext. 1900). For graphics and interactives, ext. 7636. Expanded AP content can be obtained from AP Newsroom. For access to AP Newsroom and other technical issues, contact apcustomersupport@ap.org or call 844-777-2006.

---- Index References ----

Company: Faith & Freedom Coalition; 3M COMPANY; The University of Oklahoma; European Union; SAN ANTONIO SPURS; Commonwealth of Australia; TWITTER, INC.; United Nations Publications

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); European Union (1EU94); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); Social Issues (1SO05); World Organizations (1IN77))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56); Contraception (1CO66); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Women's Health (1WO30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Asia (1AS61); Australasia (1AU56); Australia (1AU55); CIS Countries (1CI64); Caribbean (1CA06); Central America (1CE62); Central Europe (1CE50); China (1CH15); Denmark (1DE14); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Eurozone Countries (1EU86); Far East (1FA27); Germany (1GE16); Gulf States (1GU47); Haiti (1HA10); Honduras (1HO08); Latin America (1LA15); Mediterranean (1ME20); Middle East (1MI23); North America (1NO39); Northern Europe (1NO01); Oceania (1OC40); Oklahoma (1OK58); Russia (1RU33); Saudi Arabia (1SA38); Scandinavia (1SC27); Tennessee (1TE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Ukraine (1UK09); Western Europe (1WE41); Wyoming (1WY84))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Supreme Court; Republican Party; The Covenant School; Faith & Freedom Coalition; 3M Co.; University of Oklahoma; European Union; San Antonio Spurs; Australian government; TWITTER; United Nations)

Word Count: 1848

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty, Purple for Parents listed as hate groups, 2023 WLNR 21759084

NewsRoom

6/23/23 Pharos-Tribune (Logansport, Ind.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21759084

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June 23, 2023

Section: News

Moms for Liberty, Purple for Parents listed as hate groups

Carson Gerber CNHI State Reporter

As a former teacher, Katie Rector understands parents who want to protect their children inside the classroom. Her sympathy stops, though, when that idea of protection entails discriminating against others they deem dangerous.

That's what groups like Moms for Liberty and Purple for Parents of Indiana are doing at school districts across the state, according to Rector, a co-founder of the Indiana progressive activist group MADVoters.

The main target for the two parental-rights groups is the LGBTQ+ community.

Purple for Parents of Indiana have called gender-affirming healthcare for minors "child mutilation." The Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty in June called a Carmel Pride event a "perversion" in its first newsletter.

"They say they want to protect kids," Rector said. "But they're going about it the wrong way. I think that what they're doing is very prejudicial, very bigoted and hateful."

The Southern Poverty Law Center agrees. The civil-rights nonprofit this month placed the two organizations on its list of hate groups operating in Indiana.

The center lists Moms for Liberty as anti-government and calls it a "far-right organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and self-identifies as part of the modern parental rights movement."

The group grew out of opposition to public health regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and now opposes LGBTQ+ and racially inclusive school curriculum while also advocating for books bans, according to the law center.

Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich pushed back against the hate-group designation in an online statement.

"Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees?" they said.

Purple for Parents of Indiana called the Southern Poverty Law Center a "far left radical hate group itself," and said it was "honored" to be added to the list of hate groups along with other conservative organizations.

The designation highlights how culture-war issues have taken center stage in schools across the state, according to Danny

Moms for Liberty, Purple for Parents listed as hate groups, 2023 WLNR 21759084

Carroll, an adjunct professor at Indiana University's School of Social Work.

Parental rights group may operate under the guise of protecting children, he argued, but the reality is they deliberately discriminate against minority students.

"If your rhetoric and the things that you are pushing are hateful and are targeting specific groups of people that have been minoritized and marginalized, you're being an active participant of hate," Carroll said.

The two groups have also had influence at the statehouse, where the Republican supermajority approved legislation banning gender-affirming care for minors.

Lawmakers also passed a bill removing legal protections for teachers and school librarians who distribute material determined by legislators to be harmful to minors.

Republican Sen. James Tomes, who initially introduced the proposal, cited information provided by Purple for Parents of Indiana as a reason for submitting the legislation. He said during a hearing he hoped the bill would have a "chilling effect" on libraries and teachers carrying books the groups deem as obscene and pornographic.

"I hope it's enough of a chilling effect that they will come to their senses, and have it upon themselves to see to it that for the kids entrusted in their custody, they will do their best to protect their innocence," Tomes said.

For Rector with MADVoters, the fact an organization now deemed a hate group is influencing state lawmakers and their policies is disheartening and unnerving.

"When a senator is introducing legislation based solely on testimony from a very extremist group, it really makes you concerned about the legitimacy of the overall workings of the statehouse," she said.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Health & Family (1HE30); Legislation (1LE97); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Purple for Parents of Indiana; Southern Poverty Law Center)

Word Count: 631

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OPINION: To stop censorship, we must let Moms for Liberty speak, 2023 WLNR 21725780

NewsRoom

6/23/23 Phila. Inquirer (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21725780

Philadelphia Inquirer, The
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June 23, 2023

OPINION: To stop censorship, we must let Moms for Liberty speak

Jonathan Zimmerman; The Philadelphia Inquirer

Jun. 22—I have a picture in my office of six people behind a banner in front of a Cincinnati courthouse in 1990. “The Perfect Moment to Stop Censorship,” the banner blares, in bright blue letters.

The protesters were condemning criminal obscenity indictments against a local museum and its director for exhibiting “The Perfect Moment,” a collection of controversial photographs by the prominent artist Robert Mapplethorpe. The photos are hard to look at and include a self-portrait of Mapplethorpe with a bullwhip up his anus. But a jury in Cincinnati — a notably conservative city — acquitted the museum and its director, ruling that the exhibit was protected free speech under the First Amendment.

My, how times have changed.

Moms for Liberty: What it is and who’s behind the group

In our own era, Americans across the political spectrum are trying to censor each other. We no longer have enough faith in ourselves — or in America — to allow speech that disgusts or offends us.

That’s the real story of the battle over Moms for Liberty, which is holding its conference here next week. The organization is trying to censor schoolbooks, curricula, and teachers. And protesters are trying to censor it in return, claiming that Moms for Liberty should have no place in Philadelphia.

They have called on the Downtown Marriott to cancel the conference. And they have demanded that the Museum of the American Revolution scrap plans to host a “Welcome to Philadelphia” reception for Moms for Liberty on June 29. “Everything they stand for is in conflict with our mission,” said one museum staffer, Xander Karkruff, who is queer.

Karkruff is right. Despite its name, Moms for Liberty is an organization devoted to inhibiting the values that our Founding Fathers proclaimed: freedom, equality, and the open exchange of ideas. It has supported gag laws restricting what schools can teach about race and gender. Most notoriously, Moms for Liberty members have suggested — without evidence — that teachers who address LGBTQ-related issues are “grooming” young children for sexual abuse.

But protesters’ attempts to silence Moms for Liberty by canceling the welcome event also violates the mission of the museum — which is “to share diverse and inclusive stories about our nation’s history with the broadest audience possible,” a museum spokesperson said recently. The protesters share the same impulse that motivates censors in all times and places: If something disgusts and offends us, we must stamp it out.

OPINION: To stop censorship, we must let Moms for Liberty speak, 2023 WLNR 21725780

That’s what led government authorities to seize gay-themed periodicals in the 1950s until the U.S. Supreme Court intervened. It’s what sparked the campaign to block the 1990 Mapplethorpe exhibit, curated by the Institute of Contemporary Art at Penn. And, yes, it’s what moves Moms for Liberty to target LGBTQ-themed books and curricula.

Let’s be clear: There’s a big difference between passing a law that restricts instruction in our classrooms and shutting down a reception at a museum. Our students and teachers have a First Amendment right to read, write, and speak in school. Nobody has a constitutional right to go to a cocktail party.

But the effort to shut down Moms for Liberty nevertheless violates the spirit of liberty, which the famed jurist Learned Hand defined as “the spirit which seeks to understand the mind of other men and women” and “the spirit which is not too sure that it is right.” And once we lose that, he warned, we would lose everything. “Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women,” Hand declared in a 1944 speech. “When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.”

The effort to shut down Moms for Liberty violates the spirit of liberty. “subtype_label”:pullquote “citation”:

”content”:”subtype”:pullquote

Hand eerily prefigured our current illiberal moment. We have stopped trying to understand each other. We are sure — too sure — that we are right. And we are equally sure that our enemies are wrong.

Listen to an LGBTQ staffer at the Museum of the American Revolution, explaining to the Philadelphia Gay News why the museum should cancel its Moms for Liberty reception: “Our space is filled with public exhibits that are anathema to the Moms’ agenda. How do they expect those people to react when they see things like the ‘Black Founders’ exhibit? Or the Stonewall exhibit?”

Frankly, I’d love to see Moms for Liberty confront information about African Americans in the Revolution and gay liberation activists in the 1960s. Maybe it would learn something about groups it had neglected or denigrated. And maybe the rest of us would learn something about Moms for Liberty, which might not be the singularly evil force we have imagined.

It’s the perfect moment to stop censorship. The question is whether we have the courage to step into the challenge, instead of continuing to shout down speech we despise.

Jonathan Zimmerman teaches education and history at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author (with cartoonist Signe Wilkinson) of “Free Speech and Why You Should Give a Damn.”

---- Index References ----

Company: THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, INC.

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Ohio (1OH35); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; U.S. Supreme Court; Philadelphia Gay News; University of Pennsylvania; Institute of Contemporary Art)

Word Count: 840

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OPINION: To stop censorship, we must let Moms for Liberty speak, 2023 WLNR 21725780

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2023 WLNR 22014487

Record-Journal (Meriden, CT)
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June 23, 2023

Section: recordjournal

In Brief Supreme Court rules against Navajo Nation in water case

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court has ruled against the Navajo Nation in a dispute involving water from the drought-stricken Colorado River. States that draw water from the river - Arizona, Nevada and Colorado - and water districts in California had urged the court to decide for them, and that's what the justices did. Colorado said siding with the Navajo Nation would undermine existing agreements and disrupt the river's management. The Biden administration said that if the court ruled for the Navajo Nation, the government could face lawsuits from many other tribes. The Navajo Nation's president says the ruling is "disappointing" and lawyers are reviewing it. A lawyer who represented states opposing the tribe's claims says the justices "ruled exactly right."

- Associated Press

DeSantis sues administration over university accrediting

TAMPA, Fla. - Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis says the state is suing the Biden administration and U.S. Department of Education over accreditation agencies that control federal aid for students. The lawsuit was filed Wednesday in Fort Lauderdale federal court. It challenges a federal law that requires colleges and universities to submit to private accreditors to qualify for federal funding. It also targets U.S.

Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and other federal officials. DeSantis, who is seeking the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, and Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody on Thursday called the federal law unconstitutional because they say it seeks to "trump" state laws. DeSantis says he's asking the court to find the arrangement to be unconstitutional.

- Associated Press

GOP to cut U. of Wisconsin

System's budget amid spat

MADISON, Wis. - Republican lawmakers will cut the University of Wisconsin System's budget by \$32 million despite a projected recordhigh \$7 billion state budget surplus, leaving the university nearly half a billion dollars short of what it requested. Republican leaders announced their plans Thursday ahead of a scheduled committee vote. The cut comes in reaction to Republican anger over campus diversity, equity and inclusion programs. Republican leaders say the \$32 million is what they estimated was to be spent on the programs over the next two years. UW's president has warned of tuition increases and program cuts if the system's budget isn't increased.

In Brief Supreme Court rules against Navajo Nation in water case, 2023 WLNR 22014487

Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has threatened to veto the entire state budget if the system's budget is cut.

- Associated Press

Writer's lawyers say Trump is wrong about \$5M jury award

NEW YORK - Lawyers for an advice columnist who won a \$5 million sex abuse and defamation jury verdict against former President Donald Trump have urged a judge to reject Trump's efforts to reduce the award to under \$1 million. Lawyers for writer E. Jean Carroll wrote Thursday in a Manhattan federal court filing that Trump has falsely tried to spin the verdict to make it sound like the jury sided with him by rejecting Carroll's claim that she was raped in spring 1996 in a Manhattan luxury department store dressing room. The lawyers say the jury sided with Carroll, concluding Trump sexually attacked her.

- Associated Press

Lawyers submitted bogus case law created by ChatGPT

NEW YORK - A federal judge has imposed \$5,000 fines on a group of lawyers after Chat-GPT was blamed for their submission of fictitious legal research to support an aviation injury claim. Judge P. Kevin Castel said the lawyers acted in bad faith but credited their apologies in a written ruling Thursday. The lawyers testified earlier this month that they thought references to past cases in a document they submitted to Castel were real. They actually were made up by the artificial intelligence- powered chatbot. Separately, the judge tossed out the aviation claim, saying the statute of limitations had expired.

- Associated Press

Moms for Liberty chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler

An Indiana chapter of the nonprofit group Moms for Liberty is apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after using a quote attributed to the Nazi leader in its newsletter.

The group's Hamilton County chapter on Thursday posted a revised version of its newsletter on Facebook after it had previously shared a version that featured the Hitler quote on the front cover. A statement from chapter chair Paige Miller condemned Hitler's actions and his "dark place in human history" and said the group shouldn't have quoted him in the newsletter. Moms for Liberty advocates "parental rights" in education and has come under scrutiny for its attacks on student inclusion.

- Associated Press

---- Index References ----

Company: NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; U.S. Department of Education; UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- SYSTEM

News Subject: (Economic Policy & Policymakers (1EC69); Economics & Trade (1EC26); Government (1GO80); Government Institutions (1GO90); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); Liability (1LI55); National Judiciaries (1NA65); Public Finance (1PU60); U.S. Supreme Court (1US13))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Colorado (1CO26); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Wisconsin (1WI54))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (U. of Wisconsin System; Supreme Court; Moms for Liberty; Navajo Nation; U.S. Department of Education; University of Wisconsin System)

In Brief Supreme Court rules against Navajo Nation in water case, 2023 WLNR 22014487

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2023 WLNR 21779718

Talking Points Memo (Blog)
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June 23, 2023

The Supreme Court's Corruption Scandal Isn't About Ethical Niceties

David Kurtz

Jun 23, 2023

A lot of things happened. Here are some of the things. This is TPM's Morning Memo.

At the risk of participating in the overuse of Michael Kinsley's rule of scandals – "The scandal isn't what's illegal, the scandal is what's legal." – let's take another look at the way the Supreme Court's influence-peddling scandal is being portrayed.

The Rot Is Deep

The ostensible sin of Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito is failure to report gifts and freebies from wealthy GOP donors. That leads to a entirely unhelpful debate mired in semantics, legal technicalities, and line-drawing over disclosure requirements. It's not that the the reporting requirements are meaningless or useless or of no value (though probably less value than you think), it's that they're tripwires at best, an alert system.

Put it this way: If Thomas and Alito had disclosed these gifts, it would not have been okay! Or rather, in the norms of DC it would have been okay, but definitely should not have been okay.

A vast, lavishly funded, four-decade campaign to stack the federal judiciary and especially the Supreme Court with reliably indeed inalterably conservative judges is the real corruption here. Sure, more is needed on the ethics front and compliance with ethics rules should not be optional. But it's like taking a knife to a gunfight.

The flip side of the coin is also true though: The reporting so far isn't revealing sketchy quid pro quos. The justices aren't for sale. They're not crafting opinions based on these freebies. It's a lot more foundational, insidious, and corrupt than that.

The issue is Leonard Leo and the Federalist Society and a couple of generations of leading lawyers on the right exerting enormous influence over the composition of the judiciary. You don't fix that or reform the judiciary with nickel-and-dime financial disclosure rules alone.

Be clear about what the problem is.

Smell The Stench

In keeping with the above theme, I can't recommend enough the latest piece from Dahlia Lithwick on the how the justices' own sense of honor and propriety is not only not the issue but entirely misses the point. The clever title – "Justice Samuel Alito IS the Salmon" – suggests we might be in for a lot of bad fishing puns, but no!, Lithwick pulls it out, with gems like these:

The Supreme Court's Corruption Scandal Isn't About Ethical..., 2023 WLNR 21779718

A #protip that will no doubt make those justices who have been lured away to elaborate bear hunts and deer hunts and rabbit hunts and salmon hunts by wealthy oligarchs feel a bit sad: If your close personal friends who only just met you after you came onto the courts are memorializing your time together for posterity, there's a decent chance you are, in fact, the thing being hunted.

and ...

Nobody in this world enjoys hearing that they are the salmon. But that is why we don't allow the salmon be the sole arbiter of whether they are the salmon.

Here's more from Lithwick on why calling this an ethics scandal misses the point:

[embedded content]

The Excuses Themselves Are Incriminating

No one has been as keenly aware of and loudly trying to draw attention to the festering cesspit of dark money and Supreme Court control than Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI):

[embedded content]

Ya Don't Say?

A Trump 2020 campaign official appeared before a DC federal grand jury under the supervision of Special Counsel Jack Smith that is investigating the fake electors scheme.

Santos Bond Guarantors Revealed

Two things we learned yesterday:

The names of the guarantors of the surety bond that is keeping Rep. George Santos (R-NY) out of jail pending trial were finally publicly released: his dad and an aunt. Santos, who vowed he'd rather go to jail than let their names be made public, lied about that, too.

Who Will Nail Santos First?

With the the criminal case against Rep. George Santos (R-NY) proceeding apace, it's not clear that the House Ethics Committee investigation will matter that much – except that it does seem to be moving more quickly than usual. So I can't rule out that Ethics might beat DOJ to the punch in terms of actual punishment, like censure or expulsion. Stay tuned ...

Ken Paxton Impeachment Saga Rolls On

Two new developments this week:

The impeachment trial in the state Senate of Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) is scheduled to begin Sept. 5. State Sen. Angela Paxton, Ken Paxton's wife, has been barred by the state Senate from voting in the impeachment trial.

Kari Lake Sued For Defamation By Election Official

Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer has filed a defamation lawsuit against failed GOP Senate nominee Kari Lake for falsely alleging that he "sabotaged the election to prevent Republican candidates, including Lake, from winning."

Hunter Biden Gets July Court Date

A hearing has been set for July 26 in federal court in Delaware for Hunter Biden to enter guilty pleas in his tax case. The judge must still approve the plea agreement.

I Hate It When This Happens

TPM's Hunter Walker:

An Indiana chapter of the group Moms For Liberty, which was labeled an "extremist group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center earlier this month, posted an apology on Thursday morning after publishing a newsletter fronted with a quote from Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

Biden Tries To Shore Up Contraception Access

Editor's note: This item was by authored by TPM's Kate Riga

With red states increasingly eyeing contraception crackdowns as part of their anti-abortion regimes, President Biden will sign an executive order today to protect access to contraception.

The Supreme Court's Corruption Scandal Isn't About Ethical..., 2023 WLNR 21779718

Jen Klein, assistant to the President and director of the Gender Policy Council, named a couple of examples on a Thursday call with reporters.

"One is Texas not paying for any form of emergency contraception for low-income women and girls in their state family planning program," she said. "In Iowa, the Attorney General has suspended payments for emergency contraception for survivors of sexual assault."

The order comes on the heels of a couple other administration executive orders on reproductive healthcare, similarly limited in scope. President Joe Biden has repeatedly called on Congress to codify abortion protections — a nonstarter with a Republican House — given what he says is his minimal arsenal.

Klein added that on this weekend marking the one-year-anniversary of Dobbs , Friday's executive order is "the only policy action that you should expect."

Wyoming Abortion Pill Ban Put On Hold

A state judge in Wyoming has blocked a ban on abortion pills from going into effect while a lawsuit challenging the new law proceeds.

Judge Strikes Down Florida Anti-Trans Law

A federal judge has struck down a Florida law banning Medicaid coverage for gender-affirming care.

We Keep Tellin' Ya

The House GOP can't stop going after Social Security and Medicare.

Keep This On Your Radar

The commercial real estate bubble is a ticking time bomb.

U.S. Median Age Jumps Dramatically

Between 1980 and 2022, the median age in the United States jumped almost 9 years, from 30 to 38.9.

What Can You Spare?

If you're a regular Morning Memo reader, we'd love your support during the TPM Journalism Fund drive. Many, many thanks to those who have already given.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Government (1GO80); Government Institutions (1GO90); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); National Judiciaries (1NA65); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Supreme Court (1US13))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56); Contraception (1CO66); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Women's Health (1WO30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Wyoming (1WY84))

The Supreme Court's Corruption Scandal Isn't About Ethical..., 2023 WLNR 21779718

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Supreme Court; House GOP; Federalist Society; House Ethics Committee; Republican House; Moms For Liberty; Gender Policy Council; Congress; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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June 23, 2023

Indiana Democratic Party: Indiana Republicans Need to Denounce Moms For Liberty, Group Quoting Hitler in Newsletter

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana, June 23 -- The Indiana Democratic Party issued the following news release:

The Hamilton County chapter of Moms For Liberty quoted Adolf Hitler on the front page of their most recent monthly newsletter.

The group, founded in 2021, and listed as an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, has gained support from Indiana Republican officials. This includes Attorney General Todd Rokita, who praised the group in social media posts earlier this month.

With the recent use of Hitler's words for their agenda, the Indiana Democratic Party calls on every Republican in Hamilton County to join Carmel Democratic mayoral candidate Miles Nelson in denouncing Moms For Liberty immediately.

Nelson commented on the group's actions: "As a man of devout Jewish faith and a parent concerned about our kids' education, this hate speech has no place in our community. Councilor Finkam has refused to comment on issues related to our schools throughout this entire campaign, but I'm hopeful the inflammatory rhetoric of the former Nazi leader would call her to act in condemning this organization."

Carmel Republican mayoral nominee Sue Finkam should join Miles and denounce this hateful language used by one of the worst dictators in history.

"Hamilton County voters know extremism. It's why the Republican Party's lurch to the right has made it one of the fastest trending places in the country toward Democrats. Carmel residents don't stand for rhetoric from Nazis and we call on Councilor Finkam to join Councilor Nelson in rejecting this hateful language. Hate groups have no place in the future of Carmel, or Indiana," said Indiana Democratic Party Chairman Mike Schmuhl.

Moms For Liberty's newsletter also spewed hateful remarks about Hamilton County's LGBTQ+ community, and Carmel's upcoming Pride festivities.

Indianapolis Star 6.21: "Page 4 of the Parent Brigade included a mention of Carmel High School. The newsletter decried the school's recent \$10,000 award from the "It Gets Better Project," a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is to uplift, empower and connect LGBTQ youth around the globe.

Money awarded to Carmel High School will be used to produce community-wide Pride events at the Carmel Pride festival happening June 25 at Carter Green.

The Parent Brigade newsletter also called out sponsors of Carmel Pride, labeling the event 'perversion.'"

Indiana Democratic Party: Indiana Republicans Need to Denounce Moms For...

* * *

Original text here:
<https://www.indems.org/indiana-republicans-need-to-denounce-moms-for-liberty-group-quoting-hitler-in-newsletter/MSTRUCK-8196214> MSTRUCK

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Judaism (1JU93); Legislation (1LE97); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Indiana Democratic Party; Indiana Republicans; Republican Party; Parent Brigade; Carmel High School; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler) (INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana)

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2023 WLNR 21747954

Tennessean, The (Nashville, TN)
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June 23, 2023

Williamson County School Board votes to keep five books on school shelves Following complaints filed against five young adult novels, the Williamson County School Board voted to keep the books on school shelves.

Angele Latham, Nashville Tennessean

The Williamson County Schools board voted this week to keep five books on the shelves of county high school libraries, after complaints were filed against a selection of young adult novels.

The books “Perks of Being a Wallflower” by Stephen Chbosky, “The Field Guide to a North American Teenager” by Ben Philippe, “Where the Crawdads Sing” by Delia Owens, “Speak” by Laurie Halse Anderson and “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” by Jonathan Safran Foer were all up for restriction and removal from the county’s high schools.

But after a recommendation to keep them by the book review committee, the board members voted overwhelmingly to reject the complaints and keep the books in the libraries.

Board member Eric Welch confirmed for The Tennessean that the first four books were the focus of one complaint by a local parent, who was satisfied with the committee’s recommendation to keep them available.

Welch also confirmed that a separate complaint against “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” was filed by a woman with “zero” connection to Williamson County Schools and who had not read the book, but was directed to file the complaint by a political action group out of Florida.

The board voted 8-2 over two votes to keep the books on the shelves.

Board members Dan Cash and Donna Clements voted against the review committee’s recommendations on each motion. Both board members were endorsed by conservative political action committee Williamson Families, which was launched by the local Moms For Liberty branch in 2021.

Moms For Liberty has been on the forefront of a number of campaigns against books in public schools, particularly in Williamson and Wilson counties, as well as across the state and nation.

Clements alluded to this effort while stating her opposition to the books, saying that the board has “not paid attention to state law” in keeping the books, and calling the unfettered access to books an “undue burden on parents.”

The Wilson County School Board is currently facing a federal lawsuit after a Wilson County resident accused the board, as well as the Wilson County Book Review Committee, of violating the Tennessee Open Meetings Act and the First Amendment by holding secret meetings to determine what books could be restricted or banned.

Williamson County School Board votes to keep five books..., 2023 WLNR 21747954

Read more from Wilson County: Lawsuit: Resident accuses Wilson County library panel of secret meetings to restrict books

The majority of Williamson County board members were supportive of the books.

"These books deal with tough topics, and the way 'Speak' handles them is so thoughtful, empathetic and considerate to those who are going through such things," board member KC Haugh said. "I would encourage everyone to read that book, and think about what the impact would be to those kids who might need that lifeline if you ban it....These books are not promoting horrific activities, they teach kids a way to relate to difficult circumstances and how to communicate it to parents and peers. The power of books is a double-edged sword and I would hate to stifle that."

Ravenwood High School student Dani Morales spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting, stating that the removal of books would only result in a "narrow-minded, homogenous society."

"In my opinion, banning the books that are being challenged here today won't do anything except make it harder for teens who have experienced topics in these books, such as sexual abuse, assault, depression and suicide to come forward about their experience and to try to seek help for any trauma they have received," she said. "School has always been a place where students can think freely and explore different ideas and perspectives. By banning books, we are stripping this away and denying students to learn about different experiences."

Both motions were approved alongside promises from the board members to discuss creating a rating system for books after Cash urged for a better review process in addition to the review committee.

"We keep being told it's an infringement on the right of the children, but no one acknowledges that...this board has the power (to remove explicit things)," he said. "I've said for well over a year that we should have a rating system. If we can't do that, then shame on us. I will vote no on this until we, as board, sit down on a retreat and have a discussion about these sexually explicit and vulgar books."

Board member Jennifer Aprea placed the onus on the parents to opt out of books, rather than the school to censor books.

"Our parents know their kids the best," she said. "It is better for constitutionality and liberty to make sure everyone has access that wants it, and parents have the right to opt out."

The USA Today Network - Tennessee's coverage of First Amendment issues is funded through a collaboration between the Freedom Forum and Journalism Funding Partners.

Have a story to tell? Reach Angele Latham by email at alatham@gannett.com, by phone at 731-343-5212, or follow her on Twitter at [@angele_latham](https://twitter.com/angele_latham)

This article originally appeared on Nashville Tennessean: Williamson County School Board votes to keep five books on school shelves

---- **Index References** ----

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June 23, 2023

Stockard on the Stump: Humble backer files election complaint against Leader Johnson

Sam Stockard

Jun 23, 2023

The Humble-Johnson love-fest continues.

A week after the Tennessee Registry of Election Finance gave Gary Humble an extension to prove his 2022 Senate campaign didn't illegally coordinate with the group he runs, a Humble supporter filed a complaint alleging illegal coordination by his opponent, Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson.

The sworn complaint by Rebecca McCray of Fairview claims Johnson's campaign worked illegally with Tennesseans for Student Success and Team Kid PAC as well as McPAC, the political action committee of Lt. Gov. Randy McNally.

Johnson beat Humble by only 2.2 percentage points last fall, raising questions about whether the Senate Republican Caucus leader could stave off another challenge in four years and at some point elevate to lieutenant governor. Since then, Johnson has burnished his conservative credentials to the point he seems to ask himself each day, "What would Gary do?"

Gary Humble (Photo: submitted)

McCray contends "substantial evidence" exists to show Johnson's campaign "unlawfully coordinated" with the PACs that sent out mailers attacking Humble and that they failed to disclose their connections to each other.

The filing points out Harry Allen, who handled Team Kid PAC, "is or was" Johnson's boss along with serving on the board of Tennesseans for Student Success, an education choice group, and that it is "unreasonable" to think they had no discussions about anti-Humble mailers and that Johnson had "no knowledge" of them.

McCray's filing also claims it is "unreasonable" to think McNally never spoke to Johnson, who is part of Senate Republican Caucus leadership, about "using his personal PAC to run attack ads" against Humble.

Johnson said Thursday the allegations are "bogus."

"My campaign has always acted both ethically and legally," the Franklin Republican said in a statement. "Any suggestion otherwise is a fruitless attempt to distract Tennesseans from the good work we're doing to protect our conservative values."

McNally also denied any coordination between his PAC and Johnson, saying, "Stringing together unrelated and irrelevant information in a 52-page document does not constitute a valid complaint." He noted all McPAC expenditures are independent

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and that his vendors take “great care” in following the law.

McCray also alleges that Ward Baker, Johnson’s campaign manager, who was accused of illegal coordination in a previous election, collaborated with PACs that sent out anti-Humble mailers.

The filing provides documents showing Baker is founder and president of Anchor Research and Baker Group Strategies at 2000 Glen Echo Road, Suite 200 in Nashville and that Robert Sechrist, who is part of the Baker Group, opened Acquire Digital at 200 Glen Echo Road.

It also shows American Mail Group LLC is located at the same address and that Direct Edge Campaigns LLC is set up at Glen Echo Road Suite 207.

The filing contends that Tennessee Conservatives PAC worked with American Mail Group and Acquire Digital LLC, both housed in the same suite as Baker’s group, to send out anti-Humble mailers in July 2022.

McCray’s filing also notes Students First PAC contributed to Johnson’s PAC and worked with Acquire Digital, American Mail Group and Direct Edge Campaigns to put out a mailer against Humble in July 2022.

Other documents show McNally’s PAC paid Direct Edge Campaigns in July 2022 for attack mailers on Humble and Johnson paid Acquire Digital for “advertising” from March to May 2022 and Anchor Research for “polling” and “professional services” last fall.

The filing also says Les Williamson serves as treasurer for all PACs connected to Baker and that Registry documents should show he is treasurer of Tennessee Conservatives PAC.

If your head is hurting after that, join the club.

Early this year, Registry board member Tom Lawless, a Senate Republican appointee, called for an investigation of Humble’s campaign, saying where there is “smoke” the board should “dig into it.” Lawless contended that Tennessee Stands events were campaign stops for Humble.

In her filing, McCray said, “If ‘transparency’ is so important, as Mr. Lawless has claimed in the past, I believe I have presented more than enough evidence of ‘smoke’ to raise a strong suspicion of unlawful campaign coordination on the part of Jack Johnson’s campaign.”

Last week’s Registry meeting at the Cordell Hull Building was packed with Humble supporters as the board opted to give him until October to provide documentation on contributions and expenses by his campaign, in addition to a questionable mailer linked to Tennessee Stands. Humble initially refused to turn over the information, leading to a subpoena, which still stands.

Registry staff recommended sending the matter to the Attorney General’s Office and taking it to Chancery Court. But the board, with Lawless abstaining, gave him four more months to comply.

Summertime — if not springtime — for Hitler

The Southern Poverty Law Center recently named the burgeoning Moms for Liberty an “extremist group” as it gains momentum nationwide, in part, by trying to ban school library books it finds offensive.

The Moms group made light of the designation.

But the Indianapolis Star reported this week that the Hamilton County, Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty sent out its first edition of The Parent Brigade complete with a quote of Adolf Hitler from 1935, “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future.”

The newsletter was updated later to provide “context” by saying the “horrific” leader’s quote should alert parents. “If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and

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protect children from an overreaching government,” the change said, according to the report.

Maybe someone should have thought about the ramifications of quoting Hitler before they sent out the newsletter.

It seems America has developed a bit of a love-hate relationship with the man who plunged the world into one of the worst moments in history. Just this month, we memorialized the U.S. soldiers who stormed Normandy Beach in 1944, running straight into German machine gun fire to defeat Hitler and the Nazi regime.

But a lot of people are latching on to one of the worst ethnic and religious cleansers in history and making him their role model. One thing is certain, he knew how to make people follow him into darkness.

The Hamilton County, Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, a burgeoning group in Tennessee, sent out a newsletter this week with an Adolf Hitler quote: “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future.

The question for Moms for Liberty is: Are they becoming Hitler or are they accusing public schools of Hitlerism? The answer probably lies with who’s trying to ban the books.

A sign for Tennessee

A federal judge in Florida this week struck down the state’s transgender health-care rule that blocks Medicaid beneficiaries from receiving gender-affirming medical care.

After a two-week trial, Judge Robert Hinkle ruled that Florida’s prohibition is unlawful and unconstitutional and ordered the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration to stop enforcement of the discriminatory ban.

For those not paying attention, Tennessee is in the midst of a legal challenge brought by transgender youth and families, joined by the Department of Justice, of state law prohibiting gender affirming care for minors.

Plaintiffs in the case filed civil investigation demand letters by Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti requiring Vanderbilt University Medical Center to turn over a litany of private information about transgender patients.

AG made sweeping demands for Vanderbilt transgender clinic records as part of fraud inquiry

Skrmetti claims the demands were made as part of an investigation into potential illegal billing of trans care patients on state insurance programs.

Parents of trans children are outraged at the hospital and not exactly glowing with appreciation for the attorney general. Skrmetti’s demands appear to go far beyond private health records to just about any type of document or communication remotely connected to gender affirming care.

Skrmetti’s office this week blamed Vanderbilt for scaring families. Critics of the Attorney General’s office are putting the blame on Skrmetti, who has joined just about every ultra-conservative cause in the nation while receiving \$4.3 million to pay outside law firms and another \$2.25 million for a 10-member “special litigation unit” to take on the Biden Administration.

Oh well, what’s a few million here and there, as long as they’re scaring the hell out of trans-folks? Come to think of it, if Moms for Liberty is worried about overreach, it ought to be citing Skrmetti in its newsletter.

Cordell lockdown

The Cordell Hull Building’s 6th floor was placed on lockdown Thursday after packages containing a white powder were delivered to Republican lawmakers’ offices.

The letters contained “obvious threats” from a liberal activist, according to a House Republican Caucus spokesperson. The sixth floor remained on lockdown Thursday afternoon while Homeland Security and first responders investigated. Staff and lawmakers were safe.

Because of the ongoing investigation, the caucus spokesperson declined to identify the activist or the type of threats.

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Not to make light of the situation, but this evokes memories of the anthrax scare of the early 2000s. One day, when I arrived at The Daily News Journal office in Murfreesboro, a large envelope was sitting on my desk. When I picked it up, white powder came out.

I tossed it back on the desk and scooted away. We called the Fire Department, and they quarantined my desk and sent me home to take a shower and change clothes. I told the assistant fire chief I'd already had a shower and fresh change and was getting low on wardrobe. He didn't care.

After months of investigation, they found out the white powder came from a packet of Aunt Jemima cornmeal. The message was clearly in response to a column I'd written about the county transportation director saying the kids on one bus were all fat because they ate nothing but cornbread.

If only I'd known it was cornmeal, I would have taken it home and made beans and cornbread.

Choking on the splinters

Despite fears – or wishes – that we're on the verge of recession, the state's coffers continue to fill up.

The Department of Finance and Administration announced this week the state's revenues hit \$1.6 billion in May, \$117.3 million more than budgeted, though they were down 1.16% from the same month last year.

Sales tax revenue came in \$112 million more than budgeted, but franchise and excise taxes were \$8.4 million less than projected. Those business taxes could be even less when a new tax break kicks in next fiscal year.

With May counted, state revenues are \$2 billion more than estimated for the first 10 months of the fiscal year, which ends later this month.

Each fall, the State Funding Board listens to economists' forecasts to come up with a projected growth rate for the state budget. Often lamenting the potential for an economic downturn, the board usually takes the path of least resistance and approves an ultra-conservative strategy.

Last November, the board adopted projections for an increase in tax revenues between 6.8% and 7.3% for the current fiscal year and a growth rate between 1.4% and 2.3% for the year starting in July.

One wonders when people will start tuning them out.

"Kill the headlights and put it in neutral / Stock car flamin' with a loser and the cruise control / Baby's in Reno with the vitamin D / Got a couple of couches, sleep on the love seat."

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---- Index References ----

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Medical Center

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In SLO County, adults are still obsessing over school..., 2023 WLNR 21802617

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June 23, 2023

In SLO County, adults are still obsessing over school bathrooms. Get over it | Opinion

By The Tribune Editorial Board, The Tribune

California law is clear.

Students are entitled to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity — regardless of the gender listed on their school records.

That law, AB 1266, has been in effect since 2014.

In other words, the issue is settled, yet you wouldn't know that from some of the outrageous statements made at Tuesday night's school board workshop in Templeton, held to discuss the district's policy on bathrooms and locker rooms as it relates to gender. Retrofitting facilities to allow more privacy for students was a key focus.

In anticipation of a large turnout, the meeting was held in the band room at Templeton Middle School.

It quickly devolved into an ideological battleground so intense that the school board president threatened to remove people.

At times, it sounded more like a religious revival than a school board session.

One speaker asked audience members to raise their hands if they do not believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins. (One woman who raised her hand could be overheard saying, "I'm Jewish.")

Another quoted Bible verses.

And still another drew parallels between California's public school system and the schools in Nazi Germany.

"The Nazis first focused on what the students learn. They changed to core curriculum to emphasize racial science, sports and history. ... Subjects such as religion became less important and were eventually removed from the curriculum," she said, though she assured the board that it was not her intention to "slam" teachers.

Community members, parents and students gather in the band room at Templeton Middle School for the meeting about transgender students' use of restrooms and locker rooms.

'Hatred and vitriol'

It was all to make a point: Boys have no place in girls' restrooms or locker rooms. And vice versa.

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Never mind that the California law saying otherwise has been in place for almost 10 years. The current wave of anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment is trying to erase that, even if it means putting school districts in legal jeopardy for failing to follow the law.

Some who commented in support of transgender rights said it was a depressing experience to stand in the Templeton band room and listen to what one speaker described as “hated and vitriol” directed at a vulnerable group of students, especially when the rights of transgender people are under attack.

Several states, including Florida, Kansas, Arkansas and Iowa, have passed laws forbidding transgender people from using the bathrooms of their choice in public buildings, including schools.

Even in liberal California, conservative backlash led the Long Beach school board to put plans for a gender-neutral high school locker room on hold.

Moms for Liberty: ‘We are for the innocence of our children’

In San Luis Obispo County, there have been occasional anti-transgender comments at school board meetings but nothing like the marathon meeting in Templeton.

Some who spoke in support of transgender rights blamed school board member Jennifer Grinager for the hostile atmosphere.

Grinager, a former president and current member of Moms for Liberty, had pumped up the volume by promoting the meeting at a North County Tea Party gathering.

”Even if you don’t live in Templeton, it’s important for you to know this and consider coming,” she said.

Students using the “opposite sex” restroom isn’t something just happening in big cities, she warned. It’s “rampant” in the Templeton district, though she acknowledged she doesn’t have exact numbers.

”I know for certain of four girls using the boys’ locker room ... and at least one student at the high school who’s transgender that’s using the female bathroom there,” she said. “So it’s happening at all of our school districts — Paso Robles, Atascadero, everywhere.”

There you have it.

Grinager’s conclusion that this is “rampant” is based on — what? — rumors and anecdotal information, like much of the other phony data being tossed around.

Her affiliation with the controversial Moms for Liberty — an organization the Southern Poverty Law Center placed on its list of hate groups — she explained like this: “We are for the innocence of our children. We are against them being sexualized, and that’s what we’re fighting for. We see that that’s what’s going on in our school system.”

Her conservative point of view no doubt helped Grinager get elected, but her job now is not to be a cheerleader for Moms for Liberty.

She would do well to recognize that as an elected official sworn to uphold the laws of the state, her first duty is to her office — not to the Moms or to fringe, right-wing Tea Partiers.

While she’s at it, Grinager should reconsider her approach to this and any other potentially divisive topic she might tackle, so that she comes from a place of collaboration that fosters listening and cooperation and doesn’t inflame powerful emotions unnecessarily.

The entire tenor of the meeting was preordained once she turned a simple question about improving facilities into a culture

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war.

She should dump the mama bear schtick and, like the other adults in the room, focus on productive ways she can help Templeton schools thrive through consensus and unity.

Superintendent Aaron Asplund said it best: “There’s no reason our conversations need to be framed this way as two sets of values in conflict. Some folks might have come thinking this should be framed as a conservative versus progressive values showdown. That’s not what this is.”

Mom’s for Liberty, Jennifer Grinager speaks to SLO County Tea Party

Moving toward gender-neutral facilities

This “bathroom issue” does not have to be a big deal; there are plenty of more critical issues to focus on in education.

We’ve already seen an evolution in bathroom facilities in many places — shopping centers, restaurants and workplaces often have several types of restrooms: men’s rooms, women’s rooms, unisex, family restrooms.

Schools — at least in states that aren’t stripping trans youths of their rights — are moving in that direction too, by focusing on ways to repurpose existing facilities to make all students feel comfortable, be they straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

The focus now is on providing gender-neutral facilities, while at the same time increasing privacy.

The state Department of Education is offering guidance to districts that want to add all-access restrooms.

And the state Legislature is looking at new facility requirements.

One proposal, SB 760, would require all public schools in California to provide at least one gender-neutral bathroom for students by 2025. Because it would be a state mandate, schools would be reimbursed for the cost.

That makes sense.

Mandating actual facilities would take the pressure off local school districts. Individual districts should not be forced into a position of having to defend themselves for repurposing restrooms and locker rooms to better accommodate students.

The Templeton district already is considering several ideas for increasing student privacy, such as including individual changing stalls in locker rooms and adding floor-to-ceiling partitions in restrooms.

The administration and school board deserve credit for that, instead of pushback and interference from people who think their personal beliefs should take precedence.

Again, California’s law is clear. Students have the right to use facilities corresponding to their gender identities — a humane policy that deserves support.

If adults don’t like it, they can take it to court or try to overturn the law by putting it on the ballot — though good luck getting that to pass in California.

Templeton is a prime example of a school district striving to do the right thing by following the law, while at the same time accommodating all students who are under their care.

For that, it deserves support, respect and cooperation.

---- Index References ----

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'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books..., 2023 WLNR 21735447

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June 23, 2023

'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books rages at Wallenpaupack Pike County Moms for Liberty vice chair continues battle against several books at Wallenpaupack's library. Other parents say it's "not about books."

Peter Becker, Tri-County Independent

At Wallenpaupack School Board meetings, a topic recently has spurred an increase in public discourse: Whether certain high school library books should be taken from the shelves because of what some consider inappropriate content for young readers.

Jasmine Ruiz, who was running in spring primary for Wallenpaupack School Board and is listed as vice-chair on the website for the Pike County chapter of Moms for Liberty, raised concerns over certain books at the February meeting. At the May 8 meeting, and then again June 12, several people addressed the school board about restricting availability of certain books for students.

Also attending was Maria Rotella, who was on the same ballot for school board (she and Ruiz were unsuccessful in their election efforts.)

Several others at the May meeting shared another perspective.

Ruiz filed complaints about two books, and other residents did so about three others.

The books in question

The titles in question, along with the number of copies at the high school library, were

"Perks of Being a Wallflower" by Stephen Chbosky (1999), three copies;"On the Bright Side, I'm Now the Girlfriend of a Sex God" by Louise Rennison (2001), one copy;"We are the Ants" by Shaun David Hutchinson (2016), one copy;"The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini (2003), two copies; and"Out of Darkness" by Ashley Hope Pérez (2015), e-book.

"It is worth noting that most of these books have been in our libraries for many years," Superintendent Keith Gunuskey told reporters.

'A show of force'

Jasmine Ruiz read Facebook posts that she described as being from parents who were asked to post by a school board member.

One of the posts read "for a show a force so we can take the wind out of their sails and let them know that Wallenpaupack Area is not going to vote for them and we're not going to put up with their crazy agenda."

Ruiz criticized the unidentified school board member for asking several parents to come and share comments at the meeting

'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books..., 2023 WLNR 21735447

in what she called “an effort to silence, undermine and demoralize certain other concerned parents and taxpayers, some of whom are running for school board.”

”Neutrality doesn’t exist if a person in a position of power is needed to bully another parent,” Ruiz continued.

At the June meeting, Ruiz took issue with the board, saying she had learned from another parent that one of the public comment registrants at the May meeting had requested to speak before Ruiz.

”This is the same person who had made a public threat against me on Facebook as I informed the board of, at the last school board meeting,” Ruiz said. “This is the same person who stated on Facebook that board members asked her to organize in numbers in order to demoralize me and other taxpayers who ran for office in the recent primary election.”

”The board has therefore shown preference to a left-wing activist,” Ruiz said.

She noted that the school board decided to extend the 3-minute speaking limit to 5 minutes in May and did so again in June.

Ruiz gave her opinion that the board did so to accommodate “left-wing activists.”

She said this was especially clear to her because earlier in the school year she had asked to speak when there was no one registered to speak but was “aggressively declined that opportunity.”

In her June comments, Ruiz said these opponents claimed that removing inappropriate and sexually explicit books from the school library was “offensive to free speech” and the board believes that the present library policy is sufficient and declines to remove “filthy material.”

She referenced books like “George” and “I am Jaz.” Gunuskey, the superintendent, stated later that these two books are available only at the Wallenpaupack North Intermediate School (grades 3-5).

Carolynn Burkholder, who has four grandchildren at Wallenpaupack, said she started reading some of the school library books that she characterized as “pure pornography.”

”I am not an extremist,” she said. “So, I’d like to ask what purpose are these books in the library? If parents think their children can read these kinds of books, they can order them online or go to the public library.”

Burkholder, at the June meeting, said she had printed out information from the books in question and handed copies to each school board member.

Martha Tashino, Burkholder’s sister, said she read part of “We Are the Ants” online.

”It’s full of disgusting, explicit sexual acts,” Tashino said. “I think you can find this stuff anywhere, but I don’t see why they should be in public school.” She said the very first page has this content.

Tashino said it was sad students would be exposed to this material.

”All I am asking is if these books are going to be kept here, there be a list put out to all parents in the beginning of the school year of sexual-content books,” she suggested. “I think it’s a reasonable thing to ask.”

Tashino said at the June meeting she is so serious about this issue because she is concerned that exposure to sexual content at an early age could lead to addiction.

The American Bar Association published an article in 2014, “How Pornography Harms Children: The Advocate’s Role,” by Allison Baxter. “Exposure to pornography harms children and youth by normalizing sexual violence, creating unrealistic expectations for intimate partners and relationships, and increasing the risk of addiction.”

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Tashino emphasized: "I am not a book banner by any means. I'd like to exclude them from the Wallenpaupack School District because you can get them at the regular library or many other places.

"If anyone can tell me the benefit of having this material educational-wise or otherwise ... in the school, maybe I'd understand it different, but I just can't believe that it's helpful," Tashino said.

The board made no comment at either the May or the June meetings.

Opposition alleges 'endgame' is to 'combine church and state'

Widely diverse opinions were shared about the appropriateness of certain books in school libraries.

Alexandra Allison, a parent in the district, told the school board, "Various ... extremist groups" are "trying to force you to change school policies and values." Allison continued, "It's not about books — it's not about many things that they would like to nit-pick and stir up. They read books out of context and a false narrative of certain books that are offered to young students in order to cause chaos within the district. The books that they target are about the marginalized community. ..."

Allison suggested the "endgame of these groups" is to "dismantle the public school system and combine church and state."

Tammy McCloud, also a parent in the district, cautioned that some are aligning with groups that argue against "evidence-based education and standards for students" and actively challenge Wallenpaupack school policies.

"These attacks rely on a playbook used by groups of disgruntled actors to offer a solution in search of a problem," McCloud said, saying they use inflammatory language to instill fear in the community and divide parents between "those who support children and those who support moral decay and indoctrination."

McCloud cautioned of using school board meetings to "promote an agenda of fear and exclusion at the expense of our kids." She advised parents to enforce their values in their own homes rather than forcing their values on an entire community.

Adam Basile, a Wallenpaupack Class of 2023 senior, cautioned that banning books, like alcohol during Prohibition, is both useless and counterproductive. He said the high school experience is a time for the "free flow of thought" and asked if it was not better for a child to come home and ask for guidance with these thoughts rather than wait for college.

"By banning books ... you're making it a forbidden fruit," Basile said. "Suppressing ideas during an important time in our lives. It is important that our minds have a chance to grow and develop with us." He said banning ideas is a first step towards "1984," the vision of a totalitarian future set out in George Orwell's novel.

Related: Monroe County Moms for Liberty chairperson convicted in harassment case

Of interest: Poconos NAACP leader talks 'Moms for Liberty' as local harassment case moves forward

Regional and nationwide debate

It is a topic that has gained momentum nationwide in recent years.

In March 2022, several parents in the Delaware Valley School District in Pike County addressed their school board, asking for the removal of several books they deemed inappropriate from district libraries.

According to PEN America, in fall 2021, a list of books related to diversity and equity were banned from use in classrooms of the Central York school district. The ban was later rescinded after a wave of complaints from students, teachers and community members.

This helped spur parents and community members nationwide to raise questions about library selections in their respective districts.

Gunuskey said the district has not had these types of requests before. He said they do have a system in place for parents and guardians to exercise control over what their child can take out from school libraries.

'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books..., 2023 WLNR 21735447

Board Policy 109 allows for a committee to review complaints about instructional materials, which presents their determination to the complainant.

Gunuskey said their library management system can block the loaning of books to specific students.

Parents or guardians should email the building principal if they feel they do not want their child to borrow a specific book, Gunuskey said. Restrictions can be made based on title, author or subject.

Related: Community debates book bans at school meeting in Pike County

Books for 'diverse community'

Requests to ban certain books are not limited to school libraries.

Tracy Schwartz, system administrator at the Wayne Library Authority, shared concerns some patrons have had about materials in their public libraries, as well as the viewpoint of the authority board and how they respond to concerns.

"We have had patrons who have questioned why we have certain materials in our collection," Schwarz said. "Mostly it's about books in the youth section, most often over materials referencing sex, LGBTQ or gender issues, but also interracial families, racially and religiously diverse books."

"We have had negative comments about our Banned Books and Pride Month displays. Mostly verbal comments where people express their opinions to staff members. In the adult section we have had patrons object to biographical, LGBTQ, political, religious and history books that they personally felt were offensive," she said.

Schwartz said that so far these comments and questions have come from individual patrons, not organized groups.

"Most people will tell us what they don't like or what they do like, but thankfully ... they have seen the Pandora's box that could be opened if they ask us to restrict what is in the library based on any individual, group or faction's beliefs," she stated.

Schwartz further commented: "They appear to appreciate that we keep things well rounded and neutral. We feel very strongly about having a well-rounded collection that contains materials that appeal to a diverse community."

The Wayne Library Alliance includes seven public libraries in Honesdale, Hawley, Newfoundland, Hamlin, Pleasant Mount, Lakewood and Bethany.

"We do not support book bans and fully support the Pennsylvania Library Association's decision to partner with the Unite Against Book Bans national initiative, which empowers readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship," Schwartz said.

"We listen to their concerns. We discuss that, while this may not be something they would personally like to read, it does not give them the right to say others can't. That is the best part about the public library: You can check out whatever you would like.

"We also ask patrons for suggestions of topics or authors they would like to see more of at the library. We want the collection to be inclusive." She continued. "When we say the library is for everyone, we mean it."

She said that, if needed, the patron can ask the library for a Request for Reconsideration of a Library Resource form, The form can be filled out and turned in to the library director for review. According to Schwarz, it rarely gets that far.

This article originally appeared on Tri-County Independent: 'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books rages at Wallenpaupack

---- **Index References** ----

Company: AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION; Pen Co of America

'Filthy material' or 'a chance to grow': Debate over books..., 2023 WLNR 21735447

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Kentucky (1KE38); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Wallenpaupack School Board; Wallenpaupack School District; Wayne Library Authority; Wayne Library Alliance; Pennsylvania Library Association; American Bar Association; PEN America)

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6-23-2023 Washington Update, 2023 WLNR 22111424

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6/23/23 U.S. Cong. News (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 22111424

U.S. Congressional News
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June 23, 2023

Section: U.S. House of Representatives Documents

6-23-2023 Washington Update

June 23, 2023

Friends,

I hope you and your family are well! I wanted to provide you with a few updates regarding what's going on -

SCOTUS Delivers Another Win for Life

This week, the Supreme Court provided another win for life! Last year, I led over 100 of my colleagues in the House and Senate to stand for the unborn and petition the Court to take up *Kerr v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic*. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court overturned the decision made by a Federal Court and insisted the case be reconsidered based on recent rulings.

The *Kerr v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic* ruling remands the case back to the Fourth Circuit for consideration. This overturns last year's decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit that allowed Planned Parenthood to be listed as a South Carolina Medicaid Provider.

I trust the Court will now rightly side with Governor Henry McMaster and South Carolina in their fight to ensure taxpayer dollars are not used to fund abortion providers like Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is a pro-abortion activist group that has no place on South Carolina's list of Medicaid providers because abortion is not health care. Click [HERE](#) for more information on this.

Life Wins: Celebrating One Year of a Post-Roe America

The very purpose of government is to protect our God-given natural rights, the first being the right to life. On June 24, 2022, LIFE won when the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* and declared it "egregiously wrong from the start."

Over 60 million unborn children died in the womb since *Roe* was decided in 1973, and now, countless lives have been saved in a post-*Roe* America. We know the fight for life has only just begun as it is now largely up to the states. I will never waver in my fight for life and will continue to do all I can to defend the rights of unborn children. If we don't stand for the unborn, then who will?

Biden Impeachment Proceeds, Schiff Censured

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This week, we saw a lot of action and accountability on the House floor with the Joe Biden impeachment vote and Adam Schiff censure vote. On Thursday, I voted to move forward with impeachment proceedings against President Joe Biden for high crimes and misdemeanors related to the southern border crisis and the national security threat his policies have caused. The president's dereliction of duty at the southern border has led to an invasion of our country, with over 5.5 million illegal border crossings since he took office.

On Wednesday, I voted to censure Adam Schiff for peddling lies about President Trump and "collusion" with Russia when he was chair of the Intelligence Committee. Schiff lied to the American people, wasted taxpayer dollars on the Russian hoax investigation, and deserves to be held accountable for his actions.

Hardening Our Grid Infrastructure

Grid security is pivotal for our national security. Last week, my colleagues on the Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Subcommittee and I held a hearing with experts and visited the electrical distribution substations in Moore County, North Carolina that were attacked in December to better understand how to enhance American grid security and resilience. It's critical that we harden our power grid infrastructure to prevent against future attacks, which is why the Energy and Commerce Committee is leading the way on this issue.

Concerned Parents Aren't Domestic Terrorists

The Left-wing SPLC recently labeled Moms for Liberty an "extremist" group and put them on a hate map for believing that parents, not the government, are the primary stakeholders in their children's education. I am proud to cosponsor a resolution to condemn the labeling of concerned parents as "extreme." It's not extremism to fight to ensure biological men aren't allowed on your daughters' sports teams and for your school's curriculum to be appropriate for children. Click [HERE](#) for more information on this.

Hunter Biden's Sweetheart Plea Deal

This week, the Justice Department ignored the serious charges of influence peddling by the Biden Crime Family as they work a sweetheart plea deal with Hunter Biden on tax and gun misdemeanors. The Bidens must not be allowed to escape prosecution for the more serious crimes that are being investigated. Make no mistake--this is a White House-approved whitewash by the DOJ.

House Republicans are committed to getting to the bottom of the litany of Biden family corruption schemes, with or without the slap on the wrist Hunter is getting today with this plea deal. We cannot allow the two-tiered justice system to continue to persecute conservatives while looking the other way for liberals. Durham Testifies Before the House Judiciary Committee, IRS Whistleblower

This week, Special Counsel John Durham testified before the House Judiciary Committee, and if you had any doubts, my colleagues on the House Judiciary Committee showed the world that the FBI was operating with one goal: to take down President Trump. We must eradicate the corruption in our justice system and ensure the failures seen in Crossfire Hurricane never happen again. Here's some of what we know:

- The FBI had no evidence in hand to justify the Crossfire Hurricane Investigation.
- The FBI failed to examine evidence that went against their narrative targeting President Trump.
- The FBI ignored concerns from case agents about faulty evidence and unsubstantiated accusations.
- The FBI lawyers manufactured evidence to spy on a presidential candidate.

This week, my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee also showcased another example of "laws for thee but not for me" from the IRS and DOJ when it comes to the Biden Crime Family. Our justice system and the American people demand equal enforcement of the law--not preferential treatment for Hunter Biden. Click [HERE](#) for more information on this.

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Given the Hunter Biden news from this week alone, I call for a special prosecutor to be appointed for the Hunter Biden investigation. Especially given the fact that he is the president's son, Hunter's unlawful and unethical activity is a threat to our national security.

Legislative Update

I cosponsored H.R. 4238, Rep. Stephanie Bice's bill called "Kate's Law" or the Stop Illegal Reentry Act, to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to raise penalties for immigrants that reenter the United States after being removed.

I cosponsored H.R. 4181, Rep. Andrew Ogles' bill to establish "Tiananmen Square Memorial Boulevard" on the street that the Chinese Embassy sits on in Washington, DC.

I cosponsored H. Res. 518, Rep. Lisa McClain's resolution objecting to "extreme" labels being used towards parents that attempt to ensure that school curriculum and sports are appropriate for their children in age and sex, in light of Moms for Liberty being labeled an "extremist" group.

I cosponsored H.R. 4058, Rep. Josh Brecheen's Healthy SNAP Act of 2023, to exclude soft drinks, candy, ice cream, and prepared desserts from being purchased with SNAP benefits (food stamps), and require the Secretary to ensure food for SNAP recipients reflects nutrition and public health concerns, as well as cultural eating patterns.

In the District

Emma Swaney, a rising junior at Belton-Honea Path High School, will attend the National High School Rodeo this July in Wyoming. Swaney is a member of the South Carolina High School Rodeo, where she qualified in the top four for Goat Tying. At the National High School Rodeo, Swaney will bear the South Carolina State Flag in the Rodeo's opening ceremony.

It is an honor to serve the Third District of South Carolina. Should you or your family need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office directly.

Blessings and Liberty,

Jeff Duncan

Member of Congress

---- Index References ----

Company: Internal Revenue Service; Federal Bureau of Investigation

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Government Institutions (1GO90); Government Litigation (1GO18); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); National Judiciaries (1NA65); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Supreme Court (1US13))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); South Carolina (1SO63); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Ways and Means Committee; Supreme Court; House Judiciary Committee; U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit; LIFE; Intelligence Committee; Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Subcommittee; Energy and Commerce Committee; Justice Department; White House; Belton-Honea Path High School; National High School Rodeo; South

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Carolina High School Rodeo; Congress; IRS; FBI)

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6/22/23 Broad. News 22:01:39

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June 22, 2023

Section: Advisory

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The Associated Press

Here are the AP's latest coverage plans, top stories and promotable content. All times EDT. For up-to-the minute information on AP's coverage, visit Coverage Plan.

NEW/DEVELOPING:

Adds: WISCONSIN-BUDGET-UNIVERSITY, UNITED NATIONS-CHILDREN-IN-CONFLICT,
NASHVILLE-SCHOOL-SHOOTING, ELECTION 2024-BIDEN-ENDORSEMENTS,
CONGRESS-OVERSIGHT-HUNTER BIDEN, ELECTION 2024-ARIZONA-SENATE, MOMS FOR LIBERTY-HITLER
QUOTE.

TOP STORIES

TITANIC-TOURIST SUB — The U.S. Coast Guard says a missing submersible imploded near the wreckage of the Titanic, killing all five people on board. Coast Guard officials said Thursday that they've notified the families of the crew of the Titan, which was missing for several days. SENT: 1,190 words, photos, video. WITH: TITANIC-TOURIST SUB-HOURS LOST — About an hour and a half into its voyage, a submersible on an expedition to view the wreckage of the Titanic lost communications. It would take another nine hours before that was reported to the Coast Guard. SENT: 870 words, photo; TITANIC-TOURIST-SUB-PAST-RESCUES -- Past deep sea rescues show the challenges of saving those on board. SENT: 1,190 words, photos; TITANIC-TOURIST-SUB-CUSTOMER — A man who was one of the submersible company's first customers says a dive he made to the site two years ago was a "kamikaze operation." SENT: 430 words, photos; TITANIC-TOURIST-SUB-LIVE-UPDATES.

ABORTION — A year after the U.S. Supreme Court rescinded a five-decade-old right to abortion, 25 million women of childbearing age now live in states where the law makes abortions harder to get. SENT: 2,360 words, photos. An abridged version of 910 words is also available. WITH: ABORTION-STATES — Where abortion laws stand in every state a year after the Supreme Court overturned Roe. SENT: 1,280 words, photo.

UNITED STATES-INDIA — President Joe Biden pronounces the U.S.-India relationship has never been stronger and

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announces new business deals as he welcomes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a state visit. Human rights activists and American lawmakers, however, question the administration's decision to honor Modi. By Aamer Madhani, Colleen Long and Seung Min Kim. SENT: 1,230 words, photos, video. With UNITED STATES-INDIA-STATE DINNER — The Bidens are hosting about 400 guests from the worlds of business, entertainment and politics at the White House state dinner for Modi. SENT: 680 words, photos, video. UPCOMING: 800 words after 6:30 p.m. event; UNITED STATES-INDIA-MODI-PRESS — Modi, who hasn't taken part in a formal press conference in years, takes questions alongside Biden. SENT: 750 words, photos.

ABORTION-BIDEN — In the year since the Supreme Court overturned the national legal right to abortion, President Joe Biden has made little progress toward restoring access. But the White House has maintained an intense focus on the issue as the first anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision approaches on Saturday. It's holding several events this week, including a rally with Biden and leading abortion rights groups on Friday. SENT: 1,140 words, photos.

BIDEN-IMPEACHMENT — Hard-right House Republicans pressing to impeach President Biden force a vote that sends an impeachment measure to House committees. But they're under no obligation to act on the resolution from Rep. Lauren Boebert. By Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro. SENT: 800 words, photos.

GEORGE SANTOS — Two relatives helped indicted U.S. Rep. George Santos stay out of detention while he awaits trial by guaranteeing his bond. That's according to court records unsealed Thursday. SENT: 540 words, photos.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR

UNITED NATIONS-CHILDREN IN CONFLICT — The United Nations puts Russian forces on its annual blacklist of countries that violate children's rights in conflict for killing boys and girls and attacking schools and hospitals in Ukraine. SENT: 550 words, photo.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR — Russia-backed officials say an explosion damaged a bridge that is one of the few links between Crimea and Ukraine's mainland. Russian forces in Crimea use the Chongar bridge to reach southern Ukraine's Kherson province. SENT: 890 words, photos.

RUSSIA-NAVALNY — Russia's Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a lawsuit by imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny contesting prison regulations that allow prison officials to deprive him of stationery and pens. SENT: 390 words, photos.

SPOTLIGHTING VOICES

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS-SUBWAY VOICE -- The voice is familiar to many millions of New York City subway riders. For more than a decade, Bernie Wagenblast's voice has been ringing through bustling underground tunnels to herald an approaching train or remind the hurried masses to please stand away from the platform edge. Wagenblast has been using that deep, sonorous voice to inform and guide. Now, as a transgender woman, she uses it to inspire, mindful of the social and political upheaval in some parts of the United States. SENT: 850 words, video, photos.

HANFORD TRIBES — Three federally recognized tribes have devoted decades to restoring the condition of their ancestral lands in southeastern Washington state to what they were before those lands became the most radioactively contaminated site in the nation's nuclear weapons complex. But the tribes have been left out of negotiations on a major decision affecting the future cleanup of millions of gallons of radioactive waste stored in underground tanks on the Hanford site. SENT: 1,000

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words, photos.

BRITAIN-WINDRUSH DAY-EXPLAINER — Seventy-five years ago, a ship carrying more than 800 passengers from the Caribbean to new lives in Britain landed at Tilbury Dock near London. The arrival of the Empire Windrush on June 22, 1948, became a symbol of the post-war migration that transformed the U.K. SENT: 885 words, photos, videos. With BRITAIN-WINDRUSH-CHILDREN — Exhibition shines light on Caribbean’s ‘barrel children’ left behind by Windrush migrants to UK. SENT: 860 words, photos.

MORE NEWS

MUSK-ZUCKERBERG FIGHT — Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg are ready to fight, offline. In a now-viral back-and-forth seen on Twitter and Instagram this week, the two tech billionaires seemingly agreed to a “cage match” face off. SENT: 330 words, photo.

FLYING-TAXIS — The Paris region is planning for a small fleet of electric flying taxis to operate when it hosts the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games next summer. SENT: 965 words, photos.

CONCERT-HAIL-FANS-HURT -- Firefighters say seven people were taken to the hospital and up to 90 people were treated for injuries after hail pummeled concertgoers at Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver. SENT: 140 words, photos.

TROPICAL-WEATHER-BRET — A hurricane watch was issued for St. Lucia as Tropical Storm Bret barreled toward the eastern Caribbean at near-hurricane strength. SENT: 405 words, photo.

MICROSOFT-ACTIVISION-BLIZZARD -- Microsoft will try to gain clearance to complete a \$69 billion takeover of video game maker Activision Blizzard in a legal showdown with U.S. regulators. SENT: 800 words, photos.

CHINA-RESTAURANT-EXPLOSION – China’s president has ordered a national safety campaign after a massive cooking gas explosion at a barbecue restaurant killed 31 people. SENT: 685 words, photos.

WASHINGTON/ POLITICS

ELECTION 2024-DESANTIS — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is rolling out endorsements from 15 South Carolina lawmakers, hoping their support for his Republican presidential campaign will help him make his case to voters in the first-in-the-South primary state. SENT: 565 words, photos.

ELECTION-2024-HURD — Former Texas congressman Will Hurd says he’s running for president and calls Republican primary front-runner Donald Trump a “failed politician” who lost the House, the Senate and the White House. Hurd hopes to build momentum as a more moderate alternative to Trump. Hurd served three terms in the House and was the chamber’s only Black Republican during his final two years in office. SENT: 900 words, photos.

ELECTION 2024-BIDEN-ENDORSEMENTS — Three top reproductive rights groups — Planned Parenthood Action Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice America and Emily’s List — are endorsing President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for reelection in 2024. SENT: 340 words, photo.

CONGRESS-OVERSIGHT-HUNTER BIDEN — House Republicans release testimony from two IRS whistleblowers who allege that the Justice Department interfered with their investigation into President Biden’s son, Hunter — a charge the

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department swiftly denied. SENT: 720 words, photo.

ELECTION 2024-ARIZONA-SENATE — Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona touts legislation cracking down on executives of failed banks. Sinema is considering a reelection bid amid criticism she's too closely aligned with Wall Street interests. SENT: 710 words, photo.

MOMS FOR LIBERTY-HITLER QUOTE — An Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, which an anti-hate watchdog recently labeled as extremist, is apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after using a quote attributed to the Nazi leader in its inaugural newsletter. SENT: 590 words.

CONGRESS-GUNS — New rules that require owners to register stabilizing braces for firearms will stay in place after the Senate rejected a Republican effort on Thursday to overturn them. SENT: 450 words, photo.

UNITED STATES-CHINA — President Biden says his comments calling Chinese leader Xi Jinping a “dictator” did not undermine progress in the U.S. relationship with China and he expects to meet with Xi in the future. SENT: 670 words, photos.

SUPREME-COURT-NAVAJO-WATER-FIGHT – The Supreme Court has ruled against the Navajo Nation in a dispute involving water from the drought-stricken Colorado River. States that draw water from the river — Arizona, Nevada and Colorado — and water districts in California had urged the court to decide for them, and that's what the justices did in a 5-4 ruling. SENT: 405 words, photo.

SUPREME-COURT-GUNS -- The Supreme Court has ruled that a man whose conviction on gun charges was called into question by a recent high court decision is out of luck. The court's conservatives were in the 6-3 majority against Marcus DeAngelo Jones, who was given a 27-year prison sentence for violating a federal law meant to keep guns out of the hands of people with previous criminal convictions. SENT: 350 words, photo.

XGR-TRANSGENDER SPORTS-NORTH CAROLINA — North Carolina has given final legislative approval to a bill banning transgender girls from playing on the school sports teams that align with their gender identity. SENT: 480 words, photo.

CAMPAIGN FRAUD-MICHIGAN — Three people have been charged with forgery and other crimes in an investigation of phony petition signatures that spoiled the candidacies of five Republicans running for Michigan governor in 2022. SENT: 330 words.

NATIONAL

NASHVILLE-SCHOOL-SHOOTING — More than a dozen parents at The Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, have written about the stress, terror and sadness in the wake of the March shooting. SENT: 780 words, photos.

SEVERE-WEATHER-TEXAS — A line of severe storms produced what a meteorologist calls a rare combination of multiple tornadoes, hurricane-force winds and softball-sized hail in west Texas, killing at least four people, injuring nine and causing significant damage around the town of Matador, officials said. SENT: 670 words, photos, video.

CENSUS ESTIMATES-RACE — Without immigration, the white population in the U.S. would have declined last year. Immigration also propelled the expansion of the Asian population, which was the fastest-growing race or ethnic group last year in the U.S., while births outpacing deaths helped propel growth in Hispanic, Black, tribal and Hawaiian populations. SENT: 760 words, photo.

WISCONSIN-BUDGET-UNIVERSITY — Republican lawmakers will cut the University of Wisconsin System's budget by

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\$32 million despite a projected record-high \$7 billion state budget surplus, leaving the university nearly half a billion dollars short of what it requested. SENT: 630 words, photo.

FBI ANALYST-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS — A former FBI analyst has been sentenced to nearly four years in prison for keeping classified documents at her home in North Kansas City, Missouri. SENT: 380 words.

INTERNATIONAL

ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS — Israeli troops demolished the home of a Palestinian who is suspected of killing an Israeli soldier last year, in the latest military operation in the increasingly volatile occupied West Bank, which has been gripped by surging violence. SENT: 530 words, photos.

ISRAEL-BAN KI-MOON — Former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says Israel is inching toward apartheid and drifting further away from the hopes of creating a Palestinian state. SENT: 410 words, photos.

RUSSIA-US-DETAINED REPORTER — A Moscow court ruled that Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich must remain in jail on espionage charges until at least late August, rejecting the American journalist's appeal to be released. SENT: 500 words, photos.

HAJJ-CLIMATE — Saudi Arabia has ambitious plans to welcome millions more pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites. But as climate change heats up an already scorching region, the annual Hajj pilgrimage — much of which takes place outdoors in the desert — could prove even more daunting. SENT: 1,160 words, photos.

HONDURAS-PRISON RIOT — Authorities in Honduras began to hand over to relatives the hacked, burned corpses of 46 women killed in the worst riot at a women's prison in recent memory. Some bodies were so badly burned that they need genetic testing or dental studies for identification. SENT: 770 words, photos.

REL—REPURPOSED CHURCHES — Across Europe, churches, convents and chapels stand empty and increasingly derelict after faith and church attendance shriveled over the past half century. More of the once-sacred structures are repurposed for anything from clothes shops and climbing walls to nightclubs. SENT: 860 words, photos.

BRAZIL-BOLSONARO-ELIGIBILITY TRIAL — Brazil's top electoral court has started hearing a case that could torpedo the political future of former President Jair Bolsonaro by rendering him ineligible for public office for eight years. SENT: 790 words, photos.

GUATEMALA-ELECTION-VOICES -- Just days away from electing a new president, many Guatemalans remain undecided, unimpressed by the leading candidates and even considering casting a protest vote to express their disapproval. SENT: 1,075 words, photos.

HEALTH & SCIENCE

SCI--BEE DEATHS -- A new survey says America's honeybee hives just staggered through the second highest death rate on record, with beekeepers losing nearly half of their managed colonies. Using costly measures to create new colonies, beekeepers are somehow keeping afloat. SENT: 805 words, photos.

MED--E-CIGARETTES-FDA -- U.S. regulators have sent warning letters to dozens of retailers selling fruity disposable

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e-cigarettes, including the current best-selling brand, Elf Bar. The action is the Food and Drug Administration's latest attempt to crack down on illegal disposable vapes that have poured into U.S. SENT: 610 words.

BUSINESS/ECONOMY

TRUCKS-AUTOMATIC BRAKING — The government's traffic safety agency says it will require that heavy trucks and buses include potentially life-saving automatic emergency braking equipment within five years. SENT: 560 words, photos.

FINANCIAL-MARKETS — Stocks drifted to a mixed close on Wall Street after central banks around the world showed they're not finished raising interest rates in their fight against inflation. SENT: 635 words, photos.

UNEMPLOYMENT-BENEFITS -- The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits remained relatively elevated last week, potentially another signal that Federal Reserve rate hikes are beginning to cool a surprisingly resilient labor market. SENT: 625 words, photo.

HOME-SALES — Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes edged higher in May and the national median sale price posted its biggest annual drop in more than a decade, even as the supply of available properties sank to an all-time low. SENT: 695 words, photos.

FEDERAL-RESERVE-POWELL -- Chair Jerome Powell reiterated that the Federal Reserve will likely raise interest rates at least once more this year because of persistently high inflation in the economy's service sector and the surprisingly tight job market. SENT: 575 words, photos.

GLOBAL CLIMATE-FINANCE — Climate activist Vanessa Nakate has urged rich countries to cancel the debt and grant climate finance to developping countries so they are no longer forced to pay for a crisis they did not create. SENT: 1,020 words, photos.

ENTERTAINMENT

KENNEDY CENTER HONORS — You know you've made a cultural impact when Henry Kissinger quotes your own joke back to you. That's what happened to Billy Crystal, one of five iconic artists selected for this year's Kennedy Center Honors. SENT: 890 words, photos.

BOOKS-DEE SNIDER — Dee Snider has been a heavy metal singer, a Broadway actor, a radio DJ, and a TV voice-over artist. Now he's added "author" to an already long resume. The former singer for the band Twisted Sister has released his first novel, "Frats." It shows in minute detail the violence, toxic masculinity and insane risks teens would take in the name of belonging, and draws heavily on Snider's own adolescence in Baldwin, New York. SENT: 775 words, photos.

SPORTS

BKN-NBA-DRAFT — The San Antonio Spurs have the first pick in the NBA draft and they're not expected to take long to select Victor Wembanyama. After that things could get interesting for Scoot Henderson and Brandon Miller. UPCOMING:

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800 words, photos. Draft scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. WITH: BKN-THREE-TEAM-TRADE -- Two people with knowledge of the deal say the Washington Wizards have agreed to trade center Kristaps Porzingis to the Boston Celtics as part of a three-team trade that also includes the Celtics trading Marcus Smart to the Memphis Grizzlies. SENT: 430 words, photos.

BBO--EUROPE-BUDDING BASEBALL — Britain's relative success at the World Baseball Classic and the upcoming series between the Cubs and Cardinals has London buzzing about baseball. The sport's governing body says it's seen an uptick in interest among kids. UPCOMING: 700 words, photos by 7 p.m.

HOW TO REACH US

The Nerve Center can be reached at 800-845-8450 (ext. 1600). For photos, Donald E. King (ext. 1900). For graphics and interactives, ext. 7636. Expanded AP content can be obtained from AP Newsroom. For access to AP Newsroom and other technical issues, contact apcustomersupport@ap.org or call 844-777-2006.

---- Index References ----

Company: Memphis Grizzlies; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Federal Reserve Board; Washington Wizards; SAN ANTONIO SPURS; Twisted Sister Limited; UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- SYSTEM; ACTIVISION BLIZZARD, INC.

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); Prisons (1PR87); Social Issues (1SO05); United Nations (1UN54); World Organizations (1IN77))

Industry: (Bioethics (1BI56))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arizona (1AR13); Asia (1AS61); Central America (1CE62); China (1CH15); Colorado (1CO26); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Far East (1FA27); Guatemala (1GU42); Honduras (1HO08); India (1IN24); Indian Subcontinent (1IN32); Israel (1IS16); Latin America (1LA15); Mediterranean (1ME20); Michigan (1MI45); Middle East (1MI23); Missouri (1MI10); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); Palestine (1PA37); Southern Asia (1SO52); Tennessee (1TE37); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Wisconsin (1WI54))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (U.S. Coast Guard; White House; China; Justice Department; North Carolina; ISRAEL; Saudi Arabia; Food and Drug Administration; Elf Bar; Memphis Grizzlies; FBI; Federal Reserve; Washington Wizards; San Antonio Spurs; Twisted Sister; University of Wisconsin System; Activision Blizzard)

Word Count: 2893

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NewsRoom

Chandler Langevin drops out of HD 33 race, endorses..., 2023 WLNR 21636340

NewsRoom

6/22/23 Fla. Politics (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21636340

Florida Politics
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June 22, 2023

Chandler Langevin drops out of HD 33 race, endorses Monique Miller

Jacob Ogles

Jun 22, 2023

Marine veteran Chandler Langevin is dropping out of the House District 33 race and endorsing Republican Primary opponent Monique Miller.

Langevin announced in February for the open seat, which is being vacated by Rep. Randy Fine, a Palm Bay Republican facing term limits.

But Miller, a Moms For Liberty activist in mid-May filed for the seat as well. She rapidly amassed a significant war chest, raising more than \$130,000 in the first two weeks of her campaign.

Of note, \$100,000 of that comes from a candidate loan. But her campaign raised a little more than \$23,000 in outside donations. Additionally, the political committee Friends of Monique Miller raised \$8,000, all of it from California donor Nicholas Miller.

By comparison, Langevin opened a campaign account in May 2022 but had raised less than \$18,000 over the course of 13 months.

"What's most important to me," Langevin said, "is that we get a true conservative to represent District 33. Monique has solid bona fides among grassroots conservatives and has impressed the establishment with her early fundraising success. She clearly has the ability to win, and she has my full support."

Miller welcomed her former opponent's support in the race.

"Chandler has a lot to offer Brevard County," she said. "I would love to see him continue to pursue his political aspirations. There is no doubt he has the chops to do great things. Palm Bay, where he resides, could use a solid conservative like him."

Langevin, who remains active in the Republican Liberty Caucus, has not announced plans to run for another office.

Miller must still compete in a Republican Primary for the HD 33 seat. Logan Luse of Palm Bay announced his candidacy in March. Since then, he has reported raising more than \$17,000. Satellite Beach Republican Erika Orriss, a software engineer, filed in April and has raised around \$1,600.

Democrat Anthony Yantz has also filed and raised less than \$1,000. Libertarian Grover Bentley has reported less than \$200

Chandler Langevin drops out of HD 33 race, endorses..., 2023 WLNR 21636340

raised.

Post Views: 0

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---- **Index References** ----

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Government (1GO80); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Congressional Campaigns (1US07); U.S. President (1US75))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Republican Liberty Caucus) (Chandler Langevin; Monique Miller)

Keywords: (2024 - Down Ballot); (Headlines); (Anthony Yantz); (Chandler Langevin); (Erika Orriss); (Grover Bentley); (House District 33); (Logan Luse); (Monique Miller)

Word Count: 500

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NewsRoom

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21645805

Forbes
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June 22, 2023

Conservative 'Moms For Liberty' Chapter Apologizes After Hitler Quoted In Newsletter The Moms for Liberty chapter in Indiana quoted Adolf Hitler in its first newsletter—and is now apologizing.

Mary Whitfill Roeloffs, Forbes Staff

A local chapter of the conservative group Moms for Liberty issued an apology Thursday for quoting Adolf Hitler in its first newsletter, as the movement that seeks to ban mentions of sexuality, gender and race from schools continues to grow across the country.

A sign emphatically reading: “We Do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT” is seen in the hallway during the inaugural Moms for Liberty Summit at the Tampa Marriott Water Street on July 15, 2022, in Tampa.

Topline

Octavio Jones/Getty Images

Key Facts

The group used a 1935 Nazi rally quote, “He alone who owns the youth gains the future” in the first edition of a new newsletter called “The Parent Brigade,” as first reported by the Indianapolis Star .

The group, called “ extremist “ by the Southern Poverty Law Center, has since apologized in a Facebook post and said that members “condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history.”

The group’s other recent Facebook posts encouraged members to attend a “class in Biblical citizenship”; celebrated several recent state bills that ban discussion of human sexuality in early grades and remove “obscene or harmful” books from school libraries; and called the Pride celebration scheduled in Carmel, Indiana, “perverted.”

Key Background

Moms for Liberty is a conservative nonprofit that was founded in 2021 and has been criticized for harassment and “anti-government” behavior. Vice News earlier this week posted a report examining the close relationship between Moms for Liberty and the Proud Boys, an organization promoting white supremacy. The Southern Poverty Law Center called the Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing “parents’ rights” organizations “extremist groups” in its annual report. Cofounder Tiffany Justice was interviewed on Fox News about the report, calling the label “absolutely absurd” and adding that the group’s members “are very concerned about the direction of the country.” President Donald Trump has said he will speak at the group’s annual summit alongside fellow Republican presidential candidates Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley.

Chief Critic

”They should not have quoted Hitler. Period. Parents are passionate about protecting future generations from tyranny, but Hitler did not need to be quoted to make that point,” cofounders Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice said in a statement to Forbes.

Big Number

115,000 across 275 chapters. That’s how many members Moms for Liberty claims to boast.

Conservative 'Moms For Liberty' Chapter Apologizes After..., 2023 WLNR 21645805

Further Reading

Inside Moms for Liberty's Close Relationship With the Proud Boys (Vice News)

Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in newsletter (Indianapolis Star)

Dark Money And Education Parent Grass Roots Groups (Forbes)

---- Index References ----

Company: Indianapolis Star; GETTY IMAGES HOLDINGS, INC.; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Bankruptcies (1BA08); Business Management (1BU42); Corporate Events (1CR05); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms For Liberty; Indianapolis Star; Getty Images; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 419

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NewsRoom

'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton..., 2023 WLNR 21637203

NewsRoom

6/22/23 Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, Ind.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21637203

Indianapolis Star, The (Indianapolis, IN)
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June 22, 2023

'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton County parent group Politicians and others react after the Hamilton County chapter of the right-wing parent group Moms for Liberty highlighted a Hitler quote.

Indianapolis Star

After the Hamilton County chapter of the right-wing parent group Moms for Liberty featured a Hitler quote prominently in its new newsletter Wednesday afternoon, politicians and others shared their reactions on social media.

Here's what some of them had to say.

To the local members of Moms For Liberty, our neighbors, I say this: Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive. Our community will not be undone by your poison. <https://t.co/zitrnKPtio>

— Jocelyn Vare For Fishers (@VareForFishers) June 22, 2023

As a man of devout Jewish faith and a parent concerned about our kids' education, this hate speech has no place in our community. I'm hopeful my opponent will condemn the organization using this inflammatory rhetoric of the former Nazi leader. <https://t.co/4a0Z3ngcfM> pic.twitter.com/l8llql3fRc

— Miles Nelson (@milesforcarmel) June 22, 2023

Mom's for Liberty probably just put Hamilton County in the national news with this Hitler quote

— WildStyle DaProducer (@MrWildstyle) June 22, 2023

It was brought to my attention that a special interest group of Hamilton County has been using quotes authored by Hitler. Let me be very clear, Hate has no place in Hamilton County or anywhere in Indiana. (1/2)

— Victoria Garcia Wilburn for Indiana House (@wilburn4IN) June 22, 2023

No group that quotes Nazis should be anywhere near our children or have any influence in our community. It is time for our community leaders to stop acquiescing to them and make clear that their hateful rhetoric will not be tolerated. (3/3)

— Matt McNally (McNally For Indiana) (@McNally4Indiana) June 22, 2023

Mom's for Liberty's version of "educating" our children includes teaching them lies and encouraging them to have zero empathy for others. Their latest use of a quote from Adolf Hitler is yet another example of their efforts to divide our

'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton..., 2023 WLNR 21637203

community. (2/3)

— Alexis for Westfield (@Alexis4WF) June 22, 2023

The local chapter of Moms for Liberty quoted Hitler in their first newsletter yesterday. I am absolutely outraged, and know that the vast majority of community members feel the same. There is NO PLACE for hate in our home. Our community and kids deserve better. pic.twitter.com/rtMImLcyrL

— Senator J.D. Ford (@SenatorJDFord) June 22, 2023

Hamilton County Democrats are united in condemning the use of a quote from Hitler in a recent Moms for Liberty newsletter, and in condemning Nazism and fascism. <https://t.co/8g7b80fscs>

— Hamilton Co Dems IN (@HamCoDemsIN) June 22, 2023

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: 'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton County parent group

---- **Index References** ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty)

Keywords: (Adolf Hitler, TTP Listicle)

Word Count: 420

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NewsRoom

How the national Moms for Liberty organization got its start..., 2023 WLNR 21649398

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21649398

Indianapolis Star, The (Indianapolis, IN)
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June 22, 2023

How the national Moms for Liberty organization got its start and more things to know
Five things to know about Moms for Liberty, whose Hamilton County chapter has made
national news this week.

Indianapolis Star

The Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty generated national attention this week after its inaugural newsletter was published with a front-page quote attributed to Adolph Hitler.

An image of the newsletter with the quote from a 1935 Nazi rally — “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future” — was posted on the group’s Facebook page Wednesday. Late Wednesday night, the front page image was updated to include “context” for the Hitler quote.

It’s not the first time: 3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in recent history

”The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert,” the update says. “If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.”

There was no explanation why that context was not included in the original version. Late Thursday morning, they issued an apology and posted a third version without the quote or “context.”

Here are five things to know about Moms for Liberty:

Group got its start during the pandemic

Moms of Liberty is a national organization founded during the pandemic, initially focusing on ending COVID-19 restrictions in schools. It formally organized on Jan. 1, 2021. It claims to have since expanded to at least 45 states and nearly 300 chapters.

According to Indiana Secretary of State records, the national group and two local chapters are registered to operate in Indiana — the one in Hamilton County and another in Allen County.

’Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive’: Reactions to Hamilton County parent group

Critics say Moms for Liberty is divisive; members say it empowers parents

Founded in Florida, Moms for Liberty claims to be a nonpartisan grassroots organization dedicated to parental rights in schools and promoting liberty.

But the group’s advocacy tactics — deemed by some as controversial, disruptive and divisive — have helped rally far-right conservatives in efforts to expand book bans and purge education curriculums of sex education, LGBTQ issues, mentions of systemic racism, discrimination and so-called critical race theory. Critical race theory — graduate-level coursework on

How the national Moms for Liberty organization got its start..., 2023 WLNR 21649398

system racism in the legal system — is not taught in public schools.

Critics have also accused Moms for Liberty members of using bullying and intimidating tactics as they monitor school board agendas and campaign for local school board seats. Leadership denied the accusations, saying it has called for its members to be “joyful warriors.”

Ties to the Republican Party

Co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich are former school board members from nearby counties in Florida. According to the Washington Post, they founded the organization after Descovich was unseated in a Republican district by a candidate who campaigned against her opposition to mask mandates and teacher pay raises. Justice had step away from her seat.

Earlier: Moms for Liberty’s Hamilton County chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in newsletter

They teamed with Republican activist Marie Rogerson to form Moms of Liberty. Since its Florida founding, the group has been credit with bringing new voters to the Florida GOP and accused of aligning with Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is seeking the Republican nomination for president, and is campaigning on an “anti-woke” agenda.

Moms for Liberty has also received money from several far-right and Republican groups including Publix grocery chain heiress and Republican mega donor Julie Fancelli who helped finance one of the rallies that led up to the storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

It’s been labeled a hate group

In its annual Year in Hate & Extremism report, the Southern Poverty Law Center listed Moms for Liberty as a hate group, calling it a reactionary anti-student inclusion group and comparing it to pro-segregationists parents groups that formed in response to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education which resulted in the integration of public schools.

”Like many other hard-right groups, these reactionary anti-student inclusion groups are constantly painting themselves as an oppressed class, while vilifying those discriminated against,” the SPLC says.

Report chronicles Confederate flag controversy

The Current, a publication which covers Carmel, Zionsville, Westfield and other communities, published a story in January 2022 about objections to a photo the local Moms for Liberty chapter released publicly. The photo showed several women in front of a banner similar to the original flag used by the Confederate States of America.

Paige Miller, the Hamilton County chapter chair, denied the allegation, telling the publication the design did not represent or show support for the Confederacy. Experts contacted by the Current offered opposing views about the possible Confederate connection to the banner.

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: How the national Moms for Liberty organization got its start and more things to know

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Health & Family (1HE30); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

How the national Moms for Liberty organization got its start..., 2023 WLNR 21649398

Other Indexing: (national; Moms for Liberty; Moms of Liberty; Republican Party; Washington Post; U.S. Supreme Court; Southern Poverty Law Center)

Keywords: (Adolf Hitler,Hate Groups,TTP What We Know)

Word Count: 795

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NewsRoom

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June 22, 2023

Holcomb's support | Hitler quote Plus, big money for the IEDC.

Indianapolis Star

Tomorrow is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

While Indiana's near-total abortion ban is still tied up in court, the passage of the law has had a chilling effect. Owing to confusion or perhaps the loss of some providers, the number of abortions performed in Indiana dropped significantly by the end of last year, a study found.

The state Supreme Court heard arguments in January but has yet to make a ruling. Here's what else is going on.

Forwarded this newsletter from a friend? Sign up for Hoosier Politics here.

Holcomb endorses Pence, but what about Crouch?

Gov. Eric Holcomb is endorsing his predecessor, Mike Pence, for the Republican presidential nomination, calling him consistent, forthright, a "powerful force for good" and "allergic to personal scandal." (The Republican primary, as of Thursday, has 13 official candidates.)

This announcement on Wednesday makes all the louder his silence on the upcoming gubernatorial race, in which his second in command, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, is running.

Speaking to reporters after an announcement of a new land conservation project in Greencastle, Holcomb said he hasn't decided yet who he'll endorse for governor. He wants to "give everyone the space that they need to define their candidacy and share who they are, share their plans."

The Republican primary is still shaping up, with former scandal-plagued Attorney General Curtis Hill considering a run and secretary of commerce Brad Chambers widely rumored to be a "maybe" candidate. Right now we've got Crouch, U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden.

What's next for Eric

Holcomb is not running for U.S. Senate or any other race in 2024, he made clear in a recent op-ed published by IndyStar.

He attended the announcement Wednesday of the NBA All-Star 2024 Saturday Night event coming to Lucas Oil Stadium, where he told a gaggle of reporters, including our Pacers reporter Dustin Dopirak, that it's because he's busy (enunciation his).

"If I was sitting around throwing pencils in the ceiling tile, maybe I would've had time to think about something else,"

Holcomb's support | Hitler quote, 2023 WLNR 21652858

Holcomb said. "But right now, I'm going to finish the job that I started."

That is, being governor. Lately his administration has been busy setting up new land conservation projects and courting electric vehicle battery and semiconductor plants to Indiana. And he said he has more "good news" in the pipeline.

He's not closing the door to future ambitions. He said he'll have "options" when he's done being governor, but "we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

Speaking of semiconductors

It's possible that one of those pieces of "good news" Holcomb was alluding to could be a large semiconductor plant. (Semiconductor production will be a crucial element to buffering the oncoming electric-vehicle transition.)

The state is making moves to attract a global semiconductor company to Boone County, who is deciding between Indiana and another midwestern state to make a \$50 billion investment.

State lawmakers gave the Indiana Economic Development Corp. a massive earmark in this year's budget: \$150 million to help with site acquisition, and \$500 million for a "deal closing" fund. On Thursday, the IEDC asked the state budget agency for \$122 million of that money to acquire 1,000 acres of land that it could offer to the semiconductor company as part of an incentive package.

Moms for Liberty quotes Hitler

The Hamilton County chapter of conservative parent group Moms for Liberty, whose mission includes stamping out discussions of race or LGBTQ+ issues in the classroom, ran into hot water Wednesday night after its inaugural newsletter included an Hitler quote and cited him by name.

Politicians and candidates across the political spectrum — including the chair of the Hamilton County GOP — condemned the use of the quote, "He alone, who gains the youth, owns the future."

The group added a "context" bubble late Wednesday night saying they mentioned the quote as a cautionary note about government overreaching into children's minds, then they ultimately issued an apology Thursday and took the whole thing down.

This quote has been used in similar ways before.

Trailing off for a bit

This is a great quote in our colleague's piece about Indianapolis councilors' proposal to lower speed limits near trail crossings:

"The challenge is do you spend \$10 million in one location or \$1 million in ten locations?"

That city official was talking about more extensive infrastructure like speed bumps and bridges. But still: this quote is a great summary of the city's interminable fight to keep up with road and pedestrian needs with limited funding.

One more note on abortion

USA Today wrote a pithy summary of the sea change spurred by the Dobbs decision a year ago, from elections to the scrutiny of the Supreme Court.

-SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK-

Hoosier Politics is compiled and written by the IndyStar politics and government team. Send us tips or let us know what you think of the newsletter by emailing kdwyer@IndyStar.com.

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: Holcomb's support | Hitler quote

---- **Index References** ----

Company: UNITED STATES SENATE

Holcomb's support | Hitler quote, 2023 WLNR 21652858

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Economic Policy & Policymakers (1EC69); Economics & Trade (1EC26); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); Public Affairs (1PU31); Public Finance (1PU60); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (USA Today; Supreme Court; Jackson Women's Health Organization; Indiana Economic Development Corp.; Moms for Liberty; Hamilton County GOP; U.S. Senate) (Eric Holcomb; Eric S. Holcomb; Curtis Hill; Curtis V Hill)

Keywords: (Mike Pence,Indiana General Assembly,Election Campaigns,Republican Party,Eric Holcomb,Suzanne Crouch,News,Lobbying,Campaigns & Elections,Politics,Legislative Branch,Local News,Health Policy,Executive Branch)

Word Count: 852

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NewsRoom

3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in..., 2023 WLNR 21640168

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21640168

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June 22, 2023

3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in recent history
A conservative parent group faced backlash after using an Adolf Hitler quote. It's not the first time this exact quote has created controversy.

Indianapolis Star

This week, a conservative parent group in Hamilton County faced backlash after using an Adolf Hitler quote in its newsletter. It's not the first time this exact quote has created controversy.

After the newsletter received backlash, the local chapter of Moms for Liberty on Wednesday evening altered the image to include a box with "context" for the quote, reading: "The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We the People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government."

Earlier: Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter quotes Hitler in first newsletter, apologizes

Late Thursday morning, the group posted an apology from its chair: "We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history. We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and we express our deepest apology."

About the Hitler quote used in the newsletter

The statement "He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future," is attributed to Adolf Hitler at a 1935 rally as part of Nazi efforts to indoctrinate youth.

Colorado school board member posts Hitler quote on Facebook

Earlier this year, the Colorado Gazette reported that a local school district member posted the quote on Facebook.

Along with the quote, the board member, Ivy Liu, wrote: "PARENTS!! GET INVOLVED AND FIGHT LIKE YOUR CHILDREN'S LIVES DEPEND ON IT, BECAUSE IT DOES!"

► Read the story from The Gazette

U.S. Rep Mary Miller uses Hitler quote in speech

Shortly after she was sworn into office, U.S. Rep. Mary Miller, the representative for Illinois' 15th Congressional District, spoke at a rally hosted by the conservative group "Moms for America," according to a Chicago Tribune story from 2021.

She paraphrased the same quote, saying that "Hitler was right on one thing. He said, 'Whoever has the youth has the future.'" The clip was circulated on Twitter.

► Read the story from Chicago Tribune

Quote appears on Alabama billboard

According to a 2014 story in the Christian Science Monitor, a billboard in Auburn, Alabama, featured a picture of children

3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in..., 2023 WLNR 21640168

beneath the 1935 quote. It was covered up a few days after it was installed due to public outcry.

Christian Science Monitor reported that the billboard was rented by Life Savers Ministries.

► Read the story from Christian Science Monitor

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: 3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in recent history

---- **Index References** ----

Company: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Christianity (1CH94); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); Teenagers (1TE59))

Region: (Alabama (1AL90); Americas (1AM92); Colorado (1CO26); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Moms for America; Life Savers Ministries; Christian Science Monitor) (Adolf Hitler)

Keywords: (Adolf Hitler,TTP Listicle,Politics,Sensitive Subjects,War & Conflict,History,News,Biographies & Quotations,Family)

Word Count: 408

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June 22, 2023

Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in newsletter
Just below The Parent Brigade's masthead was a quote Hitler used at a Nazi rally in 1935.

Indianapolis Star

The Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty, a national organization recently listed as an "extremist group" by a civil rights watchdog, apologized Thursday morning after it launched a newsletter called "The Parent Brigade" Wednesday that featured a quote from Adolf Hitler on its front cover.

It's happened before: 3 times this quote by Adolf Hitler was used publicly in recent history

The quote in the newsletter drew condemnation on social media Wednesday night and Thursday morning from local politicians and candidates for elected offices.

Around 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Moms for Liberty emailed IndyStar and posted a statement on the group's Facebook page condemning Adolf Hitler and apologizing for using the quote. A new version of the front page without the quote or explanation was uploaded.

"We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history," the statement from chapter chairwoman Paige Miller reads. "We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology."

WWII history: Dog tag lost in France back home in Indiana

The original pages of the newsletter, which were posted on the group's Facebook page Wednesday night, showed below The Parent Brigade's masthead a quote Hitler used at a Nazi rally in 1935: "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future."

Late Wednesday night, after IndyStar initially published this story, the front page of the newsletter was updated to include what was described as "context" for the Hitler quote.

"The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert," the update says. "If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government."

Hamilton County politicians denounce use of Hitler quote

Both the Hamilton County Democrats and the chairman of the Hamilton County Republican Party denounced the quote in the newsletter.

"I think Adolf Hitler is terrible, and I would never quote Adolf Hitler or the Nazis in any shape or form other than saying they are bad or terrible," said Mario Massillamany, chairman of the Hamilton County Republican party. "That was a terrible

Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter apologizes for..., 2023 WLNR 21525248

page in our world history and I don't think that we as a society can say enough about the atrocities that the poor Jewish people had to go through."

Hamilton County Democrats in a statement highlighted messages from party candidates for office.

"We expect our leaders to not have an issue with saying Nazis are bad. Fascism is bad," the party's statement reads.

'Your Hitler rally cry is repulsive': Reactions to Hamilton County parent group

Below Hitler's words on the original front page appeared a message from Moms for Liberty national co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich, with the headline: "Moms for Liberty will not be be intimidated by hate groups!"

Justice and Descovich appeared to be responding to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which labeled the Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing "parents' rights" organizations as extremist groups in its annual report, released earlier this month.

"(The movement) is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools," Susan Corke, an SPLC official, told USA TODAY.

Page 4 of the Parent Brigade included a mention of Carmel High School. The newsletter decried the school's recent \$10,000 award from the "It Gets Better Project," a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is to uplift, empower and connect LGBTQ youth around the globe.

OPINION: Moms for Liberty newsletter quotes Adolf Hitler, complains about being labeled 'extremist'

Money awarded to Carmel High School will be used to produce community-wide Pride events at the Carmel Pride festival happening June 25 at Carter Green.

The Parent Brigade newsletter also called out sponsors of Carmel Pride, labeling the event "perversion."

This article originally appeared on Indianapolis Star: Moms for Liberty's Hamilton County chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in newsletter

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Carmel High School; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Keywords: (Hamilton County, IN, Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 661

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NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21744263

Journal Review (Crawfordsville, IN)
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June 22, 2023

Section: State news

Moms for Liberty chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in its newsletter

ALI SWENSON

An Indiana chapter of Moms for Liberty, a nonprofit that advocates for “parental rights” in education and was recently labeled as “extremist” by an anti-hate watchdog, is apologizing and condemning Adolf Hitler after using a quote attributed to the Nazi leader in its inaugural newsletter.

The group’s Hamilton County chapter on Thursday posted a revised version of its newly launched newsletter, “The Parent Brigade,” on Facebook after it had previously shared a version that featured the Hitler quote on its front cover.

”We condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history,” read a statement from chapter chair Paige Miller on the cover of the revised newsletter. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology.”

The first version of the newsletter included the quote, “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future,” and cited Hitler. While the origin of the quote is not entirely clear, it has been attributed in numerous historical texts to a 1935 rally speech by the Nazi leader.

Late Wednesday, after The Indianapolis Star reported on the quote, the local Moms for Liberty chapter updated the newsletter to add a “context” section.

”The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert,” the updated version read. “If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.”

By Thursday morning, the chapter had removed those versions and posted its new copy of the newsletter, replacing the Hitler quote with the chair’s apology.

The quote has frequently been used by conservative Christian groups as a warning of “what they experience as liberal or left-wing attempts to indoctrinate children,” said Mark Pitcavage, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism.

In 2014, for example, a church group in Alabama removed a billboard after using the quote next to images of children. And last year, a Colorado school board member faced calls to resign after posting the quote on Facebook.

”They use it as a way to get people’s attention,” Pitcavage said. “Regardless, you should never use Adolf Hitler quotes to get your point across.”

Moms for Liberty chapter apologizes for quoting Hitler in its..., 2023 WLNR 21744263

Some who encountered the newsletter interpreted Moms for Liberty's use of the quote as a tacit endorsement for Hitler and his beliefs. Moms for Liberty has faced criticism for its activism against school inclusion, including trying to remove books related to race and gender identity from school libraries.

"It's disappointing, but not surprising, that the largest anti-student inclusion movement organization has allegedly used a quote from one of the appalling figureheads in history," said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research, reporting and analysis for the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center. The center labeled Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist" group in its 2022 annual report.

Moms for Liberty has come under increasing national scrutiny as it has become a power player in Republican politics. Five presidential candidates plan to speak -- and several grassroots groups plan to protest -- at the group's annual summit in Philadelphia next week.

The national Moms for Liberty chapter took to Twitter to call the Star's reporting "intentional dishonesty," even while issuing a statement that condemned the chapter's decision to quote Hitler.

"They should not have quoted Hitler. Period," read the statement from co-founders Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice. "Parents are passionate about protecting future generations from tyranny, but Hitler did not need to be quoted to make that point."

—
Associated Press researcher Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

—
The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE - ISRAEL R.A.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Foundations (1FO95); Health & Family (1HE30); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Philanthropy (1PH09); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center; Anti-Defamation League) (Adolf Hitler)

Word Count: 637

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2023 WLNR 21658674

Pensacola News Journal (Pensacola, FL)
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June 22, 2023

Santa Rosa Commissioners lose patience over Calkins' 'political grandstanding' Santa Rosa County Commissioners have had enough of fellow commissioner James Calkins' focus on national hot button issues outside of county realm.

Tom McLaughlin, Pensacola News Journal

In what has become a new normal, the Santa Rosa County regular commission meeting dissolved into chaos Thursday as Commissioner James Calkins managed, not for the first time, to draw the rest of the board into heated discussion of items unrelated to county business.

This time, Calkins introduced a last-minute proposal calling on the commission to pass a resolution encouraging the Santa Rosa School Board to remove what he believes to be pornographic literature from school district libraries. The item had not been discussed at Monday's Committee of the Whole meeting.

Calkins also sought commission approval to make June pro-life month in Santa Rosa County, an item that had been discussed Monday.

Though there were several members of the public in attendance Thursday who appeared eager to discuss the pro-life resolution, commissioners managed to resolve that proposal quietly enough when a unanimous vote was taken to support the Calkins' call without public comment.

More: Santa Rosa commissioner rails for Democrat-less government. His own party says he went too far

Debate over the "anti-pornography" resolution was another story, however, as Moms for Liberty — headed in Santa Rosa County by Calkins' wife — and other supporters of the proposal were met in opposition by educators and others who railed against a ban on books.

At one point a woman began reading pornography she claimed had been found on the school district's library bookshelves. A man in the audience could be seen holding his young son's ears as the passage was read.

The public forum portion of the county's morning meeting was abruptly adjourned when it disintegrated into a shouting match.

During the regular meeting, the four commissioners who share the dais with Calkins — Kerry Smith, Sam Parker, Chairman Colten Wright and Ray Eddington — took the stance of being opposed to pornography getting into the hands of minors, whether it be in a school setting or elsewhere, and Calkins appeared content with a simple agreement that porn is bad.

More: Foul-mouthed speaker prompts calls for decorum at Santa Rosa commission

Santa Rosa Commissioners lose patience over Calkins' ..., 2023 WLNR 21658674

With each speaking in turn, though, the other commissioners made it clear they had no intention of dictating to another elected body how to govern.

"I'm not going to get into school board stuff," Commissioner Ray Eddington asserted.

Commissioner Sam Parker was the first, but not the last, of Calkins' peers to suggest he halt his increasingly frequent "political grandstanding." Parker also noted that Calkins had introduced his pornography resolution without having met first with Santa Rosa County School Superintendent Dr. Karen Barber. Moms for Liberty has also not made a formal request to the district to remove any books.

"Maybe it wasn't political grandstanding. Maybe this wasn't conjured," Parker said. "But in my opinion, in the future if you have an issue with other elected officials, please reach out to them."

Parker later suggested that commissioners institute a practice of bringing forward "true, bonafide" meeting agenda items well ahead of the day before a meeting to give their colleagues ample opportunity to study the issues.

More: Commissioner James Calkins passed over for Santa Rosa board chairmanship

Wright voiced his support for that idea. He said that commissioners had drifted away from the idea of using the portion of their meeting time set aside for them to speak to address issues of importance to the county.

"Mr. Calkins, I'd ask that in the future you stick to issues important to what our elected duty is in Santa Rosa County, in regard to infrastructure, in regard to recreation, things like that," he said. "Let's try to stay off of national political hot button issues."

Wright, who had this week returned from the Paris Air Show, said the behavior of the Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners had been noticed not only within the community but by businesses across the country.

More: Resurfaced video of James and Mariya Calkins sparks controversy around Russian ties

"Doing things that are intentionally controversial as a way to drive a wedge between people and draw attention to ourselves and Santa Rosa County in an effort to grandstand as politicians is jeopardizing our ability to attract business and jeopardizes (relationships with) businesses that are looking at relocating here," he said. "There are a lot of things being done and said that are driving a lot of attention to this board and Santa Rosa County that do not paint us in the best light."

Calkins objected to the contention that his motives were less than pure. He said the actions he takes are done in support of the people of Santa Rosa County.

"Don't lecture me on what I bring up to the board," he said. "I will stand up for the people and what they want."

It was then Smith's turn to take exception to Calkins' words.

"Sir, you're grandstanding," he said. "There is nothing I hate more in this world than the lives of little babies being taken, and you're using this as a political ploy."

Calkins most recently drew attention to the county, and calls for him to resign, when he opposed Smith's appointment of a registered Democrat to the county's Marine Advisory Board and called the Democratic Party evil.

This article originally appeared on Pensacola News Journal: Santa Rosa Commissioners lose patience over Calkins' 'political grandstanding'

---- Index References ----

Santa Rosa Commissioners lose patience over Calkins' ..., 2023 WLNR 21658674

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Government (1GO80); Public Affairs (1PU31); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40); Real Estate (1RE57); Zoning (1ZO58))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Santa Rosa School Board; Moms for Liberty; Marine Advisory Board; Democratic Party) (Santa Rosa; Commissioners; James Calkins)

Keywords: (Santa Rosa County Commission)

Word Count: 894

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NewsRoom

NewsRoom

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June 22, 2023

Section: News

Right-wing groups organizing to replace School Board's Rose Vice chair's pick for super spurs moves against her

Steven Walker

When Sarasota County School Board Vice Chairwoman Karen Rose made a motion to hire Terrence Connor as the School District's next superintendent last week, it immediately prompted a sharp challenge among former supporters, who questioned her fit for the office.

The detractors included Michael Flynn, a former national security advisor to Donald Trump who has become a local Republican Party activist and endorsed another finalist for the superintendent's job. The Hollow, a right-wing activist group with ties to Flynn, posted on Facebook on June 16 an announcement that it was "actively working" to find a candidate to replace Rose when she's up for re-election next year.

The reaction was far different compared to eight months ago, when she made the motion for the School Board to terminate the previous superintendent, Brennan Apslen, whose removal the same conservative groups had sought because of his handling of the district's COVID-19 response and other issues.

The groups named in the critical post against Rose include The Hollow, Sarasota County Moms for America, Sarasota County Republican Assembly Club, ZEM Volunteers, and the Sarasota School District Transparency Project.

Rose's seat is up for re-election in August 2024, but she has not yet formally filed to run. The only candidate to file for the next School Board election is Tom Edwards, the board's only registered Democrat.

"I am not going to focus in on my next campaign. I'm not going to focus in on that election. I'm going to focus in on doing what's right for our students in the community, and that election will go the way that it goes," Rose said in an interview with the Herald-Tribune Tuesday.

Connor's selection

Rose was on the prevailing side of the 3-2 vote on June 13 to negotiate a contract with Connor, a deputy administrator from Hillsborough County. The conservative critics expressed anger that Rose and Robyn Marinelli, a Republican who won election last year, aligned with Edwards in favoring Connor.

School Board Chairwoman Bridget Ziegler, one of the leading conservative Republican voices on education issues in Florida and nationally, and Republican Tim Enos preferred Joe Phillips from Broward County and current interim superintendent Allison Foster for superintendent.

Right-wing groups organizing to replace School Board's Rose, 2023 WLNR 21599943

During the selection process, Flynn submitted a letter of recommendation for Charles Van Zant from Clay County, which Van Zant included in the packets he handed to the board and its selection advisory committee members. Van Zant, who was also the preferred candidate of several of the groups now critical of Rose, described himself as a “staunch conservative.” In his interview for Collier County’s superintendent vacancy, he said that he wanted to reach “unchurched students” in the district and teach them Christian values.

Despite the vocal backlash to Connor’s selection by the conservative activists who have dominated School Board politics for more than two years, Rose said she remains “extraordinarily confident” in her decision. She said it was based on the principles she focused on, which were growing academic achievement, providing high-quality public education and serving families and students in the district.

She said she holds no ill will toward anyone vocally opposed to her decision, and that she’s engaged those who have reached out to her to explain her rationale.

During the meeting where she voted for Connor, Rose offered the public some insight into her thought process.

”I am going to stay with the science of education, and that has been my commitment to you. My first choice, based on that, is Terrence Connor,” she said. “He comes with a proven track record of accomplishment, and he exemplifies that science and employing it.”

The Republican Party of Sarasota County endorsed Karen Rose for her election in 2020, and many of the individuals in the groups named in the post voted for her. Rose maintained that her support in 2020 was bipartisan and nonpolitical, pointing to her nearly three decades of experience as a district employee. But that support was tested by her push to remove Asplen.

The Sarasota Classified/Teachers Association, the local teachers union, backed Rose in both School Board elections she’s run in, but was highly critical of Rose’s move to fire Asplen.

The conservative groups now criticizing Rose also canvassed for the “ZEM” conservative slate of School Board candidates in the August 2022 election, which was an acronym representing Ziegler, Enos and Marinelli.

Marinelli voted for Connor as superintendent but was not named as someone the groups were looking to actively replace. Her term ends in 2026.

Conservative reaction to Connor

Many Sarasota conservative school activists favored Van Zant for his politics and military background. The same activists were also vocally against Connor, perceiving him as a leftist and worse than Asplen, though he is a registered Republican in Hillsborough County.

Several comments in The Hollow’s post in its Facebook group expressed a feeling of betrayal from a School Board they felt ignored the wishes of the people who got them elected.

”The lack of leadership in the local and state Republican parties has forced us to step up and find a candidate that will work together with their constituents...” Ashton Beaudry wrote in her Facebook post. “The Republican Party of Sarasota and the state party will not be responsible for finding our candidates. We the people, are responsible for that now.”

The Sarasota School District Transparency Project, another right-wing education Facebook group, also posted to express frustration with the board’s selection of Connor. “How many of you wasted your whole summer to get a Conservative majority School Board elected only to immediately be thrown under the bus?” the page, which is run anonymously, posted following the superintendent selection.

In the post’s comments, the Sarasota County chapter of Moms for Liberty also questioned the actions of the board majority.

Right-wing groups organizing to replace School Board's Rose, 2023 WLNR 21599943

"What is going on here? Why aren't any of these people doing what they promised all of us if we would just "flip the board"?" the group wrote.

In a Tweet responding to the group's announcement against Rose, Flynn said that elected officials are saying one thing and they doing something different once they get into office.

"Next time around, vote those RINOs and DEMs trying to destroy our children with this absolute madness of public school indoctrination out of office. And we will," Flynn wrote.

Follow Herald-Tribune Education Reporter Steven Walker on Twitter at @swalker_7. He can be reached at sbwalker@gannett.com.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Sarasota County School Board; Republican Party; Sarasota County Moms for America; Sarasota County Republican Assembly Club; Sarasota Classified/Teachers Association; Conservative; Moms for Liberty; DEMs) (Karen Rose)

Edition: SAR-HeraldTrib

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NewsRoom

SENATOR J.D. FORD CONDEMNS NEWSLETTER FROM MOMS FOR LIBERTY...

NewsRoom

6/22/23 States News Serv. 10:50:22

States News Service
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June 22, 2023

SENATOR J.D. FORD CONDEMNS NEWSLETTER FROM MOMS FOR LIBERTY QUOTING ADOLF HITLER

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

The following information was released by the Indiana State Senate, Democratic Caucus:

Today, State Senator J.D. Ford (D-Indianapolis) released the following statement in response to Moms for Liberty-Hamilton County releasing their first newsletter with a quote from Adolf Hitler:

"The fact that Moms for Liberty felt comfortable quoting Adolf Hitler in their first newsletter is telling. This group is spearheading the effort to ban books in the name of 'protecting children' yet they're quoting one of the most reprehensive and evil fascists in history. It's disgusting and indefensible, and I condemn what they are saying to justify this unacceptable act. A member said the quote was used to elicit 'shock value.' Yes quoting a man responsible for one of the worst genocides in history is as shocking as it is heinous. 6 million Jewish people lost their lives because of the rhetoric and ideals that were pushed by Hitler. We fought a global war thousands of American service members lost their lives to extinguish the type of hateful, anti-semitic language and views promoted by Hitler, and now we're seeing prominent groups and local leaders working to infuse those sentiments back into our society.

"I have to be honest I'm growing incredibly concerned by the increasing normalization of fascism, anti-semitism and hateful rhetoric, which we know from history will only ever lead to ugly outcomes. With the simultaneous efforts to ban books and the growing rise of Nazi sympathy, I fear we are on a slippery slope. That's why it's so important that leaders don't ignore these acts but stand up and condemn them. If Americans can lose their lives fighting a war against Nazism, elected leaders can at least have the courage to call out behavior from groups that have been recognized as extremists, like Moms for Liberty. I call on every member of the Hamilton County Statehouse Delegation to condemn this group's promotion of Hitler as well as everything he stood for.

"We must also be conscious of the impact of banning books about Nazism, the Holocaust, genocide and other hateful acts in history. We cannot allow important lessons and truths to be lost in an effort to cover the stains of our past. Doing that only robs future generations of knowledge that could help them avoid mistakes from history. Already, a shocking number of Americans don't know key facts relating to the Holocaust or have very disturbing ideas about how the Holocaust was started. If we do not know and learn our history, we are doomed to repeat it."

---- **Index References** ----

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Judaism (1JU93); Legislation (1LE97); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

SENATOR J.D. FORD CONDEMNS NEWSLETTER FROM MOMS FOR LIBERTY...

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Indiana State Senate) (J.D. FORD; Melvyn J. Ford; ADOLF HITLER)

Word Count: 426

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6/22/23 Talking Points Memo (Blog) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21658890

Talking Points Memo (Blog)
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June 22, 2023

Moms For Liberty Chapter Apologizes After Using Hitler Quote In Newsletter That Argued They Are Not An Extremist Group

Hunter Walker

Jun 22, 2023

An Indiana chapter of the group Moms For Liberty, which was labeled an “extremist group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center earlier this month, posted an apology on Thursday morning after publishing a newsletter fronted with a quote from Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

”We condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history,” Paige Miller, the chairwoman of the Hamilton County Moms For Liberty, wrote in an update posted to the group’s Facebook page. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and we express our deepest apology.”

The newsletter, which is called “The Parent Brigade,” was originally posted on Wednesday afternoon. It featured a quote that Hitler used in a 1935 speech with capitalization for emphasis: “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future.” The newsletter was updated with Miller’s apology on Thursday morning after condemnation from local leaders and reporting from the IndyStar newspaper.

The Hitler quote in the newsletter appeared on its front page directly above the statement Moms For Liberty’s co-founders, Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich, issued in response to the SPLC’s report. In that statement, Justice and Descovich described the “extremist group” designation as “name calling.”

Justice and Descovich have vigorously disputed the SPLC’s characterization of their group, which is ostensibly dedicated to “parental rights” and has focused on fighting school programs aimed at promoting LGBT inclusion, awareness of racism, and diversity. In its report, SPLC, a civil rights organization that publishes research on hate groups, described “Moms For Liberty” — which was founded amid opposition to COVID restrictions — as an an “antigovernment” group while noting it has called for eliminating the Department of Education and has spread conspiracy theories along with “hateful imagery” and “rhetoric against the LGBTQ community.”

As she criticized the SPLC on a “Moms For Liberty” broadcast, Descovich specifically objected to being compared to someone who “was doing a ‘Heil Hitler’ sign.” Miller, the Hamilton County Moms For Liberty chairwoman who apologized for the Hitler quote, did not immediately respond to a request for comment from TPM and a question about whether she was concerned the group’s use of the Nazi leader’s rhetoric undermined its insistence it is not “extremist.”

During its brief existence, Moms For Liberty has become a growing force in right-wing politics, promoting hundreds of candidates in local school board elections and backing book-banning legislation in some red states. Moms For Liberty is also

Moms For Liberty Chapter Apologizes After Using Hitler..., 2023 WLNR 21658890

set to host a summit in Philadelphia at the end of the month that will feature appearances from multiple presidential candidates including former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and Robert Kennedy Jr.

After posting the update and apology on Thursday, the Hamilton County Moms For Liberty Facebook group returned to its normal business, which apparently includes attacking a local school and performing arts center for hosting LGBTQ pride events and initiatives. One member of the group posted a photo of someone holding a pride flag emblazoned with an ominous question: "Who is hiding behind our children to influence our community."

"It is not OK to use children to push this perverted narrative!!" the group member wrote.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Hamilton County Moms For Liberty; Department of Education; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Keywords: (News); (Hitler); (Moms For Liberty); (schools); (SPLC)

Word Count: 713

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6/22/23 USA TODAY (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21648884

USA Today (USA)
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June 22, 2023

Moms for Liberty newsletter quotes Adolf Hitler, complains about being labeled ‘extremist’
The Hamilton County, Indiana chapter of the conservative parents’ rights group, Moms for
Liberty, apparently just learned Hitler was a bad person.

Rex Huppke, USA TODAY

Members of an Indiana chapter of the group Moms for Liberty found out this week that Adolf Hitler, the German Nazi leader who oversaw the systemic murder of 6 millions Jews, was a bad person.

Apparently previously unaware of Hitler’s role in the Holocaust and in starting World War II, the Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty – a national right-wing “parents rights” group that opposes the teaching of LGBTQ+ issues or America’s history of racism – used a quote from one of the most infamous dictators in global history near the top of its most recent newsletter.

The quote is from a 1935 rally, and it appeared in the newsletter like this: “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future.”

It is not clear whether the newsletter writer decided to put two of the words in all-caps to jazz up the text originally written by a man responsible for almost incalculable evil, or if that’s how the words appeared in the original Nazi speech. Hitler could not be reached for comment because he is in hell for all eternity.

Moms for Liberty complains about being labeled an extremist group under Adolf Hitler quote

As if to ensure that newsletter readers would not think the group had quoted Hitler accidentally, the quote appeared with attribution – the italicized words “Adolf Hitler.”

Florida-based Moms for Liberty, whose members have gained notoriety for disrupting school board meetings across the country to protest inclusive curriculums, was recently labeled an anti-government extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. That point was highlighted in the Hamilton County newsletter, with the words “Moms for Liberty will not be intimidated by hate groups!” appearing directly under the quote from Adolf Hitler.

It remains unclear whether all residents in this county north of Indianapolis are incapable of recognizing irony or if this is just an isolated incident.

Elon Musk declares ‘cisgender’ a slur: What about ‘fragile man with big ego’?

Moms for Liberty tries to clear up Hitler quote by stressing that they agree with it

By Wednesday night, as attention to the quote grew, the Hamilton County chapter of Moms for Liberty took quick action, updating the newsletter to make clear that they most definitely agree with the words from history’s most notorious antisemite. This was added to the front page of the newsletter, following the word “Context”: “The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People

Moms for Liberty newsletter quotes Adolf Hitler, complains..., 2023 WLNR 21648884

must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.”

Again, the irony of using a quote from a dictator to warn people about “an overreaching government” was apparently lost on the Moms for Liberty chapter, prompting suspicions that the area water supply might be tainted or that members of this national organization are, for membership, required to abandon basic reasoning skills.

Losing already? Maybe Ron DeSantis’ flailing presidential campaign caught ‘woke mind virus.’

The funniest apology in all of human history

On Thursday morning, presumably after Moms for Liberty national leaders paged through one of the history books they have tried to ban from public schools, the Indiana chapter released a statement boldly condemning a historical figure who is synonymous with genocide and hate.

”We condemn Adolf Hitler and his dark place in human history,” the statement read, more than 80 years after Hitler and his Nazi regime implemented a plan to exterminate European Jews. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and we express our deepest apology.”

Historical experts and people just casually aware of the atrocities committed by Hitler briefly agreed that “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter” is arguably one of the funniest sentences ever written. That was until the national Moms for Liberty Twitter account tweeted about the situation and wrote: “The chapter shouldn’t have quoted Hitler without condemning him at the same time.”

Dear @Moms4Liberty: Is it possible they just shouldn’t have quoted Hitler, or is it OK to quote him as long as you also condemn him? Related question, have you all considered a newsletter feature titled “Hitler Quotes That We Agree With, Even Though We Condemn Him”? <https://t.co/fQRvD40f2J>

— Rex Huppke (@RexHuppke) June 22, 2023

Asked via Twitter if it might be better to just not quote Hitler, the group did not respond.

Follow USA TODAY columnist Rex Huppke on Twitter @RexHuppke and Facebook [facebook.com/RexIsAJerk](https://www.facebook.com/RexIsAJerk)

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This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: Moms for Liberty newsletter quotes Adolf Hitler, complains about being labeled ‘extremist’

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Online Social Media (1ON38); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

Keywords: (Adolf Hitler,Nazi Germany,Indiana,Parents,LGBTQ Issues,humor column,Columnists’ Opinions,USAT Content Sharing - Opinion,Opinion Content,Opinion Collection,To the Point)

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NewsRoom

Indiana Moms for Liberty Chapter Apologizes for Quoting..., 2023 WLNR 21653516

NewsRoom

6/22/23 TheDailyBeast.com (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21653516

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June 22, 2023

Indiana Moms for Liberty Chapter Apologizes for Quoting Hitler in First Newsletter Octavio Jones/Getty ImagesAn Indiana chapter of the right-wing group Moms for Liberty is walking back its decision to quote Adolf Hitler at the top...

Kelly Weill

Octavio Jones/Getty ImagesAn Indiana chapter of the right-wing group Moms for Liberty is walking back its decision to quote Adolf Hitler at the top of its first-ever newsletter. Founded in 2021, Moms for Liberty is a well-funded nonprofit that has been at the forefront of campaigns to curtail education about race, gender, and LGBT issues in schools, as well as efforts to promote charter and private schools over public classrooms. The group has a national leadership team as well as local chapters, which have launched pressure campaigns and school board bids at a local level. The group's anti-LGBT work recently earned it a hate group designation from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Though Moms for Liberty disputes the hate group label, copy-pasting the Führer probably isn't helping. In its inaugural newsletter, "The Parent Brigade," the Moms for Liberty chapter of Hamilton County, Indiana, included a Hitler quote at the top of the page. "He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINs the future," read the quote, first reported by the Indianapolis Star. (The capitalization was Moms for Liberty's stylistic choice, not the Nazi kingpin's.) Late on Wednesday, after the Star reached out, Moms for Liberty updated its Hitler blurb to add "Context - the quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country's future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government." On Thursday morning, the group updated its Facebook post about the newsletter to clarify that Hitler is bad. "We condemn Adolf Hitler's actions and his dark place in human history. We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and we express our deepest apology," reads a quote from the Hamilton County group's chair. Moms for Liberty has worked with Republican politicians in support of a sweeping slate of anti-LGBTQ legislation, according to documents reviewed by Media Matters. The quote ran alongside the newsletter's table of contents, including "Liberty Lesson - A class in Biblical Citizenship" and "Parent WINS!" The latter described a successful campaign to remove "roughly half of the books in the teen section" of the local library and move them to an "adult section." The newsletter also targeted local LGBTQ programs, calling an area Pride festival "perversion" and warning that an area high school had received a \$10,000 grant from the "It Gets Better Project," a nonprofit that supports LGBTQ youth. Read more at The Daily Beast.

---- Index References ----

Company: MEDIA MATTERS SF, LLC; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Teenagers (1TE59))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Indiana (1IN12); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Indiana Moms for Liberty Chapter Apologizes for Quoting..., 2023 WLNR 21653516

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Indiana; Moms for Liberty; Media Matters.The; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Adolf Hitler)

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NewsRoom

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AP State News

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June 21, 2023

Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

The Associated Press

LNP/LancasterOnline. June 14, 2023.

Editorial: Another warning about danger to democracy posed by FreePA and Moms for Liberty

We can't say we weren't warned.

In January 2022, Joe Mohler — then the chairman of the Lancaster Township Republican Committee — wrote a column for this newspaper decrying an election training partnership between the Republican Committee of Lancaster County and FreePA.

Who “a political party aligns itself with matters,” Mohler wrote. “FreePA is not an organization the county GOP has any business associating itself with. Its website has been a hub for spreading inflammatory and verifiably false information.”

He described FreePA's conduct as “reckless, provocative and designed to exploit people's base instincts.”

Mohler, of course, was right. But for the sin of being right he stepped down from his leadership position as members of the Lancaster Township committee prepared a resolution to remove him from it.

The Florida-based Moms for Liberty is cut from the same cloth as FreePA, but it wields far more power and influence. It's a right-wing organization seeking to take over local school boards in the guise of protecting children from “dangers,” such as the accurate teaching of history, compassionate policies relating to transgender students and library books that reflect the realities of students' lives and prepare them for the complexities of living in a diverse world.

Without the freedom to read, without free and fair elections, without truthful history, our democracy is doomed. Moms for Liberty is intent on speeding democracy's demise at the local level, promoting liberty for its members and like-minded supporters — but for no one else.

We're not surprised that Moms for Liberty and FreePA leaders were dismayed to be labeled “antigovernment” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. They view themselves as patriots, but the patriotism they espouse is narrow-minded and exclusionary.

We were startled, however, by the willingness of Republican Lancaster County Commissioner Josh Parsons to attack the Southern Poverty Law Center in response.

Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

”This is a political tactic to try to oppose those groups who they see as conservative,” said Parsons , whose photo with FreePA activists is on the group’s website.

His fellow Republican commissioner, Ray D’Agostino, was more measured. He told LNP ‘ LancasterOnline’s Sholtis that he wanted more information about how the Southern Poverty Law Center came to its decision to place FreePA within “the antidemocratic hard-right movement.”

D’Agostino got perhaps more than he bargained for when Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, the law center’s senior research analyst, provided a statement.

”Overall, FreePA trades in the rhetoric and goals of the larger antigovernment movement, fearing UN power and calling their political opponents Marxists and communists,” Wiinikka-Lydon wrote. “They demonize their opponents, attack inclusive education and scapegoat LGBTQ persons, and they work with other organizations to undermine faith in legitimate democratic elections. They have also engaged in extremist activities and with extremism groups, from the January 6th insurrection to Moms for Liberty.”

FreePA’s connections to violent extremism are exemplified by some members’ involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, Wiinikka-Lydon added. Three members of FreePA were arrested for their participation in the Jan. 6 riot, including Sandra Weyer of Mechanicsburg, who was convicted earlier this month of obstructing Congress’ work and illegally entering the Capitol.

After Mohler’s forced exit from leadership in the local Republican Party, we asked this question in a February 2022 editorial : “What does it say that the county GOP does not have space for a Liberty University graduate who believes in Reagan Republicanism?”

We’d ask another question now: What does it say that some within the county GOP have made room for two organizations deemed to be “antigovernment” by the Southern Poverty Law Center?

What does it say about the local school boards that have cowed to demands from Moms for Liberty and FreePA to implement policies targeting transgender student-athletes and restricting access to certain library books?

Sholtis interviewed Elizabethtown Area School District board Vice President Michael Martin, who said FreePA members have taken over the local Republican committee and helped to get election deniers and conspiracy theorists such as Danielle and Stephen Lindemuth elected to the school board.

Martin is concerned the FreePA school board members and candidates may “embark on a Christian nationalist agenda that will end up tying up the school district in lawsuits.”

A self-described “fiscally conservative lifelong Republican,” Martin did not seek reelection this year. Like Mohler, he now feels he has nothing in common with the right-wing extremists seeking to take over local GOP politics.

County Republicans can slam the Southern Poverty Law Center all they want, but they’d be better off heeding this newest warning about the forces with which they’ve become aligned.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. June 18, 2023.

Editorial: State Senate should approve indigent defense bill

Sixty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court in a landmark decision established the right of poor defendants to an attorney and adequate legal defense. Nowhere is that constitutional right more flagrantly violated than in Pennsylvania. It’s one of only two states — South Dakota is the other — that provides no state funding, oversight or uniform standards for local public defenders or court-appointed attorneys.

Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

Fairness in the legal system requires an even playing field, where truth emerges from the adversarial efforts of a competent prosecution and vigorous defense. That doesn't happen in Pennsylvania. Instead, outgunned and underpaid defenders are often forced to cut corners and forgo expert witnesses and investigators. Cumbersome criminal caseloads push attorneys to settle cases quickly with a plea.

As noted by a 2011 bipartisan task force of state legislators, the issue is not the competency of defense attorneys for the indigent — many of them are outstanding — but the system that gives them neither the time nor the resources to mount a constitutionally adequate defense.

Vastly disparate spending among the state's 67 counties, which pick up the entire tab for public defender offices, also means the quality of defense depends on locale. Philadelphia, for example, spends nearly 10 times more per capita on indigent defense than does Mifflin County. Allegheny County spends roughly \$9.2 million, close to the average per-capita expenditure.

Elsewhere, state governments provide most of the funding for local indigent defense, assuring a more equitable system.

Members of the state House this week approved a bill (HB 1085), sponsored by Rep. Napoleon Nelson, D-Philadelphia, that would take a first step toward a public defense system that meets minimal constitutional standards. Now, the state Senate must approve the plan before the state's 2023-2024 budget takes effect in July. The Senate version of the bill, sponsored by Lisa Baker, R-Luzerne, and Vincent Hughes, D-Montgomery, remains in the Appropriations Committee.

Both bills would establish an Indigent Defense Advisory Committee within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, as well as a grant program. The Advisory Committee would, among other things, propose minimum standards for indigent defense services. Standards could cover training and qualifications for attorneys, data collection, caseloads, eligibility requirements and employee compensation.

Legislators would have to carve out money in the 2023-24 state budget to fund the grant program.

An abysmal system

The public may never know how poorly the system works. Many public defender offices don't have time to record even the most rudimentary information on their operations, such as average caseloads. Outside of Philadelphia, the system delivers a hodgepodge of fast, cheap and ineffective indigent legal services.

Public defenders and court-appointed attorneys are underpaid and overworked. Starting salaries for public defenders are typically about \$50,000 a year, but as low as \$30,000, considerably below what assistant district attorneys make. Court-appointed attorneys are compensated by flat fees, regardless of the complexity of a case, or how many exams, pleas and other legal tasks it entails.

As a result, more people go to state prisons, where each prisoner costs taxpayers more than \$40,000 a year. Over the last 30 years, more than 100 people have been exonerated in Pennsylvania. Since 1976, in capital cases alone, 11 prisoners have been exonerated and many more resentenced. Inflated sentences, court-ordered retrials, incarcerating the innocent and wrongful-conviction lawsuits have cost the state millions of dollars.

Justice for all

Previous administrations and legislatures in Pennsylvania have talked about the problem but done little, or nothing, about it.

To his credit, Gov. Josh Shapiro included \$10 million in his 2023-24 budget, effective July 1, to start fixing Pennsylvania's shameful system. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency would distribute this unprecedented investment locally, based on a formula that considers needs and available resources, the governor's office said. Legislators would have to carve out money in the 2023-24 state budget to fund the grants.

Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

Statewide, an added \$10 million is insufficient to ensure adequate legal services for poor defendants, but it's a step forward that would, overall, amount to nearly a 10% increase. Together, Pennsylvania's 67 counties spend more than \$100 million on indigent defense, but Philadelphia accounts for 40% of that.

Providing adequate and equitable funding for indigent defense in Pennsylvania won't be fast, cheap or easy. It will take the state's best bi-partisan efforts. But fixing this broken system is essential to making the 60-year-old promise of justice for all a reality in Pennsylvania.

Times-Tribune. June 14, 2023.

Editorial: Improve pay for support professionals

Pennsylvania law requires the state government to fund services for people with intellectual disabilities and autism, along with a moral obligation to help provide for some of its most vulnerable citizens.

It's failing on both scores. At the same time that the state government has more than \$5 billion in its Rainy Day Fund and an anticipated \$6 billion surplus by the June 30 close of this fiscal year, more than 12,000 people languish on a waiting list for intellectual disability and autism services. More than 5,000 of those people qualify for what the state itself classifies as "emergency services."

The Rainy Day Fund is meant to cover budget shortfalls, and it's raining hard for intellectual disability and autism service providers.

Underlying the waiting list is a major shortfall in the number of direct support professionals who provide individual and group care for people with intellectual disabilities and autism. Statewide, according to the Provider Alliance that represents support agencies, the field has a 37% annual turnover rate, a current 24% vacancy rate and 15,000 open positions.

The jobs are emotionally and often physically demanding. But providers can't compete for workers with market-based wages for health care because wage rates are tied to state reimbursements. The average pay for a direct support professional is \$16.72 an hour, for which the state supplies \$14.25.

That alone explains the turnover and vacancy rates. It takes an extraordinary level of commitment to remain in the direct support role when comparable or better pay readily is available for much less-demanding work.

The providers have asked the state to increase the appropriation for direct support professional wages by \$430 million. With a match from the federal government, that would enable the providers to increase wages to about \$20 an hour.

Some state lawmakers often complain about wasteful spending, but this a case of their own wasteful hoarding. Rather than squirreling away taxpayers' money, except for their own guaranteed annual pay increases that are tied to inflation, lawmakers should ensure that it is spent on crucial services that the government exists to provide.

Citizens' Voice. June 19, 2023.

Editorial: LOOP, STAR, other tax adventures

With the June 30 end of the fiscal year looming, legislators must craft the new state budget's education piece in light of a recent Commonwealth Court decision that the government's distribution of education funding is unconstitutional.

That, in turn, points to the Legislature's failure to increase the state government's share of public education funding from only about 35% of the total, leaving school districts to raise more than \$17 billion from local property taxes.

Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

Annual proposals range from modestly modifying the property tax to eliminating it. Lawmakers have increased state contributions over the past eight years but not to the point of diminishing local property taxes.

They could maintain the current system while providing property tax relief to those who most need it, by borrowing from programs in other states and from a local program.

The New York State Tax Relief Program, STAR, provides a range of property tax relief based on property owners' incomes rather than property values. It has several components. Owner-occupants of taxed property are eligible for a state tax rebate of at least 45% if they are older than 65 and their incomes are \$60,000 or less. Those whose incomes exceed that are eligible for smaller rebates. Other property owners who earn up to \$250,000 are eligible for percentage reductions in their property's assessed value. The average benefit is about \$800 a year. It costs the state government \$3 billion but would be less expensive in Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia has a program applicable to all property taxes known as LOOP, for Longtime Owner Occupant Program, and Pittsburgh's state representatives have introduced a bill to allow that city to emulate it. It particularly suits dynamic urban areas, where longtime homeowners sometimes suddenly face much higher property taxes because of new high-end developments around them. LOOP effectively zeroes out the new development in determining longtime residents' assessments.

The Legislature should approve not just Pittsburgh's plan but apply it statewide. Local markets will determine where it makes sense.

If lawmakers don't directly reform property taxes, they at least should work around the edges to make them less onerous for people who can least afford them.

END

--- Index References ---

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; STATE HOUSE CAPITAL MANAGEMENT INC; Elizabethtown Area School District

News Subject: (Economic Policy & Policymakers (1EC69); Economics & Trade (1EC26); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Local Taxing Authorities (1LO66); Public Finance (1PU60); Taxation (1TA10))

Industry: (Accounting, Consulting & Legal Services (1AC73))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (FreePA school board; Republican Committee of Lancaster County; Congress'; Republican Party; U.S. Supreme Court; Appropriations Committee; Indigent Defense Advisory Committee; Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency; Provider Alliance; Commonwealth Court; Southern Poverty Law Center; state House; Elizabethtown Area School District)

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Editorial Roundup: Pennsylvania

NewsRoom

Sound Off, 2023 WLNR 21606962

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Citrus County Chronicle (Crystal River, FL)
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June 21, 2023

Section: Sound Offs

Sound Off

Staff Writer

Do something about the panhandling

I don't know if this is a sheriff's department job or commissioners' job or city official's job, but someone needs to do something about the panhandling going on in front of the grocery stores, especially in Crystal River and Homosassa, and also on the streets. The corner of U.S. Highway 19 and State Road 44 is very dangerous and there's people out there panhandling. I don't know what the solution is to this, but I think someone needs to look into this and find out what can be done.

Sexist and old-fashioned, Jack Townsend

I'm calling in reference to a letter from Jack Townsend and Sunday, June 11, "Thoughts on Father's Day." This letter contains a lot of sexist and old-fashioned dribble. He's talking about how we convinced women that they must go out and work and have a career to have a happy life. My goodness, do you know how many women wanted to get out from under being just a wife and mother? Guess what, some women don't want to be wives or mothers. Nobody forced women to stop being wives and mothers. Now, what happened to the family unit? Hey, I don't know, but why don't you talk to the men about that because they're the ones that are not home with the single moms, taking care of kids and being with their woman. And as far as the kids go, nobody is destroying the kids except their own parents. I read another article in here about how parents are finally fed up, "SPLC labels Moms for Liberty 'extremist group.'" This fella here, Michael Graham, said no, it's just parents stood up and said they're my children. Well, guess what Jack, the parents are to blame for that. The parents are the ones that are giving them electronic devices. They're the ones that feeding them crappy food. I think your letter is just a bunch of crap.

Don't the parents know?

I'm reading in the Chronicle that they are going to have K-9 dogs sniff out vaping teens. I'm not sure I agree with that but the reason I call is because actually my husband brought up a good point. He said, "Well, don't their parents know this?" Number one, where are they getting the money to buy the vaping stuff and who is selling it to them? Because that's illegal, right there. I just find it very peculiar that these parents are unaware of what their kids are doing, the same parents that are screaming, "They're my children, I have the right to guide their lives," that they don't know what's going on so now the school has to step in with K-9 dogs.

Our children

In reference to our children, like 3 years old, 5 years old, that people think they can make their own decisions on their sexuality. Really? They can't even go to a store by themselves, they can't make their own medical decisions, yet you're

Sound Off, 2023 WLNR 21606962

saying they can make decisions on whether they want to be a male or female? Really?

Just fix the roads, it's simple

I'm calling in reference to the Pirates Cove and Betz Farm. We don't need to purchase it. Take whatever money you planned to purchase that and fix the roads. We don't need to purchase anything else. Start cutting back and fix the roads. Very simple.

Please write about this

Chronicle, how about an article about why gas went up \$0.40 per gallon for no apparent reason when you look at the price of a barrel of oil. Do your job, please.

Grow up and get a life

This is Monday, June 12, and I'm reading the Sound Off, "Your grandchildren are paying for your greed." I don't know who called in the Sound Off male or female, but you're always blaming the old people for doing this. The old people this, the old people that, we're greedy, we've taken Social Security, we've done this, we've done that. Well, let me tell you something whoever put this in, I'm one of those old people. I'm 71 years old and I'm still working and I'm still putting into Social Security and Medicare, which I have been putting in since I was 18 years old. Maybe it's time you young folk get off your duff and go to work and put into the Social Security so that it will not run out nor will Medicare. But the young people don't want to work. They like to go to the mailbox and get a check and then they go to the bank. So maybe you're one of those young people that don't want to work but you want us old people to continue to work to pay for your bills. Grow up and get a life.

Could've gone toward roads

I'm responding to your article, "CORE Business Center gets \$92K from county." Don't you think they should've taken that \$92K and picked up our roads? Because that's part of our economy.

Dear Eric Williams ...

This is for Mr. Williams, the city manager of Inverness. If you could, please buy 20 gallons of paint and paint the Whispering Oaks sign coming into the park. It looks like total garbage, and nobody's ever done a thing with it. It's rotten and about to fall down. I think a lot more people would go there if the sign looked a little better than what it does. And another thing about all these old, dilapidated buildings, like the travel agent building downtown and all these other buildings have been sitting here for 50 years with nobody in them. Tear them down! Build something! Let the county commissioners spend a dime besides the \$9 million on the animal shelter.

Disgraceful action at the U.S. Capitol

I agree with John Griffin's Letter on June 8 about the inappropriate action by the Capitol Police to stop a youth group from singing the national anthem at the U.S. Capital. Whoever told the police to do that should be fired and hung up by their thumbs. What country are we leaving in if we cannot express our respect and commitment to our national anthem in the people's capital? This is a total disgraceful action by the Capitol Police.

I don't give a hoot

I'm calling in reference to Sound Off, "Your grandchildren are paying for your greed." I got news for you, buddy. I never had any children because I didn't want them. So, I don't have any grandchildren, so nobody is going to have to pay in my family \$124,000 a person. So, you know what, since I don't have any kids or grandkids, I don't give a hoot. You should be ashamed of yourself for blaming all this on older generations. That money can be managed just fine. Way to blame the U.S. government who has been managing it.

---- **Index References** ----

Sound Off, 2023 WLNR 21606962

Company: PIRATES COVE HOT SPRINGS INC; Core Business; United States of America

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Teenagers (1TE59))

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NewsRoom

Pride celebration stirs more controversy in Arlington, 2023 WLNR 21623015

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June 21, 2023

Section: Local News

Pride celebration stirs more controversy in Arlington

ARLINGTON - Right-wing activists, including some from a local online Moms For Liberty group, used an Arlington City Council meeting to rail against drag performers and contest the town's Pride event.

Arlington Pride will be held on July 22. Earlier this month, the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights watchdog, added Moms For Liberty to a list of "anti-government extremist groups."

The organization's emergence from a locked Facebook group to commenting at public meetings comes as tensions surrounding LGBTQ+ issues in Arlington continue to simmer. Last month, city staff asked Pride Organizers to consider not hosting a drag story time at the event.

Members of the Arlington Pride group, along with others in the community, have been closely watching Snohomish County Moms For Liberty members posts for months. In response, the group - along with other LGBTQ+ allies and Arlington community members - began to routinely attend city council meetings.

In public comment at one council meeting, Pride organizers cited a new law they say gives the city the right to declare a gun-free zone.

"There is a new law, ESSB 5038 or RCW 9.41.300(2), that would allow the city to restrict open carrying of firearms within 250 feet of a permitted event in a public park if notice is given to the public about this no carry zone," a May letter from Arlington Pride to city officials.

The city disagreed. In a blunt letter, city administrator Paul Ellis responded to the group, arguing that while state law does authorize cities to restrict open carry at "permitted demonstrations," the statute is narrow. The law defines a permitted demonstration as a type of "gathering."

And the law defines a gathering as "a demonstration, march, rally, vigil, sit-in, protest, picketing, or similar public assembly."

Ellis then wrote: "You have the right to minimize the risk of backlash and problems that might occur by regulating the content of your entertainment. While the City has concluded your entertainment, based on the limited information you have provided, is protected by the First Amendment, it is clearly entertainment that certain segments of the community do not support ... you should consider how your message is being received by the community."

On Tuesday evening, Pride members said they knew Moms For Liberty was going to show up, so 50 people packed in the tiny city council chamber to listen to Kenzie Killebrew, one of the Pride group members. Extra chairs had to be brought in before the meeting.

Pride celebration stirs more controversy in Arlington, 2023 WLNR 21623015

"Last city council meeting, I told you that I was queer, but that is only part of my identity. I'm also a daughter, a sister, a mentor, a student, an animal lover and an artist," Killebrew said. "The difference between those parts of my identity is being queer is the only one I've had to hide."

A principle and fundamental reason for the founding of Arlington Pride was to provide a safety net for the local queer community, organizers say. LGBTQ+ children kill themselves at a disproportionately high rate. Groups like Arlington Pride can connect youth - and adults - to services or an introduction into the community, they say.

Advocates say events like Arlington Pride serve as recognition of a visible queer community. In fact, studies show supportive events like Pride can make a positive impact on LGBTQ+ youth.

The National LGBT Health Education Center lists living as a stigmatized minority as a factor leading to increased risk of suicide. Studies have shown hate crime laws reduce suicides as well.

Moms for Liberty groups across the country have pushed to cast drag performers as sexually deviant and pressed politicians to cancel drag performances and ban LGBTQ+-themed books.

Sue Ward, a member of the Moms group, was first to the podium Tuesday evening. She criticized drag performances and threatened legal action, mentioning laws against minors attending "erotic" performances.

"If violations occur and the City of Arlington does not pursue violations of these codes, the community shop owners and pastors likely will," Ward said.

Two people who spoke in support of the event declined to publicly state their addresses saying they feared Ward. Ward waved off those concerns after the meeting.

"There's been no threats. The threats have come at me, the threats have come at Tom (Hughes)," said Ward. Hughes is a right-wing agitator who attended the Arlington City Council meeting on June 5.

Supporters of LGBTQ+ rights, drag performances and the Arlington Pride event outnumbered those in opposition. Keegan Smith said his family had been in the Arlington area for three generations.

"I'm not part of the LGBT community, but they're part of ours," Smith said. "This is Arlington Washington Pride that is trying to hold an event. This isn't Seattle Pride, this isn't anybody else trying to come here and change our community. These are people here, the people that live here. They're your neighbors."

Ward said after the meeting she was a member of the Facebook group, but not a member of the Moms For Liberty organization. She also said she was a member of another conservative group, Conservative Ladies of Washington. She also has nearly 20,000 followers on Twitter.

Ward also sent a letter to council that featured much of what she said in her public comment.

In the letter, she also said a family member is transitioning and that she has friends who are gay. She ended her letter with a message to city council.

"Please consider making a change to having this event OR at the very very least know exactly what is going to transpire," she wrote in the letter. "There is no guarantee for that."

Arlington Pride has already pushed back after the city requested the group pay for security and insurance. The city relented on the requirement last month. Arlington Pride will provide security through its own members.

Several members of the Arlington Pride group are former law enforcement and military with training in crowd control.

Pride celebration stirs more controversy in Arlington, 2023 WLNR 21623015

Mayor Barb Tolbert thought the meeting Tuesday went well.

"It was a very civil discussion of people with opposing viewpoints," Tolbert said. "I thought they followed the rules, talked respectfully and had their voices heard."

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---- Index References ----

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June 21, 2023

Sunburn — The morning read of what's hot in Florida politics — 6.21.23

Peter Schorsch

Jun 21, 2023

Good Wednesday morning.

Eight sports legends are entering the Florida Sports Hall of Fame.

The 2023 new additions were announced during a reception held at the museum in Port St. Lucie. The 2023 class will be inducted in a ceremony at the Florida Theatre in Jacksonville on Nov. 8.

Florida is ready to induct eight new Sports Hall of Famers.

"How exciting to be able to recognize such a talented, accomplished and diverse group of athletes," said Rick Hatcher, president and Chair of the Florida Sports Hall of Fame board. "Their contributions to their sport, their communities, and impacts they've had on a worldwide stage make this a remarkable class. We are honored to welcome them as the newest members of the Florida Sports Hall of Fame."

The 2023 class includes:

—LeRoy Butler: A three-year starter (1987-89) for the Florida State University football team, this Jacksonville native played 12 seasons for the Green Bay Packers and was a four-time First-team All-Pro.

—Vince Carter: Born in Daytona Beach, Carter is an eight-time All-Star and a two-time All-NBA Team selection. He has been touted as the greatest dunker of all time. He also ranks No. 6 in three-pointers in league history.

—Greg Coleman: Known for being one of the first African American punters in the NFL, Coleman spent 12 years in the league. A product of Florida A&M University, Coleman earned the nickname "Coffin Corner" because of his ability to aim his kicks near the corner of the playing field.

—Tom Coughlin: In eight seasons as head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars (1995-2002), the Jaguars made four consecutive playoff appearances and appeared in the AFC Championship Game twice — the first in only the second year of the team's existence (1996).

—Ashlyn Harris: Born in Cocoa Beach, Harris was a member of the 2015 and 2019 World Cup Champion teams. Despite numerous injuries early in her college career, she won three NCAA Women's Soccer Championships with the UNC Tar

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Heels in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

—Jeff Johnson: Over 27 seasons, Johnson has built Chipola baseball into one of the premier JUCO programs in the country. Johnson led the Indians to National Championships in 2007, 2017 and 2018. His programs have produced 19 MLB players and four MLB All-Stars.

—Elaine Larsen: The two-time world champion jet car driver is one of only 15 jet dragster pilots, and one of only three women jet dragster pilots in the world. She has competed in more than 1,400 races during her 20-year career. She currently serves as the sole testing driver for Palm Bay-based research center Larsen Motorsports.

—Shannon Miller: Miller was the 1993 and 1994 world all-around gymnastics champion and a member of the gold medal-winning Magnificent Seven team at the 1996 Olympics. She was also the most successful American athlete at the 1992 Olympics, winning five medals.

— SITUATIONAL AWARENESS —

—@RepJamesCormer: Hunter Biden is getting away with a slap on the wrist when growing evidence uncovered by the House Oversight Committee reveals the Bidens engaged in a pattern of corruption, influence peddling, and possibly bribery.

—@WalshFreedom: MAGA: “Hunter Biden must be charged for the crimes he committed! Hunter Biden is charged for the crimes he committed. MAGA: “These charges are bullshit! It’s all meant to distract from the real crimes Hunter & his dad committed!

—@EWerickson: The Hunter Biden deal indeed reeks of favoritism and partiality by his father’s DOJ. However, it is also true first-time offenders frequently get deals like this. It is also true that had (Donald)Trump returned all the documents, he would not have been indicted.

—@Aronberg: If Fort Pierce is the location of Trump’s criminal trial, it means the jury pool will come from 5 counties, 4 of which voted for Trump in both 2016 and 2020. The other is St. Lucie, which is a swing county that has the largest population in the district.

—@ABCofFL: Something not spoken about enough with Tallahassee is how opposing sides on an issue can and do respect each other. We want to extend@FloridaAFLC our deepest sympathies on the loss of Mike Williams. We agreed on very little, but Mike was a great advocate.

— DAYS UNTIL —

’And Just Like That’ Season 2 premieres — 1; Florida Chamber 2023 Florida Learners to Earners Workforce Solution Summit — 6; Jacksonville Mayor-elect Donna Deegan’s inauguration — 9; ‘Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny’ premieres — 9; Wimbledon begins — 12; 2023 MLB All-Star Game — 20; ‘Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning — Part One’ premieres — 21; Florida Chamber 37th Annual Environmental Permitting Summer School — 28; Christopher Nolan’s ‘Oppenheimer’ premieres — 30; Lionel Messi to make his Major League Soccer debut with Inter Miami CF — 30; ‘Billions’ final season premieres — 51; Beyoncé’s ‘Renaissance’ tour in Tampa — 56; The first GOP Presidential Primary debate — 63; ‘Ahsoka’ premieres on Disney+ — 63; The U.S. Open begins — 68; Florida House Fall 2023 Interim Committee Meetings begin — 89; Martin Scorsese’s ‘Killers of the Flower Moon’ premieres — 107; 2023 Florida Chamber Annual Meeting & Future of Florida Forum — 124; ‘Dune: Part Two’ premieres — 135; ‘Captain Marvel 2’ premieres — 142; Formula 1 will take over the Las Vegas Strip — 148; Ridley Scott’s ‘Napoleon’ premieres — 154; Florida’s 2024 Regular Session begins — 202; South Carolina Democratic Primary — 227; New Hampshire and Nevada Democratic Primaries — 230; Georgia Democratic Primary — 237; South Carolina GOP holds first-in-the-South Primary — 248; Michigan Democratic Primary — 251; ‘A Quiet Place: Day One’ premieres — 261; 2024 Oscars — 263; ‘Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse’ Part 2 premieres — 282; ‘Deadpool 3’ premieres — 317; ‘Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes’ premieres — 338; Opening Ceremony of the 2024 Olympic Games — 401; ‘Captain America: Brave New World’ premieres — 401; New ‘Alien’ premieres — 422; Georgia Tech to face Florida State in 2024 opener in Dublin — 430; ‘Thunderbolts’ premieres — 548; ‘Blade’ reboot premieres — 604; ‘Fantastic Four’ reboot premieres — 681; ‘Moana’ premieres — 737;

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'Avatar 3' premieres — 912; 'Avengers: The Kang Dynasty' premieres — 1,045; Untitled 'Star Wars' movie premieres — 1,066; Another untitled 'Star Wars' movie premieres — 1,276; 'Avengers: Secret Wars' premieres — 1,416; 'Avatar 4' premieres — 2,375; 'Avatar 5' premieres — 2,738.

— TOP STORY —

"Hunter Biden reaches deal to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax charges" via Michael S. Schmidt and Adam Entous of The New York Times — Biden agreed with the Justice Department on Tuesday to plead guilty to two misdemeanor tax charges and accept terms that would allow him to avoid prosecution on a separate gun charge, a big step toward ending a long-running and politically explosive investigation into the finances, drug use and international business dealings of President Joe Biden's troubled son.

Hunter Biden takes a plea deal, with no jail time. Republicans are still not satisfied.

Under a deal hashed out with a federal prosecutor who was appointed by Trump, Biden agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor counts of failing to pay his 2017 and 2018 taxes on time and be sentenced to probation.

The Justice Department also charged Biden but, under what is known as a pretrial diversion agreement, said it would not prosecute him in connection with his purchase of a handgun in 2018 during a period when he was using drugs. The deal is contingent on Biden remaining drug-free for 24 months and agreeing never to own a firearm again.

Even though years of investigation by a Republican-appointed prosecutor found evidence to charge Biden only on the narrow tax and gun issues rather than the broader international conspiracies promoted by Trump and Republicans on Capitol Hill, the agreement was assailed by the right as too lenient.

The crimes to which Biden is pleading guilty, said Douglas Berman, a law professor at Ohio State University, are ones that the average person is rarely prosecuted for because they are usually only brought along with more serious offenses.

"If these are the only offenses, most prosecutors are going to say it's not worth a federal case," Berman said.

—"Florida political leaders react to Hunter Biden's plea deal" via Jacob Ogles of Florida Politics

"For Joe Biden, the troubles of his son are personal and politically painful" via Peter Baker of The New York Times — No subject may be more personally painful nor politically problematic for President Biden than his troubled son, Hunter. He is by various accounts a gaping wound in his heart and the most sensitive soft spot in his campaign armor. On the one hand, Hunter Biden's agreement on Tuesday to plead guilty to two misdemeanor tax crimes capped a five-year investigation without allegations of wrongdoing by the President or, presumably, prison time for his youngest son. But on the other hand, it put Hunter once again in the crosshairs of Biden's adversaries who instantly complained that the wayward son got off too easy.

— THE TRAIL —

"Biden, Ron DeSantis make dueling trips to California in 2024 bids" via Julia Manchester and Alex Gangitano of The Hill — Biden and Gov. DeSantis are making dueling trips to California this week, underscoring the importance of the state politically and financially as they prepare for 2024. DeSantis, who will be in the Golden State through Tuesday, attended a private fundraiser in Sacramento, while Biden is in San Francisco through Wednesday for fundraisers and events on climate change and artificial intelligence (AI). The split-screen of Biden and one of the top GOP presidential contenders also comes as California is set to play a key role in the battle for the House next year.

Ron DeSantis and Joe Biden cross paths in California. Image via AP.

"The indictment isn't it: Why Donald Trump keeps his Primary lead as opponents stall" via Marc Caputo and Tom LoBianco of The Messenger — So if Trump is leading by double digits and isn't hurt by the indictments what does that mean for the Primary contest? "Most likely, it's over," said Republican pollster Wes Anderson. "Donald Trump has to beat himself.

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What does that look like? I have no friggin' idea. But I don't think the indictment is it." In focus groups, his supporters didn't necessarily think Trump was innocent. But that didn't seem to matter. Instead, the charges evoked anger among participants that was reminiscent of the feeling of the 2016 Republican electorate when Trump won as an anti-establishment outsider. "People were basically saying, 'I'm sure it's true. That's not the issue. It's a dual system of justice,'" Anderson said. "I was shocked by the intensity. It was, 'screw them. We go to war now.'"

"Trump's GOP support appears to soften post-indictment, but he holds lead in Primary field" via Jennifer Agiesta and Ariel Edwards-Levy of CNN — Trump's support appears to have softened following his indictment and arrest on federal charges. Most Americans approve of Trump's indictment stemming from his alleged mishandling of classified documents after leaving office, even as 71% say politics played a role in that charging decision. Though Trump continues to lead the GOP field by a wide margin in the race for the Republican Party's nomination for President, the poll suggests that his support has declined, as have positive views of him among Republican and Republican-leaning voters. Nearly a quarter now say they would not consider backing his candidacy under any circumstances.

"Post-indictment polling doesn't yet spell doom for Trump" via Philip Bump of The Washington Post — Trump has never faced a situation like the one formalized earlier this month when the Justice Department obtained a federal criminal indictment against the former President. The lengthy indictment spelled out in detail Trump's efforts to retain documents marked as classified, including his alleged attempts to subvert a 2022 subpoena. It is a unique situation, to put it mildly. So, even for a weary, cynical public, the question arises anew: Could this actually hobble Trump's political support? In the horse race question, Trump dropped 6 points relative to May. Interestingly, DeSantis didn't gain at all.

"Trump lead over GOP field slips after federal indictment" via Julia Mueller of The Hill — Trump's lead over the Republican Presidential Primary field for 2024 has slipped in the wake of his federal indictment. A CNN poll found that although the former President is still at the head of the GOP field by a wide margin, his support among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents dipped 6 points after he was indicted and arraigned on 37 federal criminal charges in connection with the Justice Department's classified documents probe.

"DeSantis world makes Massachusetts moves" via Lisa Kashinsky of POLITICO — DeSantis once used Massachusetts as the backdrop for one of his biggest political stunts. Now the Republican Governor and his allies are quietly laying the groundwork for his presidential campaign in this traditional Super Tuesday state as they prepare to play deep into the Primary calendar. DeSantis' campaign has activated volunteers, including MassGOP Vice Chair Jay Fleitman and state Committee person Mary Lou Stuart, to build a supporter network in Massachusetts. And Ken Cuccinelli, founder of the DeSantis-aligned super PAC Never Back Down, is expected in Massachusetts this week to connect with potential donors as the operation works to staff up and canvass in states that vote through Super Tuesday.

— MORE 2024 —

"Next question for GOP 2024 Trump challengers: When to drop out?" via Alex Leary of The Wall Street Journal — With the 2024 Republican presidential crop now largely in place, another guessing game begins. When will candidates start dropping out? As the shine from campaign launches wears, candidates will feel pressure to show progress. That tension is likely to be more intense than usual given what happened in the GOP's raucous 2016 Primary, during which Trump bested a massive field. Given his base of core supporters, both pro- and anti-Trump Republicans agree that the former President benefits from having a large crop of rivals divvy up the rest of the GOP electorate.

"Trump team turns post-arraignment Versailles visit into campaign ad" via Jacob Ogles of Florida Politics — When Trump met supporters at Versailles Restaurant after his arraignment, one anchor griped he was trying to turn the scene into a campaign ad. Now, it has actually become one. Trump's arraignment in federal court sparked a spectacle from supporters and protesters outside the federal courthouse in Miami. Now, the Mar-a-Lago Republican's campaign has released a video on Rumble that splices together footage of supporters in Miami with voice-overs of pundits supporting Trump. The video also uses a speech from a fundraiser Trump held in Bedminster, New Jersey, the same night of his appearance in federal court.

To watch the ad, please click on the image below:

"How Trump has tried to use Hunter Biden as a way to attack his father" via Anjali Huynh of The New York Times — For

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Trump and his allies, decrying Hunter Biden has long served as a political applause line, most notably during the 2020 race. Trump repeatedly circulated unsubstantiated claims in efforts to link his Democratic rival to his son's business dealings, which he painted as corrupt, even before Biden became his party's nominee. Now, with Trump newly arraigned on federal charges over his handling of classified documents, he and many Republicans have sought to cast Hunter Biden's agreement with federal prosecutors as overly lenient and sought to establish a double-standard narrative.

"The Memo: Democrats divided on whether to attack or ignore RFK Jr." via Niall Stange of The Hill — The surprising early strength of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s presidential campaign is sparking unease among Democrats — and leaving them divided about what to do about it. Party strategists cleave into two camps on the question of how Biden and his campaign should respond. One faction argues that Biden should ignore Kennedy. Engaging him would only legitimize and elevate his candidacy, they say. The other school of thought holds that Kennedy is too dangerous a figure to let campaign unimpeded. This second camp notes that, even if Kennedy never looks like a fully serious contender for the nomination, he could hurt Biden if he continues edging up in the polls.

— DOWN BALLOT —

"AIF endorses Tom Leek, Stan McClain, Keith Truenow for Senate" via Drew Wilson of Florida Politics — The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) is issuing early endorsements for three Senate candidates in next year's contest. The pro-business group's endorsements went to Rep. Leek in SD 7, Rep. McClain in SD 9 and Rep. Truenow in SD 13. Leek, who chairs the powerful House Appropriations Committee, currently represents House District 28 and is looking to upgrade to the seat currently held by term-limited Sen. Travis Hutson, who has already endorsed Leek as his successor. McClain, who chairs the House Ways & Means Committee, currently represents House District 27 and is seeking to replace exiting Sen. Keith Perry. Truenow, meanwhile, has entered the race for the Central Florida seat currently held by term-limited Sen. Dennis Baxley.

Tom Leek gets solid backup for his Senate campaign.

"Sitting and former Orange Co. School Board members back Carlos Guillermo Smith for Senate" via Jacob Ogles of Florida Politics — School Board members Melissa Byrd, Angie Gallo and Maria Salamana are supporting the Orlando Democrat's run in Senate District 17. So are former School Board members Daryl Flynn and Linda Kobert. "Carlos is a strong advocate for education and has worked to ensure our schools are safe for all students regardless of their background or identity," Salamana said. "He has been outspoken about how legislation impacts our families and will continue to represent our community needs in Tallahassee." The Florida Parent-Teacher Association in 2020 named Smith as Legislator of the Year. The recent endorsements signal the public education world in Central Florida still holds the former lawmaker in high esteem.

"Sedition panda' files for 2024 Citrus County Commission seat" via Mike Wright of Florida Politics — A Lecanto man known as "Sedition Panda" for his alleged role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection is now setting his sights on the Citrus County Commission. Jesse Rumson filed paperwork with the Citrus County Supervisor of Elections as a Republican in County Commission District 5. Republican incumbent Holly Davishan't announced her intentions for 2024 but has told friends she plans to seek re-election to a second term. Rumson was arrested in February on numerous federal charges, including obstruction of law enforcement during an official proceeding and assaulting police officers. The Justice Department said Rumson was among a mob that illegally massed near a Senate door. When rioters successfully broke open the Capitol parliamentary door, Rumson was seen wearing a panda headpiece and running from the Senate wing door.

— DESANTISY LAND —

"DeSantis used secretive panel to flip state Supreme Court" via Beth Reinhard and Josh Dawsey of The Washington Post — For decades, the liberal-leaning state Supreme Court stymied the ambitions of Florida's Republican Governors. That is until DeSantis was elected. The court let him erase a congressional district with a large Black population. It opened the door to a law making it easier to impose the death penalty. Now, it's poised to rule on the Governor's plan to outlaw most abortions in the third-most-populous state. The hard-right turn was by design. DeSantis seized on the unusual retirement of three liberal justices at once to quickly remake the court. He did so with the help of a secretive panel led by Leonard Leo — the key architect of the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative majority — that quietly vetted judicial nominees in an Orlando conference room three weeks before the Governor's inauguration.

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Ron DeSantis' Supreme Court picks were vetted by a panel on the down low.

"Most court spending priorities spared the veto ax" via Jim Ash of The Florida Bar — DeSantis has signed a \$116.5 billion budget for FY 2023-24 that leaves most court spending priorities intact. That means that beginning July 1, trial court judges will see a 5% across-the-board pay raise, as the court system requested. On their own initiative, lawmakers also approved a 5% pay increase for justices and appellate judges. The vetoes eliminated just one item that the courts requested, a \$6 million appropriation for the Department of Management Services to begin the design and planning of a 6th District Court of Appeal facility. DeSantis also vetoed \$2 million that a local delegation member sponsored for a Polk County Courthouse roof replacement.

"Fighters for nonpartisan public education take on DeSantis-backed Moms for Liberty in Florida" via Noreen Marcus of the Florida Bulldog — Moms for Liberty, the school grievance league with close ties to DeSantis, has changed public education in Florida — and not for the better, many parents and educators say. In DeSantis' war on "woke," a political term that refers to the belief in systemic racism or other injustices, the Moms for Liberty are his foot soldiers. They're a force in Republican politics akin to Sarah Palin, John McCain's 2008 running mate, who called herself "a hockey mom" and said the only difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull is "lipstick." DeSantis urges them on. "You just gotta be willing to stand by your convictions," he said at the Moms' first summit meeting in Tampa last year.

— STATEWIDE —

"DeSantis signs off on managed care pilot for people with developmental disabilities" via the News Service of Florida — DeSantis has signed off on creating a pilot program to provide Medicaid managed-care services to people with developmental disabilities. The pilot was included in a broader health care bill that DeSantis signed with the state budget for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Lawmakers in 2011 approved an overhaul of the Medicaid system that has led to most beneficiaries receiving services through managed-care plans. But services for people with developmental disabilities have been provided through such things as what is known as the state's iBudget program. Under the bill, the pilot program will be created in Miami-Dade, Monroe, Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee and Polk counties. Enrollment will be voluntary.

"FRF warns consumers about illegal, potentially deadly vaping products" via Drew Wilson of Florida Politics — The volume of illegal nicotine dispensing devices, also known as vaping products, comes as Florida — the third largest state by population — sits at No. 1 in vape sales. Data collected by vape manufacturers shows an expected \$363 million in illegal vape products will be sold within Florida this year — 20% above the national average — accounting for as much as 58% of overall vape product sales. Five years ago, illicit vapes accounted for less than 10% of vape products sold. The Florida Retail Federation warned that illegal vaping products not only threaten legitimate businesses but may also pose a danger to consumers.

Florida retailers issue a stern warning about bogus vape products.

—"FAU/FIU study shows Florida housing and rental markets are overpriced" via Talia Blake of WMFE

"It's definitely chaos': How immigration law impacts Florida restaurants, construction" via Dave Berman of Florida Today — Provisions of Florida's new law cracking down on the use of workers who are not in this country legally won't take effect until July 1. But Manuel Lievano, CEO of Miami-based MCC USA Global Workforce Solutions, says he already sees its impact at the Miami-area fine-dining restaurants he visits. An existing worker shortage there is getting worse. "It's definitely chaos right now" in the restaurant industry, said Lievano, whose firm connects U.S. companies experiencing labor shortages with foreign workers who want to obtain permanent residency. Officials in the hotel and construction industries say they also expect to feel the pinch. The challenge Florida employers face of filling jobs in a state that has a 2.6% unemployment rate is being exacerbated by the new legislation.

"Authors file lawsuit after Florida school district restricts book about same-sex penguins" via Douglas Soule of USA Today Network-Florida — The authors of "And Tango Makes Three" are suing Florida and a county school district in federal court over a restriction on their children's book about two male penguins who raise a chick together. Joined in the suit by students, authors Peter Parnell and Justin Richardsontake issue with a Lake County School District's decision to bar students below the fourth grade from accessing their book. The plaintiffs, who are represented by the law firms Selendy Gay Elsberg and Kenny

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Nachwalter, say they're suing to "vindicate their First and 14th Amendment rights and to stop the abhorrent and discriminatory practice of restricting access to books based on partisan, non-pedagogical motivations."

The authors of 'And Tango Makes Three' get litigious in Florida.

—"Why Florida's new Insurance Commissioner is optimistic about rates" via Lawrence Mower of the Tampa Bay Times

"What are the most patriotic states in the U.S.? Not Florida, according to WalletHub" via Brandon Girod of the Pensacola News Journal — WalletHub compared metrics surrounding two key dimensions, military engagement and civic engagement. In the study, it found that Florida ranked as the 46th most patriotic state in the country, placing it among the likes of New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Arkansas. The most patriotic states in the U.S. include Virginia, Montana, Alaska, North Dakota and Maine. Each of these ranked high among WalletHub's 13 metrics that correspond to the two categories. In the two dimensions used to rank the list, the state ranked 19th in military engagement and 49th in civic engagement.

— D. C. MATTERS —

"Republicans, claiming double standard, vow to keep investigating Bidens" via Kayla Guo of The New York Times — Congressional Republicans on Tuesday blasted the plea deal Hunter Biden reached with the Justice Department, accusing President Biden of orchestrating a lenient penalty for his son and promising to intensify their investigations of the Biden family. Speaker Kevin McCarthy said the agreement, in which Hunter Biden pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors for failing to pay taxes on time and could avoid prosecution on a separate gun charge, "continues to show the two-tier system in America." McCarthy said the deal should only "enhance" congressional Republicans' investigation into the Bidens. Rep. James R. Comer of Kentucky, the Chair of the Oversight Committee undertaking that inquiry, said he would do just that in a statement calling the charges against Hunter Biden a "slap on the wrist."

Congressional Republicans vow not to let up on the Biden family. Image via AP.

"Biden aims to ensure AI systems are safe before their release" via Akayla Gardner and Jennifer Jacobs of Bloomberg — Biden said his administration wants to ensure that artificial intelligence systems are safe before they reach the public as he met business leaders and experts to discuss new safeguards for the emerging technology. "In seizing this moment, we need to manage the risks to our society, to our economy and our national security," Biden said in San Francisco on Tuesday. He said he was committed to "making sure AI systems are safe before they are released." The President reiterated his calls for Congress to pass bipartisan privacy legislation. The administration is pushing companies to develop new privacy and security protections for consumers as the use of technologies such as generative AI has exploded in recent months.

"Antony Blinken, once seen as a headache in China, could be a remedy" via Meaghan Tobin of The Washington Post — When Secretary of State Blinken arrived in Beijing on Sunday for two days of talks with top officials, people in China were skeptical. The Secretary's last name when pronounced in Mandarin sounds similar to the painkiller ibuprofen. People joked on Weibo, the domestic equivalent of Twitter, that his visit would cause headaches rather than relieve them. Instead, it appears that Blinken's visit has acted as a remedy, at least in the short-term, to alleviate some of the tensions in the bilateral relationship. "This is good for China's international image, for its grand narrative," said Shen Dingli, a Shanghai-based scholar of international relations. The meeting gave Chinese leader Xi Jinping a chance to improve the country's image abroad.

"Baby bonus a new twist in Democrats' child tax credit push" via Laura Weiss of Roll Call — House Democrats' latest proposal to expand the child tax credit includes a new feature: a \$2,000 payment for newborn babies. The two parties have been battling over the tax benefit since before a larger version of it lapsed after 2021. Past attempts to revive the pandemic-era child credit expansion haven't included the new twist added this year by House Democrats, which could push the total benefit to as high as \$5,300 in the first year of a child's life. The core of the legislation would revive an expanded tax credit for families that was in place for 2021, typically worth \$3,600 per year for children under the age of 6 and \$3,000 for older kids, paid in monthly installments. That's up from the current maximum \$2,000 benefit, which is only paid out at tax time.

"Are lawmakers seeking healthy limits on junk food or acting as food police?" via Kristina Peterson of The Wall Street

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Journal — In a push to boost the country's health, some lawmakers want to prevent people from buying soda or junk food with federal benefits, but opponents say Congress shouldn't be policing what Americans eat. The proposed restrictions are among a range of changes that lawmakers are considering for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Sen. Marco Rubio has introduced legislation that would prevent food aid from being used to buy soft drinks, candy, ice cream and prepared desserts including cake and cookies. A measure in a House GOP spending bill approved in Committee along party lines last week would establish a pilot program allowing a handful of states to restrict some foods or beverages from the SNAP program.

— LOCAL: S. FL —

"DeSantis wields budget veto pen, but funding for Palm Beach County projects mostly safe" via Stephany Matat of the Palm Beach Post — DeSantis largely spared Palm Beach County from his \$511 million budgetary cuts as he signed a record-high \$116.5 billion budget with \$1.1 billion in expenditures for local needs. The county's biggest ticket items passed DeSantis' veto pen, including about \$330 million for highway construction and about \$235.6 million for Florida Atlantic University programs related to autism services, an expansion for the College of Nursing, the establishment of a Doctor of Dental Medicine degree and construction and planning to create a College of Dentistry. In addition, Loxahatchee River preservation efforts will get nearly \$1 million, while \$2.3 million is allocated for the Lake Worth Lagoon system assessment and \$3 million for Green Cay Park relating to water treatment.

"Former public-school teacher vying for Miami-Dade County School Board seat" via Anne Geggis of Florida Politics — A former public-school teacher turned education technology entrepreneur announced her bid to represent Miami-Dade County School District 7 on the School Board — seeking the seat that DeSantis' appointee currently occupies. Records show Max Tuchman filed the paperwork for the seat on May 1 and she's since raised \$74,370 for her bid, including a \$10,000 loan she gave her campaign. In a district where the percentage of children attending a charter or private school is significantly greater than the state average, Tuchman is emphasizing her traditional public-school roots. Her announcement notes that not only is she a graduate of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, but she also worked as a classroom teacher there.

Max Tuchman filed paperwork for a seat on the Miami-Dade School Board and has some serious campaign cash behind her.

"DOH Martin County issues toxic algae health alert for Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie Canal" via Ed Killer of Treasure Coast Newspapers — The public should avoid contact with toxic algae near the east shore of Lake Okeechobee at the recreation area at Port Mayaca and inside the basin just east of the gates, according to a state health alert. The cyanobacteria, more commonly called "blue-green algae," contained the toxin microcystin in water samples taken June 17 in four places: on the lake side of the S-308 dam flood gate, on the canal side, in the center of the canal and near the lock. When open, the gate allows lake water to enter the C-44, also called the St. Lucie Canal, in Martin County, 10 miles west of Indiantown.

"Invasive giant snails have been found in Miramar, leading to a quarantine" via Jack Lenus of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — The giant African land snail, known by the state "as one of the most damaging snails in the world," has shown up again in South Florida — this time in Miramar, where agriculture officials enacted a quarantine for part of the city. The giant African land snail consumes "at least 500 different types of plants," according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. "These snails could be devastating to Florida agriculture and natural areas as they cause extensive damage to tropical and subtropical environments." The Department will treat properties with metaldehyde-based molluscicide, known as "snail bait," a treatment allowed for residential use, it said.

"A contractor shorted workers \$171K in pay and health benefits, feds say" via David J. Neal of the Miami Herald — The subcontractor on a South Florida Water Management project owed workers \$171,998 in cash and benefits after paying some employees only 67% of what they should have been paid, the U.S. Department of Labor announced. The money went to 11 electricians employed by Clewiston's Quality Electric Contracting. That's an average of \$15,636.18 in pay and benefits per person. Labor said this was a South Florida Water Management project on the C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir Pump Station on the Caloosahatchee River in Hendry County. Quality was a subcontractor of Jacksonville's Harry, Pepper & Associates. Because federal money was involved in the project, the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts rules came into play.

"An administrator who got 'paid without working' has teaching license revoked" via Scott Travis of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — A former Palm Beach County principal accused of not showing up to work for nearly a year, despite

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collecting a six-figure salary, has been banned from working again as an educator in Florida. The state has revoked the teaching license of Bonnie Fox, a longtime principal who served at three schools in Palm Beach County. She was the only principal at Odyssey Middle, west of Boynton Beach, which she opened in 2001 and closed in 2018 due to declining enrollment. After Odyssey's closure, Fox continued to be paid a principal's salary to work non-school-based jobs. A district investigation determined she rarely worked during her last year on the job, even telling investigators she'd been instructed to "stay under the radar."

Bonnie Fox was paid for doing little to no work. Image via South Florida Sun-Sentinel.

"Motorcyclist burned tire marks onto Boynton Beach pride flag mural, police say" via Shira Moolten of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — A motorcyclist documented himself burning tire marks into the "Pride Progress Flag" painting on a busy intersection in Boynton Beach on the second day of pride month, police say, the latest in a series of incidents targeting LGBTQ street murals. At about 1 a.m. on June 2, a witness heard loud screeching noises and watched as a man in dark clothing and a helmet spun his tires multiple times over the rainbow streetscape on the intersection of East Ocean Avenue and Southeast First Street in Boynton Beach, according to a police incident report. The motorcycle left four long black marks on the painting, causing \$500 in damage.

— LOCAL: C. FL —

"Volusia Sheriff Mike Chitwood teases political announcement: What's he running for in '24?" via Mark Harper of The Daytona Beach News-Journal — Volusia County Sheriff Chitwood is running for re-election next year. The two-term Sheriff who's made national headlines in recent months for his ongoing fight with White supremacists and hate groups teased a big announcement next week in a tweet. "Let's make it official. Got an announcement coming next week," Chitwood wrote beneath an image of his face and the year "2024." The tweet included an emoji representing a United States flag, a star, and a police revolving light. Paperwork filed with the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office confirms that he is seeking a third term as Sheriff.

Mike Chitwood teases 2024 plans.

"David Santiago has missed 4 of 11 regular meetings; county has no policy on absences" via Sheldon Gardner of The Daytona Beach News-Journal — New District 5 Council member Santiago has missed four of the 11 regular Volusia County Council meetings that have occurred since he joined the governing body this year while his six fellow Council members have had near-perfect attendance. This has not gone unnoticed. Deltona City Commissioner Dana McCool, who lives in Santiago's district, recently raised the issue on "The Smoking Truth" podcast, which she co-hosts. "I want to understand, when is it ethically and responsibly wrong for an elected official to miss meetings that they were elected for?" she asked. "And I love this person, but I want it answered to the constituents because I deserve better in District 5."

"Orange tourist tax panelist quits, says 'deck seems stacked' for convention center expansion" via Stephen Hudak of the Orlando Sentinel — A former Orlando Sentinel columnist resigned from a mayoral advisory panel studying possible uses for uncommitted tourist tax millions, saying "the deck seems stacked" to expand the Convention Center again. "Since the Committee began, the (Convention Center) has had an outsized presence, both in presentations and marketing materials. We also have been told, time and again, about its economic importance," wrote Mike Thomas, a former member of Orange County's Tourist Development Tax (TDT) Citizen Advisory Task Force. "No other competitor for TDT funds has had such an opportunity," he said in an email to Roseann Harrington, Chief of Staff for Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings. "Quite frankly, the deck seems stacked."

— LOCAL: TB —

"Hillsborough names interim School Superintendent to replace Addison Davis" via Marlene Sokol of the Tampa Bay Times — Veteran educator Van Ayres will lead the Hillsborough County School District in the year ahead as work begins to find a permanent replacement for outgoing superintendent Addison Davis. Another special meeting is scheduled for June 27. Between now and then, Board members will meet individually with the district's attorneys and Human Capital Chief Marie Whelant to discuss qualities and qualifications for Davis' permanent replacement. Board member Patti Rendon tried to convince the Board to wait until the June 27 meeting to decide on an interim leader, saying she had not had time to evaluate Ayres

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against other possible candidates. Her motion died for lack of a second.

Van Ayres will lead the Hillsborough County School District as interim Supervisor.

”St. Pete Beach officials investigate City Manager” via Mark Parker of Catalyst — While Alex Rey avoided termination at a recent special Commission meeting, St. Pete Beach officials stripped their City Manager of authority and launched an official investigation into his conduct. Issues arose during Rey’s yearly review at a June 13 City Commission meeting, when all five Commissioners relayed city employee concerns regarding Rey’s leadership. Those included allegations of creating “a toxic work environment,” promoting divisiveness, and not following procurement processes. Commissioners approved an investigation into Rey’s conduct and called a special meeting on June 16, to establish its scope. However, residents and Mayor Adrian Petril called for his immediate removal.

”St. Petersburg police, Pride leader discuss drag law, security ahead of parade” via Natalie Weber of the Tampa Bay Times — St. Petersburg Police Chief Anthony Holloway and St. Pete Pride Executive Director Nicole Berman reiterated a consistent message for Pride this year in the wake of a new law aimed at drag shows: if you can wear it at the beach, you can wear it at Pride. “That has been our messaging for several years around participants in our parade,” Berman said at a news conference. Holloway largely shied away from specifics of how drag shows or attire would be policed at Tuesday’s news conference but said if there was an issue during the event, Pride organizers would be notified to speak with those in violation of the law and give a warning.

”Can Tampa’s recent grads afford to stay in the area?” via Alexandra Urban of the Tampa Bay Times — As rent prices continue to increase, some University of South Florida graduates have found it hard to move out on their own or continue to build up a savings account. The average asking rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Hillsborough County is currently \$1,565, according to data from commercial real estate data company CoStar. Just five years ago that average was \$1,119. How are young, recent college graduates managing this? We talked to two USF alumni who graduated in the last three years and one current USF senior, each from different fields of study. The average monthly income among them is about \$2,600 after taxes. They all have roommates, and they all echoed the same sentiment: Making ends meet isn’t easy in Tampa.

”Clearwater’s new \$45 million city hall moves forward” via Breanne Williams of the Tampa Bay Business Journal — Clearwater will start designing a new city hall to be built south of the Municipal Services Building downtown. Clearwater City Council on June 15 unanimously chose a stand-alone design concept on the city-owned property at Myrtle Avenue and Pierce Street. They were given three concepts to review, and the total project is estimated to cost \$44.8 million — \$31.5 million for a new city hall and a \$13.3 million renovation of the MSB. The selected proposal will build a 41,679-square-foot city hall along with a public plaza green space that connects to the Pinellas Trail. The existing parking lot of the MSB will support city hall; on-site parking will also be added for the development.

”Could the Selmon Expressway be extended to Big Bend Road? Hillsborough Commissioners take a look.” via Henry Queen of the Tampa Bay Business Journal — The Lee Roy Selmon Expressway may be due for a major expansion. The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners will hear a report on the possibility of extending the toll road 10 miles south toward Big Bend Road in the eastern Tampa suburbs. Embarking on such a large project could cost \$1.8 billion, according to preliminary estimates based on 2022 construction prices. An extension of the Selmon Expressway is still something businesses may support, the report said. Commissioner Michael Owen directed county staff in April to work with the Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority and the Florida Department of Transportation on the idea. THEA owns and operates the Selmon Expressway. The road has seen record traffic volume post-pandemic as migration to the Tampa Bay area intensifies.

— LOCAL: N. FL —

”NWS Mobile confirms EF2 tornado hit Pensacola” via Benjamin Johnson of the Pensacola News-Journal — The National Weather Service in Mobile confirmed to the News Journal that the tornado that ripped through the city of Pensacola and Pensacola Beach reached an EF2 strength. NWS Mobile meteorologist Steve Miller told the News-Journal that Thursday’s tornado had an estimated peak wind speed of 120 mph, making it an EF2 tornado. “Overall, there was mostly straight-line wind damage with that EF2 interspersed in there,” Miller said. “The estimated peak wind of the EF2 is 120 mph, and the straight-line wind damage reached 65 to 75 mph.” According to NWS Mobile data, the tornado began around 8:35 p.m. at

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ISSE West Pensacola near West Gregory and Citrus Streets. The tornado ended around 9:08 p.m., dissolving at 1 SW Villa Sabine on Pensacola Beach.

Pensacola sees the business end of an EF2 tornado.

"Sheriff Clovis Watson will not seek second term in office, submits withdrawal letter" via Andrew Caplan of The Gainesville Sun — Alachua County Sheriff Watson will no longer seek a second term in office, all but ending his term just two-and-a-half years in. The Sheriff sent out an email to employees thanking them for their support while announcing his enviable departure in 2024. His office later confirmed the announcement to The Gainesville Sun, declining questions at this time. "After much prayer and thought, I want to announce to each one of you that I will not be seeking re-election as Sheriff of Alachua County," he wrote to his employees. "This decision was not made lightly, and I want each of you to know that I will continue to serve you all with honor and professionalism throughout the rest of my time as your Sheriff."

"After 14 years, City Commissioners appear poised to begin a review of its charter" via Jeff Burlew of the Tallahassee Democrat — Commissioners voted 4-1 to ask staff to bring back an agenda item on a review of its charter, a sort of constitution for the city government that dictates how it functions. Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox, who made the motion, declined to say what possible charter changes have been discussed. She said she had "no thoughts" on whether the City Commission should increase its members or move to new districting schemes — topics that popped up during the 2022 Election. City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, who cast the lone no vote, said he'd be interested in hearing specific ideas from the public but wasn't sure the city needed to appoint a charter review commission. He later told the Democrat that he was apprehensive because some of his colleagues had "apparently been lobbied on specific changes" but wouldn't disclose them.

"Leon Superintendent settles for 'lesser' punishment, says 'I have done nothing wrong'" via Ana Goñi-Lessan of the Tallahassee Democrat — Florida's capital city Superintendent who has been under investigation for his "politically charged statements" and infusing "personal views" into his administration of the school district has settled with the state's education agency. Leon County Schools' Rocky Hanna reached an agreement with the Florida Department of Education and will receive a reprimand, according to a settlement agreement from the State of Florida Education Practices Commission. "I have chosen to ignore my personal pride and remain focused on the bigger picture — helping every student in our district prepare for their next step in life," Hanna said in a statement.

"Kicked, punched, sexually assaulted: OSHA tells Jacksonville hospital to keep workers safe" via Steve Patterson of The Florida Times-Union — The federal government has cited a Jacksonville mental health hospital over working conditions where it says employees received broken bones, concussions and other injuries working with patients. Employees at Wekiva Springs Hospital faced "an alarming rate of workplace violence," U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration Area Office Director Scott Tisdale said in a release announcing the citation. "This facility's lack of action to protect their employees' safety and health is concerning to say the least," Tisdale said. "No one should ever work in fear of death, violent assault and serious injury just to earn a living." OSHA inspected the Wekiva Springs site in November and said people had described 182 incidents — not all violent — over the course of last year. Over a six-month stretch, police were called to about 70% of the occurrences, the agency said.

Wekiva Springs Hospital suffers a spike in workplace assaults.

"One of the best: UF Health Cancer Center earns NCI designation" via Christine Jordan Sexton of Florida Politics — The University of Florida Health Cancer Center announced Tuesday it has met the rigorous requirements for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation. The UF Health Cancer Center is the 72nd cancer center to achieve the designation in the United States and becomes the fourth in Florida to earn the prestigious honor. The designation sharpens UF Health Cancer Center's competitive edge when vying for cancer research grants and brings with it an annual \$2 million commitment from the NCI for the university to use to help attract more world-class researchers and clinical investigators. "This is a big deal — and it's going to make a difference for many of Florida's families as their loved ones fight cancer," UF President Ben Sasse said.

"All lanes of I-75 near Gainesville closed after tanker overturns, spills chemical" via Chris Tisch of the Tampa Bay Times — Interstate 75 near Gainesville has been shut down after a tanker truck overturned, causing a chemical spill, the Florida Highway Patrol reports. Troopers said the crash occurred at the 391-mile marker. Southbound traffic is being routed off at the 399-mile marker, which is U.S. 441 at the High Springs exit. Northbound traffic is being routed off at the 390-mile marker,

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which is the State Road 222 exit, the highway patrol said in a tweet. The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles said in a tweet posted at 7:41 a.m. that the tanker was carrying hazardous materials. In an update shortly after 1 p.m., the Highway Patrol said cleanup efforts still were underway.

— LOCAL: SW. FL —

”Bradenton to update vacation rental rules to include condos, deadline to register extended” via Jesse Mendoza of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune — Bradenton is hoping to find balance with new updates to vacation rental regulations that aim to keep the peace between short-term rental business owners and local residents who often raise concern. City Administrator Rob Perry said the city is treading lightly to stay within the bounds of state laws that restrict the authority of local municipalities over vacation rentals, while still addressing basic concerns about safety and ensuring code enforcement compliance. “We recognize that there are two complementary interests, some would say adverse interests here,” Perry said. “But we are trying to balance the interest of our community for the quiet enjoyment of their community and the economic interest of tourism and people wanting to come to visit.”

Rob Perry said Bradenton is treading lightly with the state rules on short-term rentals.

”A water main to Anna Maria Island has broken, officials say. Here’s what to know” via Robyn Murrell of the Bradenton Herald — Residents on Anna Maria Island may see a drop in water pressure as the county replaces a broken water pump beneath the drawbridge on Manatee Avenue, Holmes Beach Police said in a Facebook post. Boaters should stay in the channel when passing beneath the Anna Maria Island bridge while repairs are being completed, Manatee County Government said in a news release. In addition, while repairs are being made, some residents may experience lower-than-normal water pressure. Residents are being asked to reduce water usage as much as possible until the repairs have been completed, the release said.

”Ghost orchids: There’s 1,500 left in southern Florida, and numbers dwindling, groups say” via Chad Gillis of the Fort Myers News-Press — The flower is literally a thing of legends, the focal point of books and movies and the victim of ecological crimes. Now several environmental groups plan to file suit against the federal government for failing to protect ghost orchid habitat. “The ghost orchid cannot afford further delay,” said Jaclyn Lopez, director of the Jacobs Law Clinic for Democracy and the Environment at Stetson University. “Florida’s biodiversity faces so many threats — from climate change to sprawl pressure — the federal government needs to step up its game and prioritize protecting our vulnerable plants and animals.”

— TOP OPINION —

”Why Hunter Biden’s plea deal is justified” via The Washington Post editorial board — That Hunter Biden will not spend time behind bars if the deal goes through is by no means exoneration. He’s pleading guilty to misdemeanors instead of facing a smorgasbord of charges that might or might not have stuck in a court of law.

The outcome appears similar to what other defendants might have gotten for similar violations of the law.

A U.S. attorney appointed by Trump had years to substantiate conspiracy theories about Joe Biden’s role in his son’s business affairs. He has not done so.

For all the recent GOP insistence that law enforcement is being “weaponized,” with the indictment of Trump as Exhibit A in Republicans’ claims, more sober assessments have produced a growing body of evidence that the Justice Department exercises care and restraint when pursuing politically sensitive cases regardless of whether the target is a Democrat or Republican.

The Post’s Carol D. Leonnig and Aaron C. Davis reported this week on initial resistance and hesitation from leaders at the FBI and Justice Department when their subordinates sought to probe Trump’s role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

What Leonnig and Davis describe is the opposite of a witch hunt. Their report shows the caution with which Attorney General Merrick Garland proceeded; indeed, in the view of some department investigators and prosecutors, he was cautious to a fault. But that’s different from weakness or meekness.

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His prudence and deliberation should maximize public confidence in the rule of law.

— OPINIONS —

"DeSantis runs fake ad, Frost's F-bomb divides" via Scott Maxwell of the Orlando Sentinel — This state's daily news cycle is basically a full-frontal assault on the senses. And it's worth noting that it's not normal. It's not how the rest of America lives, nor how it used to be in the Sunshine State. Florida used to pride itself on weird and wacky. But lately, it's just ugly. And it's often about pitting Floridians against each other. DeSantis got caught releasing a campaign ad with fake, computer-generated images of Trump. There is, of course, the irony/hypocrisy of these images coming from a guy who complains about "fake news." But most remarkable was Team DeSantis' complete lack of contrition after being caught. Then there was freshman U.S. Rep. Maxwell Alejandro Frost's F-bomb heard 'round the world.

— INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY —

— ALOE —

"An answer to the call: Tallahassee police officer wins national award for unwavering service" via Elena Barrera of the Tallahassee Democrat — Tallahassee Police Officer Henni Hamby was always told she had a servant's heart. A passion for helping others and believing in the black and white of what's right and wrong has fueled Hamby's 30-year-long career in law enforcement. This unwavering dedication to serving her community earned her an Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service in Community Policing. She immediately thought, "Why me?" ... "I was definitely honored and humbled to know my supervisors put me in for such an award," she said. Out of almost 200 nominees in the running for national recognition, Hamby was one of 19 law enforcement officers from all over the country to be recognized last week for above-and-beyond service by Attorney General Garland. Five officers, including Hamby, were from Florida.

Henni Hamby is celebrated for having the heart of a helper. Image via Instagram.

"NASA Cassini data reveals rare building block of life spewing from Saturn moon" via Rob Landers of Florida Today — According to a NASA news release, scientists reviewing data from the agency's Cassini mission, which launched from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in 1997, have detected icy grains of phosphorus in the spray shooting up from Enceladus' frozen surface. Enceladus, like several other moons in the outer solar system, contains a liquid ocean beneath a thick crust of ice — an ocean that could harbor life. What makes the discovery of phosphorus so important is that it is among the rarest of the building blocks for life. "It's the first time this essential element has been discovered in an ocean beyond Earth," said Frank Postberg, a planetary scientist at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, who led the new study.

— HAPPY BIRTHDAY —

Happy birthday to Michele Cavallo, Cory Dowd, Gia Porras-Ferrulo, Anthony Katchuk, Shannon Love, Gisselle Reynolds, and Courtney Bense Weatherford.

—
Sunburn is authored and assembled by Peter Schorsch, Phil Ammann, Daniel Dean, Ryan Nicol, Jacob Ogles, and Drew Wilson.

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Company: Florida Department of Education; South Florida Sun Sentinel; SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE; U.S. Department of Labor; National Cancer Institute; NAV TALENT, INC.; Florida House Experience; FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY; UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Federal Bureau of Investigation; SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT; GREEN BAY PACKERS, INC.; Quality Electric Contracting Inc.; Florida State University; FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION; Treasure Coast Newspapers, LLC; GEORGIA TECH ENTERPRISE INNOVATION INSTITUTE; THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY; USA today network; Inter Miami CF; The Florida Bar; The News Service of Florida Inc; Florida Department of Highway Safety And Motor Vehicles; University of Florida Health Cancer Center; St Petersburg Police Pension Fund; THE BRADENTON HERALD, INC

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June 21, 2023

Section: Opinion

Our View: What would the Founding Fathers say?

Staff Writer

Last week, Illinois became the first state in the nation to outlaw book bans.

Jim Hawkins, Attleboro's state representative, is hoping Massachusetts will do the same.

We hope he succeeds.

It's about time someone stepped forward to turn the tables on those who want to take away others' First Amendment rights by censoring what they can read.

Hawkins filed a bill that would prevent the banning of books in libraries. Several more representatives later joined the effort by sponsoring his bill.

"We felt it necessary to take measures to prevent the limitations and restrictions recently growing in our district and across the state," Hawkins said. "Massachusetts is and always has been at the forefront of protecting our freedom and democracy."

The Illinois law, which would withhold state funding from public libraries that restrict or ban materials because of "partisan or doctrinal" disapproval, is a response to the push across the United States to remove certain books in schools and libraries, especially those about LGBTQ+ themes and by people of color. The American Library Association in March announced that attempts to censor books in schools and public libraries reached a 20-year high in 2022 - twice as many as 2021, the previous record.

The ALA's March report not only documents the growing number of challenges, but also their changing nature.

A few years ago, complaints usually arose between parents and other community members and referred to an individual book. Now, the requests are often for multiple removals, and organized by national groups such as the conservative Moms for Liberty, which has a mission of "unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

It seems unthinkable, given their image as reserved and scholarly, but many librarians around the country have told of being harassed and threatened with violence or legal action.

"Every day professional librarians sit down with parents to thoughtfully determine what reading material is best suited for their child's needs," ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada said in a statement accompanying the March report. "Now, many library workers face threats to their employment, their personal safety, and in some cases, threats of prosecution"

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for providing books to youth they and their parents want to read.”

We certainly have no objection to parents limiting what their children read or watch. That’s every parent’s right.

But we strenuously object to parents limiting access to books for ALL children.

And our founders would be aghast to learn that nearly 250 years after we declared our independence and 235 years after the Constitution was ratified that there are Americans who still want to ban books.

It’s unfortunate that the law in Illinois and the one proposed by Hawkins may be necessary.

But not fighting back against book bans would further erode the freedom that is the essence of America.

---- Index References ----

Company: AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Children (1CH89); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Health & Family (1HE30); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

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Section: Main

LGBTQ+ activism can counter state of hate another viewpoint

LGBTQ+ Pride grew out of the 1969 Stonewall Riot and became a global movement. Sometimes Pride is celebratory, as in 2015 when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized marriage equality in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. At other times, Pride is a call to action, a reminder that while we have come so far, we still have tremendous work to do to ensure our place, our rights and our safety in the American community. This year, Pride is the latter - we must be more vocal and visible than we have ever been.

The Republican culture warriors have cynically targeted and scapegoated the LGBTQ+ community with a relentless campaign of harassment aimed at rolling back our progress. Recently, their tactics have run the gamut from a farcical boycott of Bud Light for an Instagram post featuring a trans influencer to outright threats of violence. Many Republican leaders and elected officials, who have spent the past few legislative cycles passing dangerous anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, are openly supportive of these antics.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, announced its first-ever state of emergency for the community, claiming an "unprecedented and dangerous" spike in anti-LGBTQ+ assaults. The organization has tracked 75 anti-LGBTQ+ bills signed into law so far in 2023 nationwide, doubling last year's number. There are certainly more to come.

Likewise, Equality Florida issued its first-ever travel advisory for LGBTQ+ people, laying the blame squarely with Gov. Ron DeSantis, "who has made extremist policies the centerpiece of his presidential campaign strategy." The NAACP followed, noting, "Florida is openly hostile toward African Americans, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals."

The Southern Poverty Law Center named Florida-based Moms for Liberty as a hate group for opposing LGBTQ+ equality. Last July, Moms for Liberty held its first national summit in Tampa, featuring DeSantis and Dr. Ben Carson and Betsy DeVos, two questionable anti-LGBTQ+ personalities from the Trump administration.

With all that as the backdrop, Florida with greater frequency is seeing public Nazi demonstrators. The leader of the Proud Boys, convicted of seditious conspiracy for his part in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, was a South Floridian. It's no accident that Floridians make up the highest number of insurrectionists charged or convicted for Jan. 6. Florida has become an intolerance incubator. We're a state of hate.

The LGBTQ+ community is no stranger to hostility, but it's different now. The easy availability of guns, coupled with the heightened rhetoric on social media, makes the threat of violence all the more real. Media around the country are reporting on LGBTQ+ people and families fleeing Florida for more welcoming states.

The majority of Floridians do not agree with this intolerance. They're starting to see through the promises of Republican

LGBTQ+ activism can counter state of hate another viewpoint, 2023 WLNR 21452010

politicians that legislative restrictions are to “protect children.” The Republican foot-in-the-door approach has been trotted out too many times.

Last year’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill was only to “protect” kids up to third grade - until this year, when it was expanded through 12th grade.

Florida’s transgender youth sports bans, a solution in search of a problem if there ever was one, morphed into bans on trans health care for youth for their “protection.” And then those bans expanded to adult trans health care as well.

We cannot be cowed into silence or hiding. It’s time for a return to the visible and disruptive tactics used by Act Up in the 1980s to bring attention to AIDS. We need a new call to action to preserve LGBTQ+ rights and fight the homophobes and transphobes who are directing our public policies.

Does that mean taking over a building or shutting down a street to be heard? Does it mean standing up to take back control of school board meetings when unhinged MAGAs shout “groomer” and “pedophile” at peaceful LGBTQ+ attendees? Does it mean showing up in force at Pride and other LGBTQ+ events in spite of the Nazi presence?

Yes! A united front from the entire spectrum of the LGBTQ+ community and our straight allies is how we will beat back this full-on assault on our rights and our right to exist.

”Stonewall was a riot,” the T-shirts say. For LGBTQ+ Floridians, it’s time to get off the beach, get out of the bars, get off the apps and rise up!

Stephen Gaskill is a communications and public affairs consultant living in Boynton Beach. He is immediate past president of the Florida LGBTQ+ Democratic Caucus.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION; EQUALITY FLORIDA INSTITUTE, INC.

News Subject: (Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Government (1GO80); Human Rights (1HU19); Legislation (1LE97); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

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NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21460796

Tampa Bay Times (FL)
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June 21, 2023

Superintendent searches advance in 2 Florida school districts. 7 are looking.

Jeffrey S. Solochek; Tampa Bay Times

The big story: The Hillsborough County School Board wants to take its time in selecting its next full time leader.

But superintendent Addison Davis has set his departure for July 14, and someone has to run the nation's seventh largest school system while the board conducts its national search.

On Tuesday, the board picked a respected insider to mind the store as interim superintendent for the next year. It's Van Ayres. Read more here.

Hillsborough is not the only school district looking for a leader.

On Tuesday, the Duval County board also kicked off its effort to replace Diana Greene, who left at the end of June. It asked the Florida School Boards Association to run its search, WJXT reports. The effort is expected to cost at least \$75,000, WTLV reports.

Seven districts across the state are currently seeking new top leadership. Nearly a dozen more have seen changes in the past year. Some experts have said this churn is one of the most serious issues facing Florida public education.

Hot topics

Attendance zones: The Hillsborough County School Board narrowly approved a plan to close five schools in 2024, despite the departure of the superintendent who recommended the action.

Board politics: The Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association has filed a grievance against two School Board members with connections to Moms for Liberty, accusing them of harassing a teacher in violation of the district's contract and policies, as well as state rules and laws. A lawyer for the board has dismissed the complaint as not valid.

Book challenges: Six Lake County students joined authors Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson in suing the Lake County school district and state education officials over the removal of "And Tango Makes Three" from circulation in fourth grade and younger, the NY Times reports. It's the second lawsuit challenging a Florida school district over book bans. The complaint seeks "to stop the abhorrent and discriminatory practice of removing library books based on partisan, non-pedagogical motivations."

Campus leadership: Six Hillsborough County schools will get new principals.

Superintendent searches advance in 2 Florida school..., 2023 WLNR 21460796

Culture wars: As Moms for Liberty increases its national profile, pushback against the group and its efforts to affect school operations grows in Florida, Florida Bulldog reports.

History lessons: The Association for the Study of African American Life and History has launched a Freedom School to teach Sarasota-area teens unvarnished Black history, the Herald-Tribune reports.

Security: Flagler County schools will not begin a school guardian program using armed district employees, as School Board members had too many questions and concerns, Flagler Live reports.

Other school news

The Duval County school district is looking to move its headquarters. Officials offered two options for consideration, WJXT reports.

A Lee County mom was panicked after her non-verbal 8-year old was placed on the wrong summer school bus. The child was found safe, WINK reports.

An Escambia County community has started a summer tutoring program for struggling first and second graders. More than half of students at the nearby elementary school did not meet grade-level expectations in language arts and math, the Pensacola News-Journal reports.

From the court docket ... An administrative law judge recommended a St. Lucie County teacher who had a rifle in his truck at school should keep his job, the News Service of Florida reports.

Don't miss a story. The link to yesterday's roundup is right here.

Before you go ... Don't pass this amazing new mashup of two superstar bands, Kiss + Earth Wind and Fire.

•••

Sign up for the Gradebook newsletter!

Every Thursday, get the latest updates on what's happening in Tampa Bay area schools from Times education reporter Jeffrey S. Solochek. Click here to sign up.

---- Index References ----

Company: Duval County School Board; The News Service of Florida Inc

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Hillsborough County School Board; Florida School Boards Association; Association for the Study of African American Life and History; Kiss + Earth Wind and Fire; Duval County board; News Service of Florida)

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Commenters clash at SLO County school board meeting on..., 2023 WLNR 21511134

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June 21, 2023

Commenters clash at SLO County school board meeting on transgender kids' use of restrooms

By Lucy Peterson, The Tribune

More than 100 Templeton parents, students and residents turned out Tuesday night for an at-times contentious school board study session on transgender students' use of restroom and locker room facilities within the district.

The meeting, which ran for five hours in the band room at Templeton Middle School, included over two and a half hours of public comment, often interrupted by loud outbursts and verbal disputes between audience members as tensions ran high throughout the meeting.

Attention on the session, which aimed to discuss ways to make restroom and locker room facilities safe and comfortable for all students, escalated in advance when board member Jennifer Grinager, the founder and previous president of San Luis Obispo County's Moms for Liberty chapter, spoke at a SLO County Tea Party meeting and urged members to turn out at the meeting.

"We've got to be creative. The law does not require us to force anybody else to be in the facility at the same time," Grinager said at the Tea Party meeting in reference to students sharing restrooms and locker rooms. She said she was speaking as a private citizen, not a school board member.

That move, in turn, activated members of the LGBTQ+ community, who showed up to fight what they saw as an attack on transgender youth.

Superintendent Aaron Asplund emphasized that the district did not want the issue to become divisive, while proposing a series of options as potential resolutions to the debate on restroom and locker room privacy concerns.

"There's no reason our conversations need to be framed this way as two sets of values in conflict," Asplund said. "Some folks might have come thinking this should be framed as a conservative versus progressive values showdown. That's not what this is."

3-1.jpeg Templeton District Board members prepare for a June 20, 2023, meeting on transgender students' use of opposite gender restrooms and locker rooms.

Contentious public comment kicks off meeting

The meeting got off to a heated start before the district administration even got to present the issues and possible solutions up for consideration.

Commenters clash at SLO County school board meeting on..., 2023 WLNR 21511134

Religion and history were frequently mentioned in comments made from both sides, along with the role Moms for Liberty has staked out in public schools.

The group defines itself as a national, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization fighting for parents' right over the education and health of their children.

But multiple meeting participants cited that the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit legal advocacy group, recently classified Moms for Liberty as a "far-right organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and self-identifies as part of the modern parental rights movement."

Comments were kicked off by Willow Kawamoto, a resident of SLO County for the past seven years. Kawamoto identified herself as a lesbian and transgender woman and said she felt that the debate on transgender kids' use of restrooms and locker rooms was dangerous.

"My status as a woman and as a human being are recognized by the state of California," Kawamoto said.

Gary Lehrer, a member of Moms for Liberty and current director of public relations and communications for the Republican Party of San Luis Obispo County, likened the public's response to Moms for Liberty as akin to the Nazis' treatment of Jewish people.

"You know who doesn't get treated decently and fairly? It's Moms for Liberty. We have been dehumanized and villainized," Lehrer said.

Multiple public outbursts occurred throughout Lehrer's comments, causing board President Mendi Swan to call the room to order.

Another community member, Dr. Kim Andridge, a licensed psychologist who said she had a specialty working with queer and transgender youth and adults, said that access to affirming services, such as restrooms, is one of the most important factors in protecting the health of LGBTQ+ kids.

"The things being proposed by Mothers for Liberty is exactly what is causing these kids to die," Andridge said.

Peter Byrne, a 40-year resident of SLO County, urged the school board to "stop trying to naturalize what is not normal."

"The school board should be ashamed of themselves for allowing men to use girl's locker rooms. ... The school board itself needs to man up," Byrne said.

unnamed-5.jpgCommunity members, parents and students attend a June 20, 2023, Templeton Unified School District board meeting on transgender students' use of restrooms and locker rooms.

Legality of restroom and locker room use

The nearly two and a half hours of public comments was followed by a legal presentation by Shauna Cunningham of Cunningham Law Group.

Cunningham referenced multiple legal regulations that the school district is required to follow, including California Education code 221.5, which like AB 1266, mandates that students must be allowed to participate in school programs and activities based upon their gender identity.

Additionally, Cunningham referenced Templeton Administrative Regulation 5145.3, which allows students to use restrooms and locker room facilities and participate in programs and activities consistent with their gender identity.

The regulation requires that any student's privacy concerns must be addressed, and specific groups of students cannot be

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singled out.

How Templeton district could refurbish facilities

When the meeting turned toward the discussion of possible solutions, the superintendent encouraged parents and community members to find common ground, while underscoring the sense of privacy, comfort and safety for all students.

"Everyone here has deeply held values. People are driven by their values. We should harness those towards common-ground solutions," Asplund said.

The potential locker room solutions laid out by Asplund varied by extent and cost, including:

The option for students to no longer dress for PE classes
The option for individual students to request opting out from dressing for PE with no grade penalty
The installation of eight changing stalls per locker room with the ability for students to request single-use spaces if desired
The installation of 20 changing stalls per locker room

The board agreed that providing kids with the option to not dress for PE was unhygienic and might be taken advantage of. Their focus centered on the installation of eight changing stalls per locker room.

This option included models of how the locker room spaces could be retrofitted to fit new needs, while taking advantage of currently unused spaces.

The potential restroom solutions also varied by extent and cost, including:

The replacement of urinals with toilets and the installation of floor-to-ceiling partitions
The designation of single-use, gender-neutral restrooms
Retrofitting current group restrooms to create more private, gender-neutral and single-use restrooms

These options included potential added safety components such as:

Hiring monitors to stand outside restrooms throughout the school day
The installation of decibel-level sensors that would be activated by any loud noises within the restrooms

In response to the potential restroom solutions, board members discussed the possible cost of various options as well as logistical space concerns. Board members also considered the possibility of a new law that would require all California schools to provide at least one designated single-use restroom on every campus.

School board member Janel Armet also suggested that a larger investment might be made to improve the quality of the restrooms and locker rooms within the Templeton school district.

Final comments

The meeting concluded with some final comments made by Grinager and Armet.

"There seems to be an impression that Moms for Liberty directed this meeting, and we didn't," Grinager said, referring to a flyer from the Gala Pride and Diversity Center that was passed out ahead of the meeting.

"This was never a discussion to end protections for our LGBT students," Grinager said. "Nobody in this community hates LGBT individuals to my knowledge. I myself dedicated years of my life to working with the HIV and AIDS population."

Armet referenced the contention earlier in the meeting, especially throughout the public comment process.

"It was kind of hard to hear sometimes what people said tonight. I hope we can change that, and it's going to take the whole community coming together," Armet said.

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Mom's for Liberty, Jennifer Grinager speaks to SLO County Tea Party

---- **Index References** ----

Company: TEMPLETON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); North America (1NO39); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Republican Party; Mothers for Liberty; Cunningham Law Group; Gala Pride and Diversity Center; Templeton Unified School District; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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Wonkette (Blog)
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June 21, 2023

RFK Jr. To Speak At 'Moms For Liberty' Confab, So That's What RFK Jr. Is Up To (Jesus Christ)

Doktor Zoom

Jun 21, 2023

The rightwing censorship advocates at "Moms For Liberty" are taking a little trip down memory lane at the group's annual meeting, announcing yesterday on Twitter that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will speak at their "Joyful Warriors Summit" in Philadelphia, to be held the last weekend of June. While most of us only became aware of Moms for Censorship as it became a central astroturf player in rightwing efforts to ban books featuring anybody gay (including penguins) and anybody Black (including everybody Black), the group got its start in Florida during the pandemic, opposing mask mandates and spreading antivax bullshit. Kennedy's planned appearance at the Mad Moms confab is almost a sort of homecoming.

Previously!

ACHTUNG! TN Moms Have Found The Critical Race Theory, And It Is Ruby Bridges' Children's Book!

'Moms For Liberty' Leader Wistfully Shares Dream Of Gunning Down Librarians

'Moms For Liberty' Now Against Mother's Day

Kennedy is nominally running as a Democrat, albeit a crazy conspiracy-spouting one, and you'll no doubt be surprised not at all to learn that the other speakers at the convention will include Kennedy's fellow candidates Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley, and Vivek Ramaswamy, but not Tim Scott or Chris Christie, nor those other ones you've all forgotten already, and Crom knows so have we. Other prominent wingnuts include historical disinformation disseminator Dennis Prager and Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts, plus other mixed nuts.

Here's a very patriotic Declaration of Independence-themed preview video, to prove that the Founders would approve of the Mad Moms. We should probably point out that none of the colonists' grievances against King George III had anything to do with The 1619 Project or Gender Queer being on school library shelves. After nearly a full minute of patriotic glurge (Philadelphia! Home of the Declaration and the Constitution! But not a word about throwing D batteries at Santa Claus), the video says remarkably little about the conference, except that attendees can be 100 percent sure that everyone else there will agree with them. As far as we can tell, the testimonials were recorded at the end of the 2022 summit, so that may explain a lot.

[embedded content]youtu.be

RFK Jr. To Speak At 'Moms For Liberty' Confab, So That's..., 2023 WLNR 21510039

There's also this very inspirational "look back" at the 2022 summit, where everyone was very inspired and government is bad — indeed, the "enemy" — and if you can't trust Ben Carson and Ron DeSantis on the shortcomings of so-called "experts," well, you'd better attend the next meeting.

[embedded content]youtu.be

"Moms for Liberty" are famous for abusing teachers and other parents, up to and including death threats and whatever the actual unhinged fuck this is, and RFK Jr. making common cause with them is just the latest and grossest instance of him cozying up to actual fascists and the far Right; the previous most recent instant of such was when the antivax foundation that he founded and that now pays him half a million dollars a year started begging the Actual Nazis who run Gab to feature him and his work.

We'll just close with some excellent news for Yr Wonkette, which is that we will not be requesting travel costs, registration fees, or a per diem from Yr Editrix to attend this train wreck, no, not even if it were tax deductible, feh!

[Vice / AP / Moms For Purity]

Yr Wonkette is funded entirely by reader donations. If you can, please give \$5 or \$10 so we can keep you up to date, safe in the knowledge that not a cent will go to Moms for Censorship.

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---- **Index References** ----

Company: HERITAGE FOUNDATION (THE)

News Subject: (Censorship (ICE48); Civil Rights Law (ICI34); Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (ICO42); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (IIN08); Legal (ILE33))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (ILI40); Political Science (IPO69); Science (ISC89); Science & Engineering (ISC33); Social Science (ISO92))

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Letters: 'It's not about liberty. It's about control.' Moms for..., 2023 WLNR 21289757

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 21289757

Columbus Dispatch (OH)
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June 20, 2023

Letters: 'It's not about liberty. It's about control.' Moms for Liberty dangerous
Letters to the Editor: Trying to limit what children learn is trying to limit what children know
and what they think.

Letters to the Editor

Re "DeSantis is wrong about book bans in Florida; they're a real threat," June 16: Jonathan Friedman, of PEN America, makes an excellent argument about the current rush to restrict what students can read.

Jonathan Friedman: DeSantis is wrong. Book bans in Florida schools and in other states aren't a 'hoax.'

It's about control.

Schools are moving certain books from elementary to middle school shelves and requiring students to "prove" they can read on a fifth-grade level before allowing them access to the books they want. They claim it isn't book banning, but removing books from readers' line of sight and testing their right to read them is in fact banning books, with the added flourish of making the ban the students' fault.

Ingrid Jacques: Book ban debate plays into deepening divides. Are we either 'fascists' or 'groomers'?

On the opposite side of the issue is Ingrid Jacques, a USA Today columnist, who defended Moms for Liberty, women who find books describing the lives and experiences of people long marginalized in this country and demand they not be available to the children for whom they were written.

They also find books that answer honestly the many questions children have about sexual identity and, again, demand they be removed from the libraries where they belong. Moms for Liberty — a misnomer if ever there was one — think children should be "protected" from their own brains.

Teacher: 'To censor and ban books is to erase whole parts of humanity'

It's amazing how reading books they want to read improves a child's reading proficiency. But Jacques and Moms for Liberty would deny many titles to children eager to read them. (One of those books is "It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health." Heaven forbid elementary school students read information about their bodies and their health.)

I stand with Jonathan Friedman and others who believe books written for children should be available to children. Trying to limit what children learn is trying to limit what children know and what they think. It's not about liberty. It's about control.

Margo Bartlett, Delaware

Letters: 'It's not about liberty. It's about control.' Moms for..., 2023 WLNR 21289757

More: How to submit a letter to the editor for The Columbus Dispatch

I'm trusting that Guy

Re "The 'cruel comfort' of a 'better place'," June 11: I am in agreement with Chris Highland that we often lack sufficient words or terminology that would be helpful in bringing a measure of comfort to a hurting or grieving individual or family.

I also agree that our mere gentle presence in those moments and beyond might assist more in their journey towards healing.

He asserts, however, that the use of the term "better place" has no place at all in our culture, and furthermore, indicts the Bible and Christianity as a whole for failing to offer any promise of a better world to come.

He describes the "hell" that people tragically suffer in this life; yet many and hopefully most find strength to persevere and in time overcome their circumstances with the love and support of friends, family, and yes, faith.

One is free to elevate this temporary world and mortal existence, as miraculous as it is, above a promised glorious eternity to come. Enjoy. Eat, drink, and be merry.

But the Lord Jesus Himself hung from a wooden crossbeam to pay for the sins of Chris Highland and the entirety of humanity; in that moment, He promised a thief who was crucified next to Him and who had, in his dying moments chosen to believe, "truly this day you will be with me in paradise."

I'm trusting that Guy.

John Stempko, Westerville

This article originally appeared on The Columbus Dispatch: Letters: 'It's not about liberty. It's about control.' Moms for Liberty dangerous

---- Index References ----

Company: Pen Co of America

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Children (1CH89); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (PEN America)

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June 20, 2023

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT) IS INTERVIEWED ON ALL IN WITH
CHRIS HAYES ON MSNBC

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT) IS INTERVIEWED ON ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES ON MSNBC

JUNE 19, 2023

SPEAKERS: STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT)

MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC HOST

[*] MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC HOST: There's a meme I've been thinking about a lot lately, a viral tweet that reads, and I quote, I never thought leopards would eat my face, sobs woman who voted for the Leopards Eating People's Faces Party. It's an adage that has been proven relative -- relevant, excuse me, time and again when the American right is forced to reckon with the consequences of its own actions, most recently in Utah where Republicans passed the law targeting books in school libraries that contain "pornographic or indecent content."

And wouldn't you know it, that very law, that very law has now been used to restrict access to, wait for it, the Bible.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: With the Holy Book in one hand and signs in the other, frustrated parents calling out the recent decision by Davis School District that voted to remove the King James version of the Bible from elementary and middle school libraries. The move coming after a complaint was filed with the district in December when the district received an anonymous grievance that said the school district was ignoring "One of the most sex-ridden books around, the Bible, adding that this edition of the Bible "has no serious values for minors because it's pornographic by our new definition. Get this porn out of our schools."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: So, maybe it's time to update that meme. I never thought they would ban my favorite book, sobs woman who voted for the book-banning party.

State Representative Carol Spackman-Moss is a Democratic member of the Utah State House. Before running for office, she was a high school teacher for more than 30 years. And she joins me now. Representative Moss, thanks so much for coming on the show. What is your reaction to the King James Bible being taken out of some Utah school libraries? Do you support that move on the basis of, I don't know, consistency if Republicans are going to ban books with vulgarity or sex in them, then that included the Bible.

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT) IS..., 2023 WLNR 21296963

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT): Yes, it was consistent. And by the way, I was an English teacher. I taught literature and writing, and I sometimes taught a unit called the Bible as literature. But the person who filed this challenge just put it out there to see if they would follow the same process and see what they're doing to other books. And boy, did the lawmakers, the Republicans take the bait and all this outrage they expressed in meetings. And not just outrage, but actual threats in the meeting last week that they could charge them with -- if they don't just immediately take a book out that's been challenged as pornographic, they could charge them with felonies.

But the Bible based on things -- it's the first step toward atheism and hedonism. But all they did was the district followed their procedure of let parents and teacher review committees make a decision and they put it in high schools only. That was it.

HASAN: So, do you think Utah Republicans are simply going to end up changing their own rules here to protect religious texts that they approve of? There's some talk that the Book of Mormon could be challenged next, which would be hugely controversial in Utah.

MOSS: Yes, it would. It would. But what they were pointing -- the person who challenged it, I assume, they were pointing out is the bill is flawed because we should take everything in context at its literary value. And that's -- they're not doing this with that with some books. They're just saying these lines are what they call the bright line, they're pornographic, they should be taken out. No, they should -- all books that are challenged should be looked at as a whole, not by individual words or passages.

And Mehdi, I just want to say they haven't -- they haven't discovered Shakespeare yet.

HASAN: God help us all. So, let's -- so you spent decades as an English teacher, as you say. You mentioned Shakespeare. Big picture. Big picture. What do you make of this right-wing campaign of book-banning in your state and across the country? What impact in your view is having on our public schools on the American education system?

MOSS: It's a huge impact in an amount of time. In the district I taught, it was 62,000 students. There have been 94 books challenged by six people and this is typical. And these lists do not just come out -- many I don't think people have even read. They come from lists, groups like Moms for Liberty in Utah, Utah Parents United. It's a small, but very organized group. They're the same books, books that have been in the canon for years, the bluest eye by Tony Morrison, Beloved.

See, they've gone from just looking for books that have to do with LGBTQ kids and BIPOC kids. That's the primary list. Now, they're moving into established literary works. And that's where I really say we have to draw the line. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of being spent on this, time, hours and hours instead of working on kids learning to read.

See, I have many of those books. I've read them. Kids that need to make up the losses during COVID, there's so many things we need to do. And what's happening, Mehdi, is that teachers are leaving, librarians are quitting, and that's the tragedy. It's part of what I see as an overall attempt to destroy public education. Voucher bills, homeschooling, many schools, more school choice, this is one aspect. And it's very dangerous. These are most important freedoms, the freedom to read, the freedom to speak, academic freedom. And I'm very concerned about it. And I think there will be lawsuits to follow. I'm pretty sure of it. These are unconstitutional laws.

HASAN: I do share your concern. I'm glad you joined the dots there making the point that this is about the deliberate destruction of public education. It's about much more than just books or lines and books. Utah State Representative Carol Spackman-Moss, thank you so much for your time tonight. I appreciate it.

MOSS: Thank you for having me. My pleasure. Thank you.

END

---- Index References ----

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT) IS..., 2023 WLNR 21296963

Company: Parents United for Better Schools

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Europe (1EU83); North America (1NO39); Northern Europe (1NO01); Norway (1NO68); Scandinavia (1SC27); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Utah (1UT90); Western Europe (1WE41))

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NewsRoom

'They're not fit to work with children.' Parents slam Midwest..., 2023 WLNR 21355122

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June 20, 2023

'They're not fit to work with children.' Parents slam Midwest teachers who were caught trading tips on 'subversively' transitioning kids, in govern...

James Reinl, Social Affairs Correspondent, For Dailymail.Com

'They're not fit to work with children.' Parents slam Midwest teachers who were caught trading tips on 'subversively' transitioning kids, in government-funded workshop

Midwestern parents have reacted angrily to revelations about the region's public school teachers meeting privately online and trading tips on helping kids transition while hiding it from their families.

Moms for Liberty campaign group says educators must be 'accountable' Teachers shouldn't 'make these decisions for any family,' says social media user Indiana University and the US Department of Education have not commented Read our exclusive about the online workshop and what the teachers said

Worried Midwesterners posted online that the educators should be investigated and disciplined for any wrongdoing, and the groups that hosted and funded the workshop should face scrutiny.

DailyMail.com last week attended a workshop for some 30 Midwest teachers. They spoke about being 'subversive,' how their personal 'code of ethics' trumped laws, and how to 'hide' a trans student's new name and gender from their parents.

The organizers, the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP), part of Indiana University's Great Lakes Equity Center, has not answered our repeated requests for comment.

Neither has the federal Department of Education, which funds the center.

Parents and campaigners went online to complain about the educators. One suggested 'homeschooling' was the only option

Parents who were alarmed by the revelations are making their voices heard.

'If we have activist teachers breaking the laws in their state, they need to be held accountable,' Tiffany Justice, cofounder of the nationwide parents' rights group Moms for Liberty told DailyMail.com.

Gays Against Groomers, which campaigns against radical gender ideology, also called for action against the educators.

'These people believe they own your children,' the group posted on social media.

'They are coming for ALL of them, and it is up to us to stop them.'

'They're not fit to work with children.' Parents slam Midwest..., 2023 WLNR 21355122

Other people from the Midwest and beyond reacted angrily, with one social media user warning 'this is what teachers are doing behind your backs' and suggesting that parents should choose 'homeschooling' instead.

'This is immoral. It should be illegal,' posted another user.

'You don't have the right to make these decisions for any family.'

Another user railed against an apparent 'obsession by public school teachers to subvert parental authority.'

Even if only a small fraction of American teachers were doing the same, a worrying number of children could be affected, they added.

'They're not fit to work with children,' another wrote.

DailyMail.com last week gained access to the four-hour session in which teachers from Michigan, Iowa, Ohio, Illinois and beyond discussed helping trans students in the face of new laws in Republican-run states.

They include laws requiring teachers to tell parents about a student's new name or pronoun, whether trans students can use bathrooms that don't correspond with their birth sex, or ban trans girls from participating in girls' sports.

In the discussion and role-play sessions that followed, the teachers, administrators, principals, and counselors spoke about trans students and their families in a way that alarmed many parents.

DailyMail.com gained access to a private workshop where Midwestern teachers shared tips on helping kids transition without telling their parents

Kimberly Martin (left), a Michigan educator, and Jennifer Haglund of Iowa, say they'll go above and beyond to help trans students

Some teachers said they followed the rules, but others discussed being 'subversive,' how their personal 'code of ethics' trumped laws, and how to 'hide' a trans student's new name and gender from their parents.

Kimberly Martin, the DEI coordinator for Royal Oak Schools, which serves 5,000 K-12 students in Michigan, spoke about helping trans students keep their gender change a secret.

'We're working with our record-keeping system so that certain screens can't be seen by the parents ... if there's a nickname in there we're trying to hide,' Martin told the online gathering.

Jennifer Haglund, counselor for Ames Community Schools, which serves 5,000 K-12 Iowa students, complained about Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds in March signing a law that bars biological males from competing on female sports teams.

She bragged about her 'own activism' and of taking part in protest marches.

'I know that I have my own right code of ethics, and that doesn't always go along with the law,' Haglund said.

Shea Martin, an Ohio-based trans educator, who writes a 'socialist, feminist, and anti-racist' blog called Radical Teacher, said she worked against 'laws that prohibit or restrict trans advocacy.'

'The stakes are very high for trans youth,' Martin said.

'I think that requires working subversively and quietly sometimes to make sure that trans kids have what they need.'

Martin did not describe any subversive acts, but, later spoke about teachers addressing 'sexuality' with elementary students,

'They're not fit to work with children.' Parents slam Midwest..., 2023 WLNR 21355122

who are aged between five and 10.

When talking about men, women, playground crushes, love, and marriage with youngsters, teachers should be wary of treating 'reinforced heterosexuality as the norm,' Martin said.

The controversial workshop was hosted by Great Lakes Equity Center, at Indiana University

School board meetings across the Midwest, like this one in North Dakota, have seen tense exchanges over trans students and parents' rights

The Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP) serves 11.2 million students in 7,025 school districts across 13 states

Parents are clashing with teachers across the US over whether transgender teenagers can transition in classrooms without their knowledge - and most cases are not always solved in the principals' office, and often end up in court

At no point in the session did any teacher say parents might know what's best for their own kids, nor question whether affirmation-on-demand was the only way to help a trans-identified student.

The exposé comes amid growing tensions between traditional parents, who worry about newfangled gender ideas in schools, and some progressive teachers, who say they need to protect trans students from their own families.

Teaching new wave gender ideology in schools and secretly affirming trans-identified students have become hot-button issues in America's culture wars between liberals and conservatives.

Republican politicians in Red states have introduced more than 500 bills affecting LGBTQ people this year, with dozens already signed into law, says the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy group.

MAP, which hosted the workshop, is part of the Great Lakes Equity Center. Funded by the federal government under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it serves 11.2 million students in 7,025 school districts across 13 states.

In November, MAP announced that it had secured an \$8.5 million funding arrangement with the Department of Education, and millions of dollars more from other sources.

MAP operates across Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. It covers states with pro-trans laws and others with a more cautious approach.

---- Index References ----

Company: Royal Oak Schools; HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Illinois (1IL01); Indiana (1IN12); Iowa (1IO85); Michigan (1MI45); North America (1NO39); North Dakota (1NO56); Ohio (1OH35); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

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NewsRoom

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NewsRoom

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June 20, 2023

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[20:00:00]

JASON JOHNSON, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: and why abortion rights will define the 2024 election and beyond. You do not want to miss this one. Set your DVRs. Get your family together. Get your kids who are going to college and watch this with you. So, please join Reid for a one-on-one one-year post row with a "REIDOUT" special tomorrow with Vice President Harris at 7:00 p.m. Eastern right here on MSNBC.

That's tonight's "REIDOUT". I got to go. I got to go. I got to go. ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES starts right now.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC HOST (voiceover): Tonight, on ALL IN.

REP. ADAM SCHIFF (D-CA): The Justice Department moved with great alacrity to go after the foot soldiers who broke into the Capitol and assaulted police officers, but they've taken a very long time to go after the organizers of this insurrection.

HASAN (voiceover): New details on the federal investigation into January the 6th and why prosecutors took so long to start looking at Trump.

BILL BARR, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL: He's a very petty individual who will always put his interests ahead of the country's, his personal gratification of his -- you know, of his ego.

HASAN (voiceover): Then, the latest right-wing frenzy against one of the world's leading vaccine experts.

PETER HOTEZ, AMERICAN SCIENTIST: Anti-vaccine disinformation has always done a lot of damage in part, but now it's a lethal force.

HASAN (voiceover): Plus, Bishop William Barber on history under attack this Juneteenth, how the Bible got removed from schools in Utah, and why conservatives are now wooing Muslims after decades of hate.

LAURA INGRAHAM, HOST, FOX NEWS: Us Catholics and other Christians, other people of faith, have been waiting for the Muslims to step up on this issue and so many others.

HASAN (voiceover): When ALL IN starts right now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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HASAN (on camera): Good evening from Washington, D.C. I'm Mehdi Hasan in for Chris Hayes. Today a federal judge ordered, ordered Donald J. Trump not to speak publicly about evidence in the classified documents case brought against him by Special Counsel Jack Smith earlier this month. The order prohibits the ex-president from keeping or crucially sharing on social media the evidence that federal investigators will turn over to his legal team as part of the discovery process. Trump will also only have access to the materials "under the direct supervision of his lawyers." And the judge warned that if he violates these rules, Trump could face contempt of court or other civil or criminal sanctions.

Now, please forgive me while I laugh my head off at the idea of Donald Trump promising not to post anything on social media. What a promise that will be. As we all know, he has a, shall we say, difficult time keeping his mouth shut as well as a long history of abusing and threatening judges, prosecutors, and witnesses in various cases against him. I'm not even sure what the court really expects to do if he does reveal something publicly. Are they really going to, I don't know, indict him again?

But this is where we are as the first-ever federal indictment of a former president proceeds. The wheels of this case are finally in motion and Donald Trump will be tried on 37 criminal counts. Now, the big question is when will that happen? Special Counsel Jack Smith promised to seek a speedy trial. But will that begin before the presidential election next year? Would Trump, the front-runner for the Republican nomination, could the ex-president be tried and convicted on federal criminal charges before November of 2024, less than a year and a half from now? Or is it too late?

The consensus emerging from legal experts is that the window has passed. As former federal prosecutor Renato Mariotti writes in Politico, "It would take herculean effort to bring this to trial next year." And Judge Aileen Cannon has essentially total control over the schedule for the trial of a man who appointed her to the bench and who she has favored in the past.

As Donald Trump's former acting attorney general explained --

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEW WHITAKER, FORMER ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL: this isn't going to go to trial before the general election in 2024 if Donald Trump is the Republican nominee. There's no way that Donald Trump, while he runs for president, is going to be able to prepare for this trial in a meaningful way. And so, I'm sure judges can be very sympathetic to his request to extend it beyond the political campaign that he currently finds himself in.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: But we didn't need to be in this position with the clock rapidly counting down in this way. We could have seen the ex-president indicted much sooner than he was if the Department of Justice had just moved faster. Some of us said that and we were shouted down, trust the process, trust the DOJ, trust Merrick Garland. Well, according to explosive new reporting out today from the Washington Post, for more than a year, the FBI resisted opening the other major federal investigation into Donald Trump related to his role on January the 6th, while the top DOJ leaders dragged their feet.

[20:05:00]

"A wariness about appearing partisan institutional caution and clashes over how much evidence was sufficient to investigate the actions of Trump and those around him all contributed to the slow pace. Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco charted a cautious course aimed at restoring public trust in the department, while some prosecutors below them chafed, feeling top officials were shying away from looking at evidence of potential crimes by Trump and those close to him," the Post found.

And inside the Justice Department, some have complained that the Attorney General's determination to steer clear of any claims of political motive has chilled efforts to investigate the former president. You couldn't use the T-word, said one former justice official briefed on prosecutors' discussions.

You couldn't use the T-word. The T-word being the name of the man who incited a violent insurrection in order to try and

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overturn an election and stay in office. Now, Merrick Garland's confirmation as Attorney General in 2021 was cheered on by so many liberals, many of whom saw it as a slap in the face to Republicans who had successfully blocked Garland's earlier nomination to the Supreme Court. But again, some of us, at the time, questioned if he was the right person for this job. And we feel sadly vindicated by this Washington Post reporting today.

It didn't need to take so long to get a federal indictment of Donald J. Trump more than two years into this administration, and that too for mishandling classified documents and not for inciting an insurrection. We're still waiting on the DOJ and on the Special Counsel to hold Trump accountable for that. History will have to reckon with whether Merrick Garland was the right man for this moment and what could have been had he and his DOJ not slow-walked the investigation into Donald J. Trump.

Aaron Davis is one of the investigative reporters who broke the story for The Washington Post, and he joins me now. Aaron, thanks for coming on the show. You describe in your reporting with Carol Leonnig how a group of prosecutors had a plan to focus on people in Donald Trump's orbit, including Trump adviser Roger Stone and the organizer of the Stop the Steel Rally, Ali Alexander. That plan apparently was batted down amid concerns that, "investigating public figures demanded a high degree of confidence because even a probe that finds no crime can unfairly impugn them."

And I read that, Aaron, and I just -- I'm trying to imagine a DOJ under Donald Trump making that kind of high-minded decision. Did your sources feel that they were bending over backwards to just look impartial and that's what cost them?

AARON DAVIS, INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER, THE WASHINGTON POST: Well, it's been a fascinating reporting exercise here, of course. And, you know, we really did start with a premise of did we have to be here, you know, as Trump is running in for president? You know, the folks inside the Attorney General's office and all the way on down, you know, they really tried to set a different tone.

And Garland's own words, we're going to restore regular order, we're going to come in and we're going to let investigations bubble up from the bottom. We're not going to be the one, as happened openly, under the previous administration in Bill Barr, to, you know, say what is a legitimate investigation or not and what should be going forward or not. This was going to bubble up from the bottom, and the line prosecutors take it to their superiors and up to the Deputy Attorney General and the Attorney General.

The problem was that system had been broken for so long that there wasn't a clear path for that to happen. And in this particular case, in the Cooney proposal that we talk about in February 2021, this is a group of prosecutors inside the U.S. Attorney's office who say there is so much out there. Biden has been safely inaugurated now. There's so much out there on social media, pictures of Roger Stone with Oath Keepers the night before January 6th, you know, the day of January 6th, we should be looking at that. We should be looking at Alex Jones, who says he paid \$500,000 to bring riders to D.C. and he himself was directed by the White House to carry out the march.

And those were the things that the FBI said, whoa, wait a minute, we can look at the folks going in the front door of the -- of the Capitol, but we don't have any physical evidence tying those Trump allies to the going in the Capitol.

HASAN: And Aaron, did you get a sense from your sources that they're defensive now or that they do regret not moving faster?

DAVIS: I think there is a large contingent within the Justice Department that still believes that they will get there. That -- and you have to think too also, there's kind of two groups here. There's all the folks who were there through all of the tortured previous administration and decisions that were made. And then there's also, there's a group that came in with Garland. But in all honesty, a lot of them did not come in. Key people who were in charge of this investigation were not confirmed until November, December of 2021, nearly a year passed before they were in a position to do anything about it.

You know, to them, they feel like they've been moving quickly but, you know, it's of course taken so long.

[20:10:05]

HASAN: It has indeed. Aaron Davis, thank you for your very important yet depressing reporting. I appreciate it.

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DAVIS: Thank you.

HASAN: Ankush Khardori is a former federal prosecutor and a contributing editor for New York Magazine. Harry Litman served as deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department, is now a legal affairs columnist for the L.A. Times. Both join me now. Ankush, you've been critical as I have of Merrick Garland and the DOJ. Do you feel kind of, I don't know, vindicated by this new reporting in the Post today?

ANKUSH KHARDORI, FORMER FEDERAL PROSECUTOR: Well, I'd be lying if I said that that wasn't one of the feelings that I had. Today was a little surreal because we've been having this debate, as you know, for a couple of years, particularly in 2021 and through most of 2022. And, you know, kind of throughout that period, there were, you know, veteran, democratic, sort of lawyers, who were former U.S. attorney types, commentators who were, you know, assuring everyone that this was all proceeding as it normally does.

The argument never made much sense. The whole notion of a bottom-up investigation as an exclusive path to pursuing Trump, potentially just made no sense because these options are not mutually exclusive. You could have done that, you know, prosecuted all the rioters and conducted a concerted investigation at the highest level of Trump -- you know, the Trump White House.

And so, like, now we're, unfortunately, you know, we are where we are, and Trump, you know, has a very plausible path back to re-election. You know, and that complicates this considerably. And it did not have to be this way.

HASAN: Harry, it didn't have to be this way.

HARRY LITMAN, FORMER DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL: It didn't have to be this way if they wanted to have a whole different playbook. I think Ankush is right. They wanted it to proceed as it normally does. Garland's watchword, he didn't want to lean in and grasp at Trump. He didn't want to lean away. From the start, he's been very clear.

And if you look carefully -- I think you're maybe caricaturing it a little bit, Mehdi, when you talk about slow-footing and foot-dragging. What they did is play it by the book, a book that is well-established. Now, we can say, hey, what if they had done top-down and bottom-up at the same time and made special rules for Trump? You can see that now. We would have more time. That looks valuable. Of course, it's not clear we won't have enough time. It's not clear --

HASAN: Wait --

LITMAN: -- that they should have been -- one second. It's not clear they should have been thinking about, you know, making it by the election. Look, cases right now in Pittsburgh, where I'm from, the capitol case is being tried. It's a complicated case less so than this. It happened in 2018. If you do the normal process, this is where you wind up. We can say, oh, he should have thrown out the playbook, but he was being very vigilant about it.

HASAN: Harry, let me jump in.

LITMAN: Yes, go ahead.

HASAN: Let me jump in. You say about the foot-dragging the caricaturing. The Washington Post is reporting that the T-word, they didn't want to mention Trump's name.

LITMAN: Yes, so -- there is one person who says that, and I think what we can interpret it as meaning is they wanted to go from the bottom up. They didn't even have the seditious conspiracy charges. He's certainly shown, hasn't he, Mehdi, that once the predicate is made, he's very ready to go after Trump. They're ready, in fact, to go after serious charges.

HASAN: Yes.

LITMAN: And by the way, one important detail, they were already going after the phony electors way back in January. So,

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look, I don't disagree. We could see it differently now, but I just want to make clear what they were doing was trying hard to neither favor nor fall away from a normal standard prosecutorial playbook.

HASAN: And Ankush, Jack Smith is moving fast. Does Merrick Garland get credit for appointing him?

KHARDORI: Yes, he does get credit, I mean, for doing something that has kicked this into motion. But I have to take issue with a couple of points, respectfully. This is not some standard, unbreakable playbook. And the reason why so many people were complaining in real-time, according to the Washington Post reporting, why people like myself were writing about it, Andrew Weissmann went public last summer with his serious concerns about it, is precisely because not everyone agreed. There's not some single playbook out there.

And let me just the level set here. It's easy to forget, a few days before January 6, Trump got caught on tape with the Secretary of State of Georgia trying to persuade him, you know, infamously to find that -- find the extra votes and so on. Now, that is at a bare minimum, evidence of potential election fraud at the federal level. So, from my perspective, and I wrote a piece on this that actually came out on January 6 by a quirk of timing. That should have prompted a criminal investigation by itself. There should have been criminal investigation shortly after Biden took office or after Garland took office.

And we can, you know, craft all the apologetics, talk about all the playbooks that, you know, we evidently disagree about, but we are where we are now. And I think it's fairly plain as a result of the Post reporting that this was not necessary.

HASAN: We're almost out of time, Harry.

LITMAN: Very quickly, Mehdi.

HASAN: OK, briefly. Go ahead.

LITMAN: It's actually wrong. That is the playbook. What Andrew said in the New York Times was they should have a new one. I understand why he said that. But you can't quibble that they went about it as they normally have.

[20:15:12]

HASAN: Harry, we're out of time, but I do want to play a very quick clip of Donald Trump on Fox tonight. Have a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: When I said that I couldn't declassify it now, it's because I wasn't president. I never made any bones about that. When I'm not president, I can't declassify.

BRET BAIER, HOST, FOX NEWS: And that's what you said. You did declassify it.

TRUMP: I said -- no, no, I said I couldn't -- that wasn't the document.

BAIER: I could have declassify they document.

TRUMP: Bret, there was no document. That was a massive amount of papers and everything else talking about Iran and other things.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Is Jack Smith watching stuff like this with popcorn?

LITMAN: Ankush, you want to go first?

HASAN: Harry -- you go, Harry.

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LITMAN: 100 percent he is. And it's totally bogus because of course, Trump's claim was he already had declassified in his mind just by taking it. So, this is one more inculpatory statement. Every time he opens his mouth, it gets worse.

HASAN: We'll have to leave it there. Ankush Khardori, Harry Litman, I enjoyed that conversation. Thank you.

LITMAN: Thank you.

HASAN: Coming up, as Republicans work feverishly to prevent Americans from learning about America's past, the importance of Juneteenth and the fight for racial justice is next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:20:00]

HASAN: Today is this country's newest federal holiday, Juneteenth, commemorating the final emancipation of enslaved people in the former Confederate South. President Biden signed the law establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday two years ago in a tribute that was widely seen as a response to the national racial reckoning that started in earnest after George Floyd's tragic murder.

But since then, there has been a backlash to that reckoning. The Republican Party has been working overtime to censor the teaching of history and to ban books, which discussed the legacy of slavery and systemic racism.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: As you know, the president established Juneteenth as a national holiday to mark both the long and hard night of slavery and subjugation and a promise of a brighter morning to come.

It's about remembering history, not erasing it. It's about reading books, not banning them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Sadly, when it comes to the fight for racial justice and racial equality in this country, it often feels like two steps forward, one step back.

Bishop William Barber is the co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign and founding director of Yale University Center for Public Theology and Public Policy. On Sunday, he delivered his final sermon after serving 30 years as pastor of his North Carolina Church. And he joins me now.

Bishop Barber, thanks so much for coming on the show. A lot of people are celebrating Juneteenth today, but you've said Juneteenth is not a celebration, but rather a day on which a lie was undone. Can you break that down for us?

WILLIAM BARBER, FOUNDING DIRECTOR, YALE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY: Well, I actually think it would do a disservice if we turn this into a time of dancing and celebrating and drinking rather than a time of organizing, truth-telling, protesting, and looking honestly at not just what lie was told 100 and some odd years ago, but the lies that are told today, particularly others relates to public policy. We actually then enable extremists who want to erase history.

The second thing is we've got to be clear about deflection. You know, these cultural wars turned to ban books that are on Kindle in Google. As my good friend Bishop Flunder says, it makes no logical sense. I'm just trying to get us not to face the reality. Juneteenth was not happy 100-some odd years ago. People have been lied to. They were upset. When they heard about it, what they started doing was saying, how can we get full citizenship?

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Well, today, we should not -- we should be bothered that in this country right now, we have 40-plus million people who make less than living wage. We had a vote in the United States Senate where two Democrats and 49 Republicans voted to block, raise the minimum wage to \$15,000 an hour which would have lifted 41 percent of African Americans out of poverty and low wealth. We've got 87 million people who are uninsured or underinsured. Poverty is the fourth-leading cause of death, higher than homicide. Voter suppression is happening in a way we haven't seen since Jim Crow. And around this country, people can get up every morning and buy under the gas and come by uncontaminated water up, weather in Wisconsin, Flint, Michigan, or Jackson.

We should seriously take Juneteenth as a time to ask the question, who's missed the memo? Like, who hasn't got it that we're supposed to be a country of equal protection under the law? What policies are not de-establishing justice rather than establishing justice and then be about the business of challenging those realities?

HASAN: So, on that note, you've retired from Greenleaf Christian Church. You're preparing to start at Yale Divinity School, but the work of the Poor People's Campaign continues. I believe you're going to be lobbying on Capitol Hill this week. What is your message for Congress?

BARBER: Well, I've retired from the Poor People's Campaign as a pastor, as the pastor of the movement and the train clergy. I'm going to still be with Repairs of the Breach. That's the co-sponsor of the Poor People's Campaign we're still building. We have over -- nearly a thousand people here this week. And first of all, we're dealing with poverty as America's death sentence. We have to face that. It is a matter of international shame that poverty in America, the wealthiest country of the world, fourth leading cause of death.

So, we're going on Capitol Hill and we're meeting with senators. We're meeting with both sides of the aisle. We're demanding that they push a third reconstruction resolution ending poverty and low wages. And do the things that we need to do living wages, health care, housing, fully funding public education, protecting our voting rights.

[20:25:17]

But not only that, we're going to the White House to share the things we have to do, the things that we should not be walking away from now that COVID is over, because we walked into COVID with poor people dying at a rate high of nearly 200,000. That's how we went in.

But we're also going back to the state. So, on Wednesday, we're going to be talking about 30 state capital mobilizing simultaneously next February. And then on June of next year, a massive poor people's low wage workers assembly to march on Washington and to the pool, because lastly, poor people now represent 40 percent of the electorate in battleground states and 30 percent of the electorate in all states.

There's not a state in this country where if poor, for Black, White, you know, Latino, otherwise, Asian native, would organize around an agenda of truth and uplift that they could not fundamentally shift the electorate. There's not a state. Just 20 percent, not 30 percent, 40 percent, just 20 percent. We're going to mobilize that sleeping giant. We're demanding that in our debates, political debates we have, how can you have nearly 43 percent of the country poor and low wealth, 50 percent of your children, and go year after year and not have presidential debates and senatorial debates that ask candidates the question, if you get elected, how are you going to deal with this unnecessary reality of people dying poverty? It does not have to exist.

And that should be the fire that we come out of a Juneteenth with, because that's the fire that we come out 157 years ago.

HASAN: Well said. Well said, Bishop William Barber. Thank you as ever for your time and your eloquence. I appreciate it.

BARBER: Blessings.

HASAN: Still ahead, well, well, well, if it isn't the consequences of their own actions. Republicans learn the hard way that banning books hurts everyone. That's next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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[20:30:00]

HASAN: There's a meme I've been thinking about a lot lately, a viral tweet that reads, and I quote, I never thought leopards would eat my face, sobs woman who voted for the Leopards Eating People's Faces Party. It's an adage that has been proven relative -- relevant, excuse me, time and again when the American right is forced to reckon with the consequences of its own actions, most recently in Utah where Republicans passed the law targeting books in school libraries that contain "pornographic or indecent content."

And wouldn't you know it, that very law, that very law has now been used to restrict access to, wait for it, the Bible.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: With the Holy Book in one hand and signs in the other, frustrated parents calling out the recent decision by Davis School District that voted to remove the King James version of the Bible from elementary and middle school libraries. The move coming after a complaint was filed with the district in December when the district received an anonymous grievance that said the school district was ignoring "One of the most sex-ridden books around, the Bible, adding that this edition of the Bible "has no serious values for minors because it's pornographic by our new definition. Get this porn out of our schools."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: So, maybe it's time to update that meme. I never thought they would ban my favorite book, sobs woman who voted for the book-banning party.

State Representative Carol Spackman-Moss is a Democratic member of the Utah State House. Before running for office, she was a high school teacher for more than 30 years. And she joins me now. Representative Moss, thanks so much for coming on the show. What is your reaction to the King James Bible being taken out of some Utah school libraries? Do you support that move on the basis of, I don't know, consistency if Republicans are going to ban books with vulgarity or sex in them, then that included the Bible.

STATE REP. CAROL SPACKMAN MOSS (D-UT): Yes, it was consistent. And by the way, I was an English teacher. I taught literature and writing, and I sometimes taught a unit called the Bible as literature. But the person who filed this challenge just put it out there to see if they would follow the same process and see what they're doing to other books. And boy, did the lawmakers, the Republicans take the bait and all this outrage they expressed in meetings. And not just outrage, but actual threats in the meeting last week that they could charge them with -- if they don't just immediately take a book out that's been challenged as pornographic, they could charge them with felonies.

But the Bible based on things -- it's the first step toward atheism and hedonism. But all they did was the district followed their procedure of let parents and teacher review committees make a decision and they put it in high schools only. That was it.

HASAN: So, do you think Utah Republicans are simply going to end up changing their own rules here to protect religious texts that they approve of? There's some talk that the Book of Mormon could be challenged next, which would be hugely controversial in Utah.

MOSS: Yes, it would. It would. But what they were pointing -- the person who challenged it, I assume, they were pointing out is the bill is flawed because we should take everything in context at its literary value. And that's -- they're not doing this with that with some books. They're just saying these lines are what they call the bright line, they're pornographic, they should be taken out. No, they should -- all books that are challenged should be looked at as a whole, not by individual words or passages.

And Mehdi, I just want to say they haven't -- they haven't discovered Shakespeare yet.

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[20:35:34]

HASAN: God help us all. So, let's -- so you spent decades as an English teacher, as you say. You mentioned Shakespeare. Big picture. Big picture. What do you make of this right-wing campaign of book-banning in your state and across the country? What impact in your view is having on our public schools on the American education system?

MOSS: It's a huge impact in an amount of time. In the district I taught, it was 62,000 students. There have been 94 books challenged by six people and this is typical. And these lists do not just come out -- many I don't think people have even read. They come from lists, groups like Moms for Liberty in Utah, Utah Parents United. It's a small, but very organized group. They're the same books, books that have been in the canon for years, the bluest eye by Tony Morrison, Beloved.

See, they've gone from just looking for books that have to do with LGBTQ kids and BIPOC kids. That's the primary list. Now, they're moving into established literary works. And that's where I really say we have to draw the line. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of being spent on this, time, hours and hours instead of working on kids learning to read.

See, I have many of those books. I've read them. Kids that need to make up the losses during COVID, there's so many things we need to do. And what's happening, Mehdi, is that teachers are leaving, librarians are quitting, and that's the tragedy. It's part of what I see as an overall attempt to destroy public education. Voucher bills, homeschooling, many schools, more school choice, this is one aspect. And it's very dangerous. These are most important freedoms, the freedom to read, the freedom to speak, academic freedom. And I'm very concerned about it. And I think there will be lawsuits to follow. I'm pretty sure of it. These are unconstitutional laws.

HASAN: I do share your concern. I'm glad you joined the dots there making the point that this is about the deliberate destruction of public education. It's about much more than just books or lines and books. Utah State Representative Carol Spackman-Moss, thank you so much for your time tonight. I appreciate it.

MOSS: Thank you for having me. My pleasure. Thank you.

HASAN: Still to come, they are the party of the Muslim ban, of the Iraq War, of enhanced interrogations. So, why do Republicans think they can win back the Muslim vote in 2024? That's ahead.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:40:00]

HASAN: The latest fake controversy on the right is the refusal by one of America's top doctors, top vaccine experts to debate one of America's top anti-vaxxers. Yes, podcaster Joe Rogan and Twitter owner Elon Musk are just some of the wealthy vaccine conspiracy enablers currently insisting that Dr Peter Hotez debate anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is, lest we forget, running for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Why would anyone think that's a debate worth having? What next? Neil deGrasse Tyson debates Alex Jones on astrophysics. Noam Chomsky debates Lauren Boebert on Cartesian linguistics. It's crazy, but it's also scary because Dr Hotez now has people sending him threats and even showing up at his house. As he told me on my show on this network last night, he's been under attack for years.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HOTEZ: The reason I got involved with RFK Jr. in the first place is I have an adult daughter, Rachel, who has autism and intellectual disabilities and wrote the book, Vaccines Did Not Cause Rachel's Autism, that refuted all of his false claims. And that's been -- you know, he's been kind of after me ever since then. And now, he's at it again.

But this time, you know, Elon -- I'm sorry, this time, Mehdi, it's caused something really terrible. And that is during the COVID pandemic, I have a new book coming out that basically says 200,000 Americans needlessly perished because they believe the anti-vaccine disinformation and refused to take a COVID vaccine during our Delta wave and BA1 and Omicron

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wave in 2021-22 after vaccines were widely available.

So, the point is anti-vaccine disinformation has always done a lot of damage and harm, but now it's a lethal force in the United States. And that's why we -- that's why we have to have that discussion. And I offered to come and talk to -- go on Joe Rogan again, I've been on a couple of times, and have that discussion with him, but not to turn it into the Jerry Springer show with having RFK Junior on it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Now, I recently wrote a book about the importance of debating called Win Every Argument: The Art Of Debating, Persuading, And Public Speaking. But as I told Dr. Hotez last night, experts shouldn't agree to debate cranks. I mean, no serious person would consider having a preeminent World War II historian debate the Holocaust denier. just as no serious person should demand a debate on vaccine science between Dr. Hotez and non-doctor RFK Jr. Debates with anti-vaccine conspiracy theories only serve to elevate them and legitimize their ridiculous and dangerous claims. And most importantly, they don't change anyone's minds.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:50:00]

HASAN: There is a seismic shift happening within the Republican Party right now. The GOP seems to be trying to use the debate over transgender rights to win over conservative Muslim Americans. Whereas the host of this show so pithily pointed out in a tweet last week, "Basically in 2016, Republicans tried to get LGBT votes by demonizing Muslims and this time around they're trying to get Muslim votes by demonizing LGBT people." Thank you, Chris Hayes.

Take for example Laura Ingraham. Here's a taste of her radio show over the last few years.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: We don't have waves of refugees from predominantly Christian countries who come in and then proceed to try to blow us up. All these other people, they got to stay in the Middle East. But we cannot be the warehouse of all these, you know, Muslim people coming from these far-flung lands.

You are not going to come into this country and destroy what's good about America. I'm telling you we've got to stop this madness.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: And here's that same host earlier this month showcasing a Muslim parent from Maryland who's organization wants school kids to be able to opt out from reading books with LGBTQ themes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Us Catholics and other Christians, other people of faith, have been waiting for the Muslims to step up on this issue and so many others.

KAREEM MONIB, CO-FOUNDER, COALITION OF VIRTUE: Our vision is to bring together people of all faiths.

INGRAHAM: All faiths, which I love.

MONIB: And we want to restore the moral consensus that we had in this country since its inception. And we want to bring people of all faiths and even those who may not belong to any particular faith.

INGRAHAM: Traditionalist, perhaps.

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MONIB: Traditional, reasonable people. I think that if we come together, we can become a political force in this country that can save us from what's happening.

INGRAHAM: You, Kareem, and all of those kids who spoke out, and former students, you all petrified the left.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: It is a new level of hypocrisy and cynicism from the right. As columnist Michelle Goldberg pointed out in The New York Times, apparently these days creeping Shariah has nothing on the woke mob. Well put. And Michelle Goldberg joins me tonight along with Wajahat Ali, columnist for The Daily Beast and author of Go Back to Where You Came From, another helpful recommendations on becoming American.

Thank you both. Michelle, you write in your latest piece for The Times, "History shows us that nothing drives conservatives to reach out to groups they once feared as much as another group that they fear even more. I wonder whether it's not just the fear, it's the kind of divide and rule mentality that has been there for a long time when it comes to, I don't know, a white conservative right wing majority and various minority groups, pit them against one another.

MICHELLE GOLDBERG, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, right. And I think we saw the reverse of this in 2016. I mean, if you go back to the Republican convention that year, the Republican convention where Donald Trump was nominated, you had this very kind of risque gay party with all of these photographs, they called the Twinks for Trump, these photographs of these kind of half dressed, adolescent looking boys and MAGA hats and, excuse me, you had a well-known Dutch nativist politician talking.

And back then I think it was very common for the American right that was emulating the European right. The European right had really leaned into this idea that Muslim immigration threatens hard-won sexual freedoms and is a particular threat to gay people. And at that moment, the panic over creeping Shariah and, you know, kind of self-jihadism and all the different boogeyman of the right.

You saw this tacit alliance with gay people and I think that the warning here for anyone tempted to make an alliance just is in how quickly they turned on their erstwhile allies.

HASAN: And Wajahat, as a Muslim who's been studying and reporting on Islamophobia for years now, what do you make of this new GOP outreach to Muslims? I mean, people forget that until George W. Bush and the war on terror came along, Republicans were trying to reach out to conservative Muslims.

WAJAHAT ALI, COLUMNIST, THE DAILY BEAST: Yes, these Muslims who are supporting the right in their attack on LGBTQ-plus families and kids, it reminds me of halal chickens lining up for Colonel Sanders. It's a classic divide-and-conquer technique of white supremacy in this country to have marginalized groups pitted against each other, right? The toxic model minority stereotype.

And what's so sad specifically to see some Muslims fall for this is that we're not that far removed from 9/11. We're not that far removed from the 2010 midterms, Mehdi, where the same exact playbook that is used against CRT and wokeness, which is used to attack transgender kids, was used against Muslims, the Shariah panic, all these people protesting Shariah. Can you define it? We can't, but we have to stop it. And what happened as a result of that? Anti-Muslim bigotry, fear-mongering, conspiracy theories, and the removal of Muslim Americans from America's political, civic and social life.

Fast forward 12 years and now you're having some of these suburban Muslim parents whom God has given everything except peace of mind, apparently, fall for the same conspiracy theories. Literally, fall for this panic. I'm in the WhatsApp groups. You're in the WhatsApp groups. I've heard this is happening. I've heard that's happening. I'm like, is this affecting you in any way? No. But think about our children.

It's the same exact literally copycat of the anti-Sharia bias and hysteria now being used against Muslims. And what I see is them opening the door for their former and future butchers sharpening the knives and will be used against us and other people

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of color. And they don't see that they're being co-opted and used by people like Laura Ingraham who's openly celebrating it on her show.

[20:55:29]

HASAN: I mean, you don't even have to go back to 2011, 9/11, 2010 midterms. You have Marjorie Taylor Greene right now in the GOP caucus. People -- you know, somebody who said outrageous things about Islam and Muslims is one of the most influential members of the House.

Michelle, I've got to broaden this discussion out. The GOP may be exacerbating this divide seeming -- "divide between LGBTQ and Muslim communities," but then always the cause of it. When you see what happened in a Muslim majority city council in Michigan recently where the council recently voted to ban Pride flags on city property, you do then see a lot of genuine liberal dismay, do you not? You do see signs of a perhaps worrying ideological divide at the local level?

GOLDBERG: Yes, absolutely. I mean -- and I think that look, there's obvious tensions between conservative religiosity and kind of extreme notions -- they're not even extreme notions, but notions of sexual tolerance and sexual liberation. Those things have been in tension in the United States. There are tensions all over the world. And it is not surprising on some level that there's some commonality between conservative Christians and conservative Muslims because -- and, you know -- and conservative Jews for that matter because they do have a lot -- you know, they have a similar investment in traditional gender roles and patriarchal authority.

And so, this is a problem potentially for Democrats in states like Michigan where the Muslim vote is very -- is very important and influential. But I also think that you can -- just because the Republican Party and conservative activists didn't invent these tensions, that doesn't mean that they're not exploiting them and, you know, kind of pouring gasoline on them because you didn't see these sorts of protests say two years ago, four years ago. And it's not as if that much has changed in terms of -- you know, a lot of the books, for example, are being protested. These aren't new books. What's new is the panic about these books.

HASAN: Yes, I mean, Muslim Americans, just like any other Americans, are equally susceptible to propaganda and moral panics.

Wajahat, let me ask a similarly big question to you. Is there a way for people from conservative religious groups, religious communities who do not like the pace of change when it comes to things like gender, gay rights, et cetera, Pride month, is there a way for them to "defend their beliefs," protect their traditions, religious views, moral values through peaceful protests, or whatever they want to do without linking up arms with people who once they've done bashing gays will go back to bashing Muslims or vice versa? Is there a way to do that without allying with the GOP?

ALI: It is very easy. Look, I am a practicing Muslim. Spoiler alert, I believe in God. I take it very seriously. And what I tell people is in our religion, it says, you know, onto us, our way onto you, your way. We have a very pluralistic society. And Muslims who are watching, you need to know that the same forces who are using us against LGBTQ have turned on us and will turn on other people of color and immigrants. It's a big tent society.

You don't have to like everything, just like people don't have to like Islam and religion. But guess what? There were allies there when Trump did the Muslim ban who said, we don't like religion, but you have every right as an American to sit here and have your religious freedom. So, we might not like everything, but your family has every right to security and dignity, and my family has every right to security and dignity.

And to those Muslims who are so offended with some of these books that I might just mention, two dads, just think about what signal you're sending, right? Just a few years ago, just now like you mentioned, Mehdi, when it comes to anyone wearing hijab, we are targeted, harassed, bullied. What we're telling people is, we'll tolerate you, but we'll just sit there and barely tolerate you, right? What does that say to the kids?

And so have a big heart, lead with compassion, lead with mercy and have faith. Have faith in conviction in your religion. Raise your kids right and they'll be fine. And teach them this is our way, we don't -- we don't agree with everything but

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that's fine. On to you, your way, on to me, mine. We all get to live in security with prosperity and peace. But there is a big tent and that's the way the American experiment, the pluralistic democratic experiment works.

That's why so many of our parents came to this country. It's a give and take, it's mutual respect and reciprocity. The way you're doing it now by aligning with right-wing mobs that have manufactured fear and panic against our communities is not the way and will only lead to long-term disasters for our communities and our allies.

HASAN: It's the manufactured part of it that really worries me. Wajahat Ali, Michelle Goldberg, thank you both. I appreciate it.

That is ALL IN on this Monday night. Chris Hayes will be back tomorrow night. You can watch "THE MEHDI HASAN SHOW" Sundays at 8:00 p.m. Eastern right here on MSNBC. It also streams weekly on Peacock. But "THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW" starts right now. Good evening, Rachel.

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---- Index References ----

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June 20, 2023

New Wake rules would set 2-year limit on book challenges and get input from students

By T. Keung Hui, News & Observer

A Wake County school board committee has backed limits on how often book challenges can be filed, as well as allowing high school students to serve on a district book challenge review panel.

The school board's policy committee voted Tuesday to back updates to the book challenge policy, amid growing calls from some parents to try to remove materials they say are inappropriate to be in school libraries.

If the changes are approved by the full board, book challenge decisions would be binding for two years before they can be formally challenged again by parents.

"I trust, I always go back to the professionalism of our librarians and our people that work in our media centers in our schools and our teachers who select materials for our classrooms," said board member Lynn Edmonds.

The Wake County chapter of Moms for Liberty filed 189 book challenges against 20 books last month ahead of the adoption of the policy changes. District administrators rejected all 189 because none of them were filed by parents at the schools where the books are located.

Members of the group and other parents have regularly attended board meetings to read excerpts of books they say shouldn't be in school libraries because they're sexually explicit, have profanity or discuss gender identity.

School board member Cheryl Caulfield said students can find values in books that have scenes that are "a little uncomfortable." But what she said parents are complaining about goes far beyond just reading a few curse words.

"I'm talking about sexually explicit material that I do not think that belongs in our schools," Caulfield said.

lgbtq book grid.jpegAcross North Carolina, some Moms for Liberty groups have called for the removal of books from school libraries that they say contain sexual passages inappropriate for children. Some of the books they have objected to are shown here.

How to challenge books in Wake

Wake's updated policy says books can be challenged for removal from school libraries or classrooms if they're "educationally unsuitable, pervasively vulgar, or inappropriate to the age, maturity, or grade level of the students." The policy does not define "pervasively vulgar."

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The policy says that challenges at individual schools must be made by families who attend those schools. Challenges will be heard by a committee formed by the principal. Students would not be on the school committees.

Parents can appeal decisions made by the school committee to the district's Central Instructional Materials Committee. This committee would also hear challenges involving materials used at the district level.

Decisions of the district committee can be appealed to the school board.

The committee rejected adding a process where challenges can go directly to the school board.

Citing how long the process is to review challenges, the policy would establish a two-year moratorium, once a decision is reached, before a parent could file a challenge against that book again at that specific school.

Parents would also be able to request that their children not read a particular book if it's part of a classroom assignment.

Should students review book challenges?

Under the updated policy, up to two high school students would serve on the Central Instructional Materials Committee when there are challenges made against books used in high schools. Students would need parental permission to serve on the committee.

Moms for Liberty has opposed allowing students to serve on the committee. That concern was echoed Tuesday by Caulfield and board member Wing Ng.

"We're asking children to make decisions for other children," Caulfield said. "They should not be deciding for others."

Ng said that the district shouldn't be dragging students into the process.

"I don't think that students should be involved in the process," Ng said. "They have other more important things to be taking care of."

But other board members said that they want the voices of students to be heard in the process.

"Let the students decide what they're capable of doing," said board member Tyler Swanson. "We have some talented students in this district who are speaking their truth to power."

Swanson had unsuccessfully lobbied to keep the names of students anonymous because he said he was worried they'd become victims of cyberbullying. District staff said that would not be possible under the state's Open Meetings Law.

---- Index References ----

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Letters: DeSantis' book banning is only the start of his measures against free expression
Hear from Pensacola News Journal readers in our weekly "Letters to the Editor."

Pensacola News Journal/USA TODAY NETWORK

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Two Escambia County parents have joined major publishers and PEN America in a lawsuit against the county for banning books in school libraries. PEN America is a non-profit organization with a goal of supporting free expression and celebrating literature – exactly what Gov. Ron DeSantis and some members of the local school board oppose.

DeSantis book bans just the beginning

Many of the books being ordered removed from school libraries, or restricted in their availability, are books by non-white authors or members of the LGBTQ community. The lawsuit argues that limiting access to the books based on opposition to certain ideas violates the First Amendment and the equal protection provisions of the 14th Amendment.

The local school board is clearly influenced by DeSantis' efforts to galvanize his far-right base as part of his soon-to-be announced presidential campaign. Exploring new ideas through books is an essential part of a child's education, and not every child has access to a wide variety of books at home. Limiting children's freedom to explore new ideas greatly diminishes their education.

I fear we are likely to see ever more vigorous efforts to restrict access to ideas that make privileged Americans uncomfortable.

— Larry Chamblin, Pensacola

Readers don't hold back: Letters: Gaetz, Rubio and Scott voting to tank our Social Security and Medicare shameful

Hear from our readers: Letters: Educators must reject far right's 'omission' agenda of book, movie banning

Argos showed patriotism in tournament

I attended the NCAA regional tournament game recently between Barry University and the University of West Florida, which Barry won. Prior to the start of the game, after realizing the National Anthem was not going to be played, the entire UWF team lined up in front of their dugout and sang it.

While some fans who saw what was going on stood respectfully, the umpires, who clearly saw what was happening, did nothing to bring attention to it. The portly third base umpire looked right at them and turned away. They allowed the Barry team to continue its warmups as if nothing was going on.

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This was not a stunt. The umpires should have halted the activity on the field and brought everyone to attention for the minute or two that it took for the Argos to finish the anthem, but they didn't.

Kudos to the West Florida Argos for showing class and respect for our nation and those who put themselves at risk to ensure our freedom and our way of life. Baseball is our national pastime. One would think that NCAA umpires would know that.

Evidently, they don't and that's an absolute shame.

— Charles Compton, Sarasota

Beach parking hurting business

I strongly disagree with the woman who wrote, "Twenty-four thousand people came onto our beach Saturday and they obviously found parking somewhere."

My wife and I had reservations at a popular restaurant in the center of the beach on Mother's Day. I let her out to get our table while I circled to find parking – and circled and circled, adding to the congestion. After almost a half hour, I finally gave up and called to pick her up and we left the beach.

She told me to her surprise the restaurant was about one-fourth empty. The manager told her people were having too hard a time parking. Well-landscaped parking garages would certainly have helped and not have blocked the view of the water from the street.

— Thomas Johnson, Gulf Breeze

Moms for Liberty are our 'Quixote'

The comic novel "Don Quixote the Man from La Mancha" by Spanish author Miguel De Cervantes is a story of a lowly nobleman with visions of becoming king. Quixote's misguided crusade is to save his country. The expression "Attacking Windmills" came from that story.

We have our own Don Quixote fools here in the name of "Moms for Liberty." They aren't attacking windmills; they are attacking our schools and our children's right to learn! They attack books, and teachers for doing their job of creating an atmosphere of free exchange of ideas and thinking out of the box to solve problems. Their goal of indoctrinating their values is dangerous. They believe schools are "Marxist breeding grounds of warriors."

Our Santa Rosa schools work hard to educate and preparing our future leaders. We need to support our school superintendent and school board for their work in supporting quality education.

Parents with children in Santa Rosa Public Schools need to be aware and defend their children's education. Join the newly organized parents' group, "RED Wine and Blue," defending children's rights and schools. Red Wine and Blue parents support books, not bans, freedom, not fear, community, not chaos and heart, not hate.

— Susan Creel, Bagdad

Readers don't hold back: Letters to the Editor: DeSantis turning Florida into Wild West with his gun legislation

Hear from our readers: Letters to the Editor: Alex Andrade's actions against LGBT are clear signs of hate

Superintendent Barber doing great

Children thrive in an accepting and free atmosphere to explore ideas and express freely. Parents trust the schools to educate their children in a positive and free environment, to develop knowledge and to be respected while respecting others despite differences.

The Santa Rosa School Board's mission is: "To love, educate, and prepare all students for graduation and a successful future."

Recently, an inappropriate comment by a county commissioner who's also a member of Moms for Liberty discredited the

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superintendent for explaining the library guidelines to citizens of a different political view. These guidelines are available for every student, parent, and taxpayer in Santa Rosa County.

These guidelines are the result of a state bill to ban certain inappropriate books. The superintendent adopted the new Florida policy, and the program has been approved by the Department of Education. Her policy gives parents choices and control to allow or deny their child reading library books that have been approved by the state.

Superintendent Barber did an excellent job in providing information to everyone with respect. It's every taxpayer's right, not only the far-right extremists, to know how to use the website and access information.

Good job, Superintendent Barber!

— Charles Creel, Bagdad

Discretion, not banning, needed

Before us today is the question of 'banning books' in school. There are some who passionately believe that certain books should be excluded from our public schools on the basis of content and others, equally passionate, who oppose the of banning of those same books.

Rather than talking about 'banning books, let's talk about exercising discretion. Not every book available is appropriate for children. Most would agree that pornography is inappropriate for our school system. We may disagree as to what constitutes pornography, but we probably agree that discretion should be used to cull inappropriate material from our library. The thing in contention is the determination as to what content is inappropriate.

Common sense should be our guide. In a world where children are routinely sexualized in movies, on TV programs, and in magazines, our schools ought to be a refuge. Children should be allowed to be children. It is wrong to sacrifice the innocence of childhood on this alter.

Rather than confusing children with things that are not yet on their horizon, give them the freedom and safety to be innocent kids for just a little while.

— William Garner, Molino

Hatred transcends common sense

Will American citizens ever realize that, as such, we have common enemies, both foreign and domestic? Abroad, we have countries that hate America and would do her citizens harm. Domestically we have a legislature that daily enacts laws that adversely affect middle- and lower-class citizens, regardless of ethnicity.

On the other hand, they refuse to enact laws that would reduce or, hopefully, prevent the senseless slaughter of our citizens, children and adults. How can any rational or moral individual turn a blind eye to Sandy Hook? Our children will continue to die because many of our legislators are bought and paid for by the National Rifle Association.

Our children are only collateral damage. Greed and corruption are so ingrained in the American political system, that it has become virtually impossible to find an honest politician. That is, if there is such an animal. Some of the poorest states in America are "red" states.

The 10 poorest states in America are: Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, West Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Georgia, and South Carolina. At the same time, some of these states have the wealthiest legislators. Why? Where is the logic?

America is a sick country. She is deathly ill. We need to wake up people and unite rather than separate.

— Carlton J. Charles, Pensacola

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Letters: DeSantis' book banning is only the start of his..., 2023 WLNR 21297375

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June 20, 2023

Section: News

Hanna to accept a 'lesser' punishment Superintendent: 'I have done nothing wrong' but can't 'be impactful or effective if I am removed from office'

Ana Goñi-Lessan

June 20, 2023

Florida's capital city superintendent who has been under investigation for his "politically charged statements" and infusing "personal views" into his administration of the school district has settled with the state's education agency.

Leon County Schools' Rocky Hanna reached an agreement with the Florida Department of Education and will receive a reprimand, according to a settlement agreement from the State of Florida Education Practices Commission.

"In this situation, as hard as it may be, I have chosen to ignore my personal pride and remain focused on the bigger picture – helping every student in our district prepare for their next step in life," Hanna said in a statement to the Tallahassee Democrat and USA TODAY NETWORK - Florida.

In a letter to Hanna in early April following a months-long investigation, Education Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr. wrote there was probable cause to justify sanctions, including the possibility of a reprimand, suspension or permanent revocation of his teaching license.

The settlement agreement includes stipulations if Hanna becomes employed in a position that requires his teaching certificate: two years probation, a \$1,000 fine to be paid during the probationary period and a requirement that Hanna take college-level classes in education leadership and education ethics.

Being an elected superintendent does not require a teaching certificate, therefore these stipulations aren't necessary in his current position with the district, he said. "If others throughout history could be placed in jail for simply advocating for what they believed in, the least I can do is be still for now and accept a much lesser punishment for doing what I believe," Hanna said, adding "I cannot be impactful or effective if I am removed from office."

The settlement agreement document states Hanna "neither admits nor denies, but elects not to contest the allegations set forth in Petitioner's Administrative Complaint, which are incorporated herein by reference."

"I have done nothing wrong," Hanna said in the statement. "I absolutely have no 'history of defying the law' nor have I ever suggested to anyone to violate the law or not teach the Florida Standards as established by the Board of Education. Although I have chosen to accept this agreement I do not regret doing what I was elected to do by the citizens of Leon County –

Hanna to accept a 'lesser' punishment, 2023 WLNR 21297774

advocating for our teachers, our children and our public schools.”

Hanna, who has been an educator for 35 years, has been a vocal critic of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and his administration on social media, in the press and at school board meetings since the governor banned mask mandates in schools during COVID-19. Hanna says that made him a target for political retribution.

Even with the settlement, Hanna acknowledges DeSantis could still try to oust him from office as he did to former State Attorney Andrew Warren last year after the elected prosecutor vowed to not prosecute women who seek abortions or transgender people who seek gender-affirming care.

”Over the last 4 years, 61 of 67 Florida public school superintendents have been removed from office or replaced, many for political reasons,” Hanna wrote. “In this current political environment, I do not want to become number 62 and replaced by a governor appointee. If this were to happen, I wouldn’t be in a position to help anyone.”

Hanna and DOE reached the settlement agreement after the superintendent sent Diaz a letter asking him what he would propose would conclude the investigation, according to a Facebook post by Hanna in mid-May. Hanna said Diaz recommended the reprimand and probationary measures, and Hanna agreed.

”School starts back in exactly 57 days,” he said. “I will be spending each one of them working to ensure our schools are prepared to offer our students a safe, high quality, learning environment for them to succeed. Thank you for your words of encouragement and support. Let’s get past all of this theater and remain focused on our challenges ahead, together.”

How the investigation began

According to Hanna, the investigation began after a board member of the local chapter of the conservative group, Moms for Liberty, sent a letter to the governor calling on the superintendent “to be removed from his position.” The letter was stamped with “LET’S GO BRANDON,” a saying popular among conservatives who use the G-rated term in place of “(Expletive) Joe Biden.”

Letter author Brandi Andrews, a member of the Leon County chapter of Moms for Liberty, included an excerpt from an email, a Facebook post and an op-ed in the Democrat, all written by Hanna in August 2022, as examples of “issues we have with our local school board right here in Leon County.”

Before the beginning of the fall semester, Hanna emailed LCS staff: “Let me be clear about one thing – I will always have your back! I realize this is improper grammar but, ‘You do You!’ Continue to teach the standards just as you have always done and do not worry for one minute about naysayers political and others who are trying to mislead people and control what you can and cannot say in your classroom.”

That letter drew the ire of the education commissioner in the DOE complaint.

”Respondent’s declaration to teachers that ‘You Do You!’ opens the door to teachers imposing their own individual political and religious views on students and teachers failing to teach with fidelity the Florida standards,” Diaz wrote.

The education commissioner also concluded that Hanna’s “politically charged statements, when expressed by him to educators, have the potential of disseminating in the classrooms of those educators.”

The complaint also includes Hanna’s pushback against the governor’s executive order banning mask mandates in schools; allegations that Hanna did not staff enough school safety officers for every LCS campus in the fall of 2020, and an email sent to the Leon County Schools teachers and staff on Feb. 14 informing parents that a “civic-engagement event” was taking place at the Florida Capitol, and if students were to attend it could be an excused absence.

The event was a rally to protest DOE’s rejection of the College Board’s Advanced Placement African American Studies course. The protest drew hundreds for a march on the Capitol.

Next steps and a parting shot

The Education Practices Commission, a group of appointed educators, citizens, parents and law enforcement officers who meet, review and give a final order on disciplinary actions, will approve the settlement agreement at a future meeting, Hanna

Hanna to accept a 'lesser' punishment, 2023 WLNR 21297774

said.

In his statement, Hanna points out that education commissioner Diaz has also shared his “personal views” and made “politically charged” statements.

”This is a sad, pathetic attempt from a completely inept administration to force their woke worldview on the rest of us. Since Joe Biden can’t get Congress or the Supreme Court to rubber stamp his radical gender ideology,” Diaz said in an April statement reacting to the Biden administration’s proposed rules on transgender athlete eligibility.

Hanna noted Diaz also holds a Florida educator certificate.

”While I strongly disagree with the disrespectful comments he made towards our president, I do respect the constitutional right he is guaranteed through the First Amendment to make them,” Hanna said. “If he was not granted this right then, perhaps, for expressing his ‘personal views,’ he should be issued a letter of reprimand, be placed on a two year probation, take two college level classes on professional ethics and educational leadership (earning a “B” or better in each) and pay a fine of \$1,000.”

The USA TODAY NETWORK-Florida has reached out to the Department of Education for comment.

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June 20, 2023

Leon superintendent settles for 'lesser' punishment, says 'I have done nothing wrong' "I cannot be impactful or effective if I am removed from office," Rocky Hanna said, while insisting "I have done nothing wrong,"

Ana Goñi-Lissan, Tallahassee Democrat

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"School starts back in exactly 57 days," he said. "I will be spending each one of them working to ensure our schools are prepared to offer our students a safe, high quality, learning environment for them to succeed. Thank you for your words of encouragement and support. Let's get past all of this theater and remain focused on our challenges ahead, together."

How the investigation began

Hanna first learned he was under investigation on Christmas Eve, right before his family was leaving for Mass.

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More: Read the 'Let's Go Brandon' stamped letter tied to investigation of Superintendent Hanna

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The USA TODAY NETWORK-Florida has reached out to the Florida Department of Education for comment.

Back story: State finds ‘cause’ to discipline Leon superintendent over ‘politically charged statements’ Reaction: Leaders weigh in as state may punish Leon Superintendent for ‘politically-charged’ statements How it started: Florida education agency investigates Leon superintendent, pointing to ‘personal views’

Read the full statement from Rocky Hanna

Impactful leaders lead by uniting not dividing. Effective leaders understand when to fight and when to be still. If others throughout history could be placed in jail for simply advocating for what they believed in, the least I can do is be still for now and accept a much lesser punishment for doing what I believe. I cannot be impactful or effective if I am removed from office.

My commitment, has and always will be, to our community, our schools, and most importantly to our teachers and students. In this situation, as hard as it may be, I have chosen to ignore my personal pride and remain focused on the bigger picture--helping every student in our district prepare for their next step in life. Whether that is going to college, pursuing a technical career, joining the military or directly entering the workforce.

I have done nothing wrong. I absolutely have no “history of defying the law” nor have I ever suggested to anyone to violate the law or not teach the Florida Standards as established by the Board of Education. Although I have chosen to accept this agreement I do not regret doing what I was elected to do by the citizens of Leon County--advocating for our teachers, our children and our public schools.

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Commissioner Diaz recently made the following comments, expressing his personal views about the President of the United States and current leadership in the federal government.

”This is a sad, pathetic attempt from a completely inept administration to force their woke worldview on the rest of us. Since Joe Biden can’t get Congress or the Supreme Court to rubber stamp his radical gender ideology, he’s resorted to bullying

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America's students through the federal bureaucracy. Good luck-this won't fly in Florida.”

Like me, Commissioner Diaz also hold a Florida Educator Certificate stemming from the brief time he spent as a teacher and school administrator before becoming a politician. While I strongly disagree with the disrespectful comments he made towards our President, I do respect the constitutional right he is guaranteed through the First Amendment to make them. If he was not granted this right then, perhaps, for expressing his “personal views”, he should be issued a letter of reprimand, be placed on a two year probation, take two college level classes on professional ethics and educational leadership (earning a “B” or better in each) and pay a fine of \$1,000.

This article originally appeared on Tallahassee Democrat: Leon superintendent settles for 'lesser' punishment, says 'I have done nothing wrong'

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June 20, 2023

Pinellas teachers challenge 2 school board members tied to Moms for Liberty

Jeffrey S. Solochek; Tampa Bay Times

The Pinellas County teachers union and two school board members affiliated with the Moms for Liberty group appear headed for a showdown.

Their differences are coming to a head over the way the board members have talked about one of the union's most outspoken members.

As candidates, Dawn Peters and Stephanie Meyer made no secret of their disdain for teachers who in their view advanced a liberal agenda in the classroom. They often focused on Dunedin High's Brandt Robinson, who has gained a high profile by making daily TikTok videos on his views. He also protested outside the Moms for Liberty national conference in Tampa last summer.

Peters stated on Facebook under Robinson's photo in 2022 that "we have GOT to get these teachers out of our schools!!"

After their election to the board in November, Peters and Meyer continued to criticize Robinson on social media — particularly on the private Moms for Liberty Pinellas chapter page. There, they have "liked" comments calling him a "creeper" and a "predator," and participated in chats about making unannounced visits to his classroom to see what he is teaching.

Robinson offers courses in Black history and has been accused of providing Marxist lessons by a Moms for Liberty local leader. The district took no action against him.

In one Facebook conversation, Meyer questioned whether Robinson allows all viewpoints in his classroom. He repeatedly has rejected the notion that he indoctrinates students, saying he teaches them how to think, not what to think.

The Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association wants the treatment of Robinson to stop before it spreads to other faculty members.

In a grievance filed in early June, the teachers union accused Meyer and Peters of violating several sections of the district's teacher contract, board-adopted policy, Department of Education rules and state law in their treatment of Robinson. The allegations range from harassing a teacher to violating Florida's Sunshine Law by having discussions about an employee in a forum that is not publicly accessible.

The union pointed to the section of district policy that states the board "will not tolerate harassment or abuse of teachers by parents, other citizens and/or other board employees." It also referred to a section stating that any complaint against a teacher

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“by a school board member, or which comes to the attention of a board member ... shall be referred to the superintendent for appropriate action.”

Robinson and the union have asked both board members for a public apology, along with their disavowal of any harassment by Moms for Liberty. Beyond that, they asked the district to conduct an investigation into the members’ actions, and for sanctions as appropriate and authorized.

“I’ve often been the target of Moms for Liberty,” Robinson said. “It really was a decision the union made to defend the integrity of public teachers. I agreed it was a good idea to file it to make sure the statement was made.”

Moms for Liberty is a national organization with Florida roots that has advocated for the removal of what its members consider to be the liberal indoctrination of students. The group has been a strong backer of Gov. Ron DeSantis’ push to limit COVID safety measures, restrict discussions of race and gender in schools and make it easier to challenge books.

Its critics say the group’s efforts prey on fear and create false narratives of what goes on in classrooms.

Neither Peters nor Meyer responded to calls and text messages seeking comment. School board attorney David Koperski wrote a letter to union executive director Lindsey Blankenbaker stating that the complaint was not valid.

Koperski wrote that individual board members are not party to the district’s collective bargaining agreement with teachers and, as such, cannot violate it.

“Individually, they do not have the authority or the responsibility to act on behalf of the school board, do not implement the provisions of the (agreement) and are not employees or administrators subject to the (agreement),” he wrote.

Blankenbaker said she anticipated a conservative, legalistic response. She noted that individual teachers technically are not parties to the contract either, but added that they are bound by its terms.

She suggested that since the board as a body ratifies the agreement, the individual members also would be responsible to follow it. Beyond that, she added, board members must follow district policies, department rules and state laws.

“We’re not good at dropping things,” Blankenbaker said. “There’s a number of remedies that are available.”

The union is considering options that include requesting arbitration and filing a complaint to the state ethics commission.

It also might turn to the full school board for intervention. It is not unheard of for a board to sanction individual members over their actions.

The Lee County board, for instance, censured member Chris Patricca in May 2022 after an employee filed a whistleblower complaint against her. The Osceola County board reprimanded and censured member Jon Arguello in February 2022 over his conduct toward a district vendor, also asking the governor’s office to investigate Arguello’s activities.

Robinson said it’s important to keep the discussion moving, particularly as the 2024 election season approaches. He noted that DeSantis, in concert with Moms for Liberty, has targeted Pinellas board members Laura Hine and Eileen Long for removal.

“I look at this grievance in the bigger picture,” he said.

In the meantime, Robinson stressed that he has nothing to hide, and he remained ready to talk with the board members about what he does. Peters recently had scheduled a classroom visit, but canceled.

“My classroom is always open,” Robinson said.

•••

Pinellas teachers challenge 2 school board members tied to..., 2023 WLNR 21320178

Sign up for the Gradebook newsletter!

Every Thursday, get the latest updates on what's happening in Tampa Bay area schools from Times education reporter Jeffrey S. Solochech. Click here to sign up.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: OSCEOLA COUNTY INDUSTRIAL

News Subject: (Arbitration & Mediation (1AR68); Business Management (1BU42); Education (1ED85); HR & Labor Management (1HR87); Labor Relations (1LA21); Labor Unions (1LA31))

Industry: (Accounting, Consulting & Legal Services (1AC73); Legal Services (1LE31))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty Pinellas; Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association; Department of Education; Osceola County)

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NewsRoom

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6/19/23 Ark. Times (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21371450

Arkansas Times
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June 19, 2023

Saline County book ban watch

For AR People

Jun 19, 2023

A few months ago, we reported that Saline County looked like it would become the next battleground in the ongoing war over book bans. Unsurprisingly, things are not going well.

First, a quick refresher. Sen. Dan Sullivan sponsored SB81, a bill that created a criminal offense for librarians who provided “obscene” material to minors. Obscenity is ill-defined, naturally, and the law completely bypasses parents’ right to make decisions on what kind of content they think appropriate for their own kids. Like we said in our previous story, “parental empowerment for me, but not for thee.”

Where we started

Governor Sanders signed the bill into law, which will go into effect this August. Saline County, though, decided they’d get a jump on things.

Where we are

The Saline County quorum court, the county’s governing body, passed a non-binding resolution at their April 17 meeting recommending that the library begin the process of moving materials that contain “sexual content or imagery” — not defined, of course, so the intent is clearly to catch pro-LGBTQ+ books in the ban — into a restricted space within the library.

Library Director Patty Hector stood up for the First Amendment, for kids, and for parents. She declined to follow the court’s resolution for two reasons: first, because the library was already in compliance with current state law; and second, because the resolution actually goes further than Book Ban Dan’s law. It allows any person to object to material, bypassing the law’s provision for a review process.

The Saline County Republican Women lost their minds at someone standing up for actual parents’ rights. They added a billboard on I-30 stating “Director Hector Must Go” with a link to a website purporting to show all the horrible material available to minors in the library.

We should note that while there isn’t any evidence explicitly linking the Republican Women to the extremist group Moms For Liberty, the Republican Women are certainly happy to use the same tactics.

In another quorum court meeting on May 23, members delayed voting on an ordinance dealing with Director Hector and book relocation, but only after extensive and spirited public comment. That vote will happen today, on Juneteenth, because of course it will.

Where we’re going

The good Arkansans of Saline County decided they wouldn’t go down without a fight. A group called the Saline County

Saline County book ban watch, 2023 WLNR 21371450

Library Alliance crowdfunded enough money to rent not just one, but two billboards supporting Director Hector and the libraries.

The group has also held meetings with County Judge Matt Brumley, which went about as well as we'd expect. Judge Brumley has stated he's lost confidence in Director Hector and is using the vote today to give himself the power to fire her. He's ignoring calls to hold public debate, instead trying to ram through this ordinance as soon as possible and refusing to let cooler heads prevail.

This fight is just beginning for Saline County. The ordinance will unfortunately probably pass, but legal challenges will undoubtedly swiftly follow. We'll provide updates when we can.

Book bans are unconstitutional, as a number of other libraries argued in federal court. They're also anti-education, anti-democracy, anti-child, and anti-parent. They don't protect kids, and they take away rights of both parents and children. They are un-American and beneath the dignity of Arkansans.

The Saline County Library Alliance will protest outside the Saline County courthouse today starting at 5PM.

The post Saline County book ban watch appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Government (1GO80); Health & Family (1HE30); Legislation (1LE97); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms For Liberty; Saline County Library Alliance)

Keywords: (Arkansas Blog); (book banning); (censorship); (For AR People); (patty hector); (Saline County); (Saline County Quorum Court)

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Saline County book ban watch, 2023 WLNR 21371450

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6/19/23 Sentinel (Carlisle, Pa.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 21311944

Sentinel, The (Carlisle, PA)
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June 19, 2023

Section: Editorial

Community Voices: Searching for truth in America

Staff Writer

During the recent debt ceiling crisis, friends from Cumberland Valley Rising and the 10th District Network worked hard to call attention to Scott Perry and his Freedom Caucus as the orchestrators of this manufactured crisis, and the chaos they created to the detriment of our democracy. Other friends from Carlisle wondered why the push in debt crisis negotiations was to spend less money on programs like SNAP (Supplementary Nutrition) and TANF (Temporary Assistance) that benefit our poorest families, instead of the much larger, government-backed benefits for wealthy families.

So, I did some research and found some discouraging long-term trends, along with a dark history in our country, which I'm sure the Moms for Liberty will ban from classrooms along with current books by Matt Desmond, Kurt Anderson and Cynthia Kaufman. They clearly outline that, as a nation, we have a long history of blaming those who are poor for their poverty, and thus not entitled to government assistance, while government benefits generously support those who are affluent.

For example, in 2020 the mortgage interest deduction for low-income families totaled \$4 billion. For high-income families, it totaled \$15.5 billion. In addition, there are employer-sponsored health insurance and college savings deductions, which are government-sponsored benefits (mostly benefiting affluent families). And this accounts for twice as much in tax breaks than we spend on military and national defense.

Congressional Budget Office data show that the US spent \$1.8 trillion on tax breaks in 2021. One half of those benefits go to the richest families. The top 1% take home more than all middle-class families and double that of the bottom 20% of families. Meanwhile, the 400 richest Americans pay the lowest tax rate of all and double their profits, and they receive 40% more in government benefits than the poorest Americans.

So, you may ask, if politicians honestly want to reduce government spending, why don't they cut the budget where they would get the most money? Good question.

Research suggests part of the answer: propaganda against those who are living in poverty, and rationalizations of those who are affluent are widespread, persistent and false. You may have heard some of them:

The poor have not tried hard enough to get a good job.

They are lazy and have a poor work ethic.

They want to be on the "dole."

This last assumption made me curious about what the "dole" actually looks like. I found that here are two government

Community Voices: Searching for truth in America, 2023 WLNR 21311944

benefits for those with very low incomes - SNAP and TANF. For a mother with two children, the nutrition allowance is \$300 a month (\$10 a day). The TANF allowance is \$210 a month (\$7 a day). That is the “dole” for this very low-income family of three: \$17 a day.

The lucky few who can get housing vouchers will not have to struggle to pay a minimum of \$12,000 a year with their TANF benefit of \$2,460. But they still have to worry about clothes, shoes, baby/child supplies, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene, transportation, toilet paper, school supplies and everything else it takes for a family to survive.

Even if a single mom can get a job that pays more than Pennsylvania’s pitiful \$7.25 an hour wages, she has to find child care, which is too often unavailable or unaffordable. And she needs transportation - an average expense of another \$7,000 a year. Paradoxically, if she gets a cheap car, she is no longer eligible for TANF.

If we look at the benefits of the legislators who are making the policy decisions that continue to benefit those who are their donors and friends, to the detriment of those who are most in need, we will find generous per diems, six figure salaries with excellent health care and pension benefits, and guaranteed yearly cost of living increases.

And they are the legislators who routinely demand budget cuts to those receiving a total of \$6,000 per year for food, housing, clothing, health care and other necessities.

Many of us believe that it is past time for we the people to demand some semblance of honesty, fairness and decency from our legislators. Orchestrated fake crises, absurd book banning, power plays over women’s bodies and teachers’ minds, blatant lies about election results, and refusals to care for our own families have no place in our democracy.

We are too good a community and a society to allow ourselves to be lied to. And we are too bright and capable as people to create anything less than a fair, just and caring democracy. Call, write and visit your legislators and tell them what you believe is truthful, fair and just. And remind them that they were hired to represent you - not their wealthy donors.

Jill Sunday Bartoli has taught at high school and college levels for over 30 years. Her research and writing focuses on equal opportunity to learn in public schools.

---- Index References ----

Company: Congressional Budget Office

News Subject: (Economic Policy & Policymakers (1EC69); Economics & Trade (1EC26); Government (1GO80); Health, Education & Welfare (1HE31); Public Finance (1PU60); Taxation (1TA10))

Industry: (Accounting, Consulting & Legal Services (1AC73); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Regulatory (1HE04); U.S. National Healthcare Reform (1US09))

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Community Voices: Searching for truth in America, 2023 WLNR 21311944

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6/18/23 Ark. Democrat Gazette (Little Rock, Ark.) 153
2023 WLNR 21219542

Arkansas Democrat Gazette (Little Rock, AR)
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June 18, 2023

Section: Editorial

What's extreme anymore?

John Brummett

It's hard anymore to tell the difference between a dangerous anti-government extremist group-so labeled by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)-and a powerful element of what's become mainstream Republicanism.

That came clearer than ever last week with tweets showing up on my feed from Arkansas public educators. They were aghast that state education commissioner Jacob Oliva is scheduled to speak at the end of the month to the national convention of Moms for Liberty in Philadelphia.

Days before, that group had been identified by the SPLC as an anti-government extremist group, a list more commonly reserved for white nationalists, white supremacists and white separatists.

Someone asked: Why wasn't there more outrage over Oliva's scheduled speaking engagement with dangerous extremists?

It's because extremism isn't what it used to be, both from the decline in sane Republicanism and the expanded definition of extremist causes. Neo-Nazis and the Klan were more universally condemned than people fretting about the private parts of public bathroom users and that their children might get educated on something they'd rather their children remain uneducated on.

The two leading Republican presidential candidates-one under arrest and the other not-also are scheduled to speak at the convention.

One of those, Donald Trump, once said there were good people in the right-wing hate groups engaged in violence in Charlottesville, Va.

The other, Ron DeSantis, is aligned closely with Moms for Liberty, which was hatched in his state of Florida by right-wing moms deploring closed schools and mask mandates during the pandemic.

DeSantis employed Oliva as a top state education official in Florida. Then the governor of Arkansas, Sarah Huckabee DeSanders Trump, brought in Oliva to help her undercut Arkansas public education by decrying liberal indoctrination-largely meaning the mention in public schools of a racist American past and the present existence of rights for gay and transgender persons-while paying with our tax money for home schools, church schools and private schools.

The Southern Poverty Law Center mentioned in the new condemnation of Moms for Liberty that photographs demonstrated that the group had at one time associated with the Proud Boys, a militant and violent ultra-right organization.

What's extreme anymore?, 2023 WLNR 21219542

And to that, one might ask: So what?

There exists a widely disseminated photograph of the beaming current governor of Arkansas standing beside a leader of the Proud Boys who happens to have since been convicted on federal charges in the Jan. 6 treasonous episode at the U.S. Capitol.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Chris Jones tried to make hay of the photo last year, but two-thirds of Arkansas voters didn't care.

I'm not sure whether what I'm about to say trivializes the Southern Poverty Law Center's modern list or indicts the Arkansas General Assembly. But the truth is that, as I read the SPLC's condemnation of Moms for Liberty, it occurs that it's almost as if the group was putting the Arkansas Legislature on the list.

Our state Legislature denies rights on the basis of gender identity. It decries the teaching of a racist American past. It bans books in libraries. It provides for criminalization of library services.

Leaders in Moms for Liberty express disgust and amazement in their group's new designation. They contend, not entirely incorrectly, that they are an advocacy group pushing for parental rights against public-school teachings and material they disapprove of.

The use of individual tactics by members seems to be the pivotal issue with SPLC. One member got in trouble for talking about shooting a teacher. Others have uttered threats at school board meetings.

A teacher reported threats against her in a demonstration outside her home. Moms for Liberty said it had nothing to do with that. The teacher said she recognized among demonstrators in her yard the faces of persons identified as members of the group at school board meetings.

What I am certain of is that these culture-war furors are way overcooked.

For example: A lone Moms for Liberty member in Florida complained about materials in the public school library containing the Joe Biden-inaugural poem titled "The Hill We Climb," written and read by a young woman named Amanda Gorman.

It's a beautiful poem about the spirit, strength and will of America to overcome its problems. It extols our nation for both "a pride we inherit" and "a past ... and how we repair it."

The complaining mother said "don't care" when told of critical acclaim for the poem. She also misidentified the poet as Oprah Winfrey.

This Florida woman took exception to the idea of needing to repair our national past. School officials in Dade County responded by moving the poem to the middle-school level of the library, as if elementary kids would read such a lengthy, lyrical work or somehow come, by that reading, to hate their country, the one thoroughly celebrated in the work.

I'd say the answer is for everyone to chill, but you can't just order up that kind of thing.

-----v-----

John Brummett, whose column appears regularly in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, is a member of the Arkansas Writers' Hall of Fame. Email him at jbrummett@arkansasonline.com. Read his [@johnbrummett](#) Twitter feed.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

What's extreme anymore?, 2023 WLNR 21219542

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Proud Boys; Arkansas General Assembly; Arkansas Legislature; Southern Poverty Law Center)

Word Count: 865

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NewsRoom

The Rant, 2023 WLNR 21084416

NewsRoom

6/18/23 Chattanooga Times (Tenn.) F3
2023 WLNR 21084416

Chattanooga Times (Free Press, TN)
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June 18, 2023

Section: Perspective

The Rant
got something on your mind? Tell us about it in 25 words or fewer.

To Westside developers: When Helen Burns Sharp asks you questions, you need to answer them.

The city and county should rebel against Choo Choo renaming. The Choo Choo is our identity.

Murderer out on bond murders. Fourth-time DUI offender kills. Something is not right.

Retain the name. Chattanooga Choo Choo to honor our heritage, legacy and memory. Restore it to its former glory.

Please stop enriching developers with future tax dollars. How is this legal?

New TFP Food writer Andre James deserves a raise!

City defunds PoPs in the Park - essentially canceling it - and favors/ supports Juneteenth. Come on! The Fourth is for everybody.

Thank you for 37 years of informative and entertaining articles, Barry Courter! We will certainly miss you.

Andre James, thanks for rocking local restaurant world with published TFP reviews. Thanks for exposing exaggeration and turning us on to the best locals.

Thanks TFP for the waterlogged newspaper last Sunday. I always look forward to drying out newsprint that could have been avoided if double wrapped.

TFP, if in fact any agency is monitoring water quality of Chickamauga and Nickajack, please publish the numbers and sample locations.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to watch the news without hearing from these annoying lawyers phishing for a lawsuit?

TFP, your coverage of the Negro Leagues tribute by the Lookouts was fantastic. Please nominate it for awards.

Well, The Lord still loves Calvary Chapel and Ms. Pappu, even though they are not interested in preserving our planet. Sad.

A rant from Belvoir neighborhood: USPS - I'm constantly getting other people's mail in my mailbox; now my mail is already slit open when delivered!

The Rant, 2023 WLNR 21084416

sorry, noT sorry that Moms For Liberty, also local, has been labeled a hate group for its association with Proud Boys. Leave us alone.

cnn is a liTTle biT Licht(er) today

unbelievable headline: Twice-arrested former president who sought to overthrow U.S. government sees boost in fundraising, poll numbers. What has happened to our country?

illogical: Our communities suggest we “buy local.” Our federal government gives our tax monies to foreign governments and noncitizens.

The head oF the Washington State Equity Department was just fired. The reason: racism. You couldn’t make this up.

iT’s noT sTudenT loan forgiveness. The debt doesn’t vanish into thin air. It’s transferred to you and me. I paid my loans. No, on yours.

JusT Think oF all the good Donald Trump could have done if he had run to serve the people and not just himself.

When are The “grownups” in both parties going to stand up for leaders who aren’t Biden or Trump?

all The Money spent on political campaigns isn’t doing any good as the people we elect don’t do any good.

be Wary oF accepting half-truths; you may be accepting the wrong half.

I’M Willing to seriously consider a third party presidential candidate. What do we have to lose?

all donald TruMP had to do was return the boxes. Shipping would have been free, and he would not have been indicted. It’s that simple.

excuse Me, but converting a hotel to room rentals, 246 square feet for \$1,000 a month, is not affordable housing.

TFP PhoTograPher Robin Rudd is a true gem. This community is lucky to have him taking beautiful photos. His work is outstanding.

iF TruMP WanTed to keep something, why not Air Force One? (which he had about as much right to).

because We have a legal system, when you come here outside of that system, you are illegal. And alien. Whether you like it or not.

i WanT a leader who speaks well, answers questions, walks well, works full time on the job, is serious about the issues, tells the truth.

iF TruMP is a billionaire, then why does he ask for our money as soon as he is indicted? Sad.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Inc.; United States of America

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Celebrities (1CE65); Consumer Products & Services (1CO62); Entertainment (1EN08); Luxury Items (1LU28))

The Rant, 2023 WLNR 21084416

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms For Liberty; Proud Boys; Washington State Equity Department; Negro Leagues; U.S. government)

Word Count: 639

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NewsRoom

Palm Bay needs full council, 2023 WLNR 21082757

NewsRoom

6/18/23 Fla. Today (Melbourne, Fla.) A29
2023 WLNR 21082757

Florida Today (Melbourne, FL)
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June 18, 2023

Section: Opinion

Palm Bay needs full council

June 18, 2023

The past year has presented our Palm Bay City Council with unprecedented challenges, notably the unexpected resignations of Councilmen Jeff Bailey and Peter Filiberto. These events have left a void in our leadership, one that has yet to be filled. The decision to leave Filiberto's seat vacant until the next regular election prioritizes political convenience over the democratic representation of our community, a disservice to the citizens of Palm Bay.

As the council reconvenes after their June break, I urge them to reflect on the past year's events. This break has provided an opportunity for introspection and a chance to return with a renewed commitment to serve all the citizens of Palm Bay, not their own respective political parties.

Our city deserves a fully staffed council, committed to addressing our issues. We need leaders who set aside political differences for our community's betterment. We need a council that is responsive, transparent, and accountable to the people it serves.

I implore the Palm Bay City Council, and our mayor, to remember the principles of community, service, and shared responsibility. Let's not allow party politics to overshadow our citizens' needs. Instead, let's work together, united in our commitment to building a brighter future for Palm Bay.

Thomas Gaume, Palm Bay

Titusville citizens, speak up

I read with great interest John A. Torres' opinion column titled "Titusville battles what the voters want" in the June 15 edition of FLORIDA TODAY.

I went to the hearing in Titusville in May where the Titusville city attorney argued why the city should not be required to certify the amendment to the city charter passed by 82.8% of voters, giving them the right to clean water. The attorney insinuated voters were misled and didn't know or understand what they were voting on. And to add insult to injury, also asked exactly what constitutes pollution.

I would say voters understood exactly what they were voting on – and during the last hurricane season when the city allowed 7.2 million gallons of sewage to be released into the Indian River Lagoon, I believe that qualifies as pollution. Judge Charles Holcomb ruled in favor of the voters.

I also went to the special city council meeting on May 31 to determine what would be the council's next course of action. Nothing was discussed in front of citizens. Now we hear the city has filed a motion seeking a re-hearing on the issue.

Palm Bay needs full council, 2023 WLNR 21082757

The city is using taxpayer money to fight against its own constituents and to sue the citizens' group Speak Up Titusville, author of the amendment.

I would encourage Titusville citizens to contact their mayor and city council members and tell them to respect their voters and spend the money they are wasting on legal fees to fix their aging infrastructure.

Darlene Hillers, Merritt Island

These Moms not about liberty

No matter how you feel about the Southern Poverty Law Center, a widely respected nonprofit group that has recently designated Moms for Liberty an "anti-government extremist group," facts are facts.

Moms For Liberty, a Brevard-born group that claims to be a champion for "parents' rights" and "children's safety," is actually only a champion of the rights of straight, white, Christian parents. They are actively working to strip away the rights of parents of LGBTQ+, Black, brown, and other marginalized communities. This questionable "nonprofit" group has partnered with far-right extremist individuals and groups in our county and state. They have taken control of our school board, and are rapidly moving toward defunding and destroying our public schools, and creating schools that teach one point of view only – the straight, white Christian point of view. Think about that.

Fortunately there are multiple opposition groups who are equally passionate. They include STOP Moms For Liberty, another Brevard-based group, founded by Liz Mikitarian in spring 2022. Unlike MFL, it has organically grown and spread rapidly with 10,000-plus members and 35 state sub-groups. Liz and SMFL have done incredible work exposing MFL and actively working to protest not only against them, but against companies that continue to support them despite their blatant support for anti-LGBTQ+ policies, book banning, censorship in our schools and far-right extremist ideology.

Do not be fooled into believing Moms for Liberty is fighting for the rights of all parents. They most certainly are not.

Kathy DeMoranville, Merritt Island

Hawthorne moment for DeSantis

The June 11 FLORIDA TODAY article titled "Will Trump indictment hurt favor in GOP?" contains a quote from Gov. DeSantis about the indictment of Trump in the classified documents case. DeSantis said, "The weaponization of federal law enforcement represents a mortal threat to a free society."

Compare this with DeSantis pushing for and signing the law that modified the the law that provided Disney a special district that facilitated the development of their Florida theme parks to one in which governor appointees controlled the district. Both DeSantis and Rep. Randy Fine, who helped pass the law, openly stated that it was passed to punish Disney for opposing the so-called "Don't say gay" law that they supported.

Even if the Trump indictment were intended as retaliation against him it would be no worse than than what DeSantis did to Disney.

The hypocritical quote and anti-Disney law earn DeSantis a scarlet H.

James Beasom, Melbourne Village

Trump broke the law

If, during my 20-year USAF career, I had decided to bundle up some to secret/SCI documents from work and take them home to keep as souvenirs, then lied when asked about the location of the documents, then shown them to various folks while bragging how "secret" they were ... I would still be in prison at Leavenworth in Kansas.

You cannot declassify by thought. These indictments are not a political thing. Trump is being charged because he broke the law, as he has many times in the past. This time, not only was he caught, but he couldn't lawyerly weasel his way out of taking responsibility for it.

DeSantis, Pence and any other Republican candidates who also weasel as to this being a political action are full of male

Palm Bay needs full council, 2023 WLNR 21082757

bovine excrement.

They are attempting to pander to Trump's increasingly diminishing power base to garner the MAGA vote that he will not have while in prison.

If you, as a candidate, want my respect and vote, start challenging this childish idiot. Understand that he doesn't stand a chance in hell of being elected at this point. All this campaign is doing for Trump is making him money to play with – as he immediately went online after the indictment went public and asked for more money. If he's so stinking rich why doesn't he pay for his own campaign? Maybe because he lied and he really doesn't have all those many billions ... poor, sad, man.

Gordon Hemphill, Satellite Beach

His own biggest foe

Donald Trump is indicted again. This time for 37 crimes related to stolen government documents, many of which he has already confessed to in interviews or on Truth Social. A recent USA Today national edition had a front-page article titled "Who's the best candidate to take down Trump in '24?" It turns out, it is Donald himself.

Immediately, House Republicans came rushing to his defense, even before the indictment was unsealed, blaming President Joe Biden for "weaponizing the DOJ" against Trump. Then the 49-page indictment was unsealed the next day. And the extent of his crimes became public knowledge.

It wasn't Joe Biden who indicted Trump. It was a Miami special grand jury that recommended indictment, and Jack Smith is the special prosecutor. DOJ doing its job. Just as with Edward Snowden and Reality Winner, both of whom also stole and shared confidential documents.

Over nine months, Trump was begged to do the right thing by the FBI and National Archives. He resisted and lied and fought until the FBI got a warrant and came and took them.

Since Donald Trump was elected, Republican leadership has connived to take down the IRS, the FBI, and DOJ. Now, it appears, "the rule of law" is the target.

Our founding fathers would be turning over in their graves over this craven partisan fealty to a wanton criminal grifter who has total contempt for democracy, the Constitution, and the rule of law. And over these Republican enablers' abdication of their sworn congressional responsibility and constitutional principles.

Jeff Dorman, Satellite Beach

Wokeism was defined long ago

A recent letter writer quoted a prominent Christian evangelist, D. James Kennedy, stating that "Tolerance is the last virtue of a depraved society."

What he neglected to say is that a 2019 Supreme Court decision essentially labeled Kennedy's organization a hate group, which speaks volumes. The definition of "woke" by all mainstream dictionaries is "aware and belief in the tenet that there are systemic injustices in a society and the need to address them," or some slight variation thereof.

Good Christians should know, and embrace this, because the originator of the foundations of wokeness walked and preached in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. To Gov. DeSantis, the definition of wokeism has been perverted to "a fundamental attribute of wokeness is the subordination of facts and evidence to anecdote and ideology."

Of course, this is drivel made up on the spot to propitiate his audience. Politicians and others on both sides will continue to spin their own particular versions of "wokeness" ad infinitum, but the true basic concepts are self-evident and should be embraced by all.

Ed Dean, Merritt Island

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Palm Bay needs full council, 2023 WLNR 21082757

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Internal Revenue Service; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Local Government (1LO75); Public Affairs (1PU31); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Palm Bay City Council; STOP Moms For Liberty; House Republicans; National Archives; Supreme Court; FBI; IRS; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

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June 18, 2023

Section: News

Is Livingston County following the roadmap Ottawa Impact created?

Sarah Leach, The Holland Sentinel

The upturned political scene in Ottawa County could be catching, experts have said - and it's possible Livingston County is the second stop on a roadmap far-right fundamentalist group Ottawa Impact started drawing in 2021.

"What (they've) done and are doing here is a blueprint for counties across America," Rev. Matt Trehwella recently told the Ottawa County GOP.

The pastor - from Brookfield, Wisconsin - created an anti-abortion militia in the 1990s and called the murder of abortion providers "justifiable homicide." He's compared coronavirus pandemic-related mask mandates to the Holocaust.

More recently, he's been active in promoting the idea of resistance to civil authorities based on the ideas of John Calvin and the Magdeburg Confession of 1550, which called on Protestant pastors to resist political tyranny.

That idea might be gaining traction in other conservative strongholds across the state - and both supporters and opponents are organizing.

'Constitutional'

As early as 2020, majority conservative counties in Michigan began adopting resolutions declaring themselves "constitutional counties," in which local sheriffs are viewed as the highest authority and aren't beholden to state or federal law enforcement.

More than 50 of the state's 83 counties, including Livingston and Ottawa, have adopted resolutions to declare themselves second amendment "sanctuary" counties or to reaffirm their support for constitutional rights.

The movement was born from unsubstantiated claims promoted by former president Donald Trump that the 2020 election results weren't legitimate. Now, in 2023, counties like Ottawa and Livingston are passing resolutions in reaction to recently passed gun safety laws created by a Democrat-controlled Michigan Legislature.

More: Ottawa County becomes 'constitutional county' after 6 hours of divided public input

More: Livingston declared 'constitutional county' in Second Amendment reaffirmation

Although such resolutions are symbolic and have no legal basis, they establish county officials' mindsets when it comes to enforcing and funding measures passed by a higher legislative body.

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”(They) do not have the ability to declare a law of the state of Michigan to be unconstitutional,” Michael McDaniel, a Western Michigan University-Thomas M. Cooley Law School Professor told WOOD TV-8.

McDaniel said the bottom line is the U.S. has a constitution, the state has a constitution and the county board has a charter. Each is meant to guarantee the others stay in their own lanes.

Extremist Groups

The Southern Poverty Law Center released a report this month labeling several “parents’ rights” groups as extremist, including one with ties to the Livingston County GOP and another that almost saw a formal alliance with a school district in Ottawa County.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as “anti-government extremist groups” based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA TODAY.

Jennifer Smith, who heads the Livingston County Chapter of Moms for Liberty, was elected chair of the Livingston County GOP in December to serve through 2023.

More: Moms for Liberty, with foothold in Livingston County, named ‘extremist group’

More: ‘Parents’ rights’ groups with ties to Ottawa Impact labeled extremist in new report

Meanwhile, Allendale Public Schools nearly severed its affiliation with the Michigan Association of School Boards in favor of joining the National School Boards Leadership Council, sponsored by the parents’ rights group Moms for America, which also made the SPLC’s “extremist” list.

The Allendale Board of Education took some board members and parents by surprise when its new Ottawa Impact-linked majority fired its longtime law firm in January in favor of a group personally tied to Ottawa Impact’s founder, Joe Moss.

Ottawa Impact is itself considered an extremist group by many Ottawa County residents, although some feel the organization is reflecting values long lost.

Moss, now the chair of the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners, and self-described “parents’ rights advocate” Sylvia Rhodea, now the vice chair, created the group after clashes with the county and its COVID-19 mitigation mandates in 2020 and 2021.

More: Allendale Schools walks back plan to join National School Board Leadership Council

OI-backed school board member Liz Ramey, who put forward the vote to exit MASB in favor of the NSBLC on Jan. 9, later apologized to the community on Feb. 15 for rushing the move.

”I understand there’s definitely some things that were pretty rushed and not necessarily intended to be rushed,” she said. “It was intended to be part of the organizational meeting. I also do appreciate the vote of the board to postpone things, because there were certainly things that came to light that were not known prior to.”

Those things included dozens of parents making public comments at the board’s meetings and work sessions about NSBLC’s stance that special education students are a drain on public education resources and should be separated from the general student population.

The board ultimately decided to continue with the MASB.

Public Communications

Is Livingston County following the roadmap Ottawa Impact..., 2023 WLNR 21131036

The most recent comparison between Livingston County and Ottawa County lies in the way commissioners seek to control public communications.

Livingston County Commissioner Wes Nakagiri, who is often outspoken on conservative issues and was once a leader of the Livingston County Tea Party, has previously made comments in support of Ottawa Impact.

This week, he championed a resolution passed by the county board declaring county-appointed entities cannot promote private events or activities outside the scope of their mission. The resolution draft came directly after the promotion of local Pride Month events in a county-sponsored newsletter.

Meanwhile, in Ottawa County, the OI-led board recently approved additional spending to create a centralized communications director position and has issued guidance to county department leaders that media inquiries and press releases must be approved by the administrator's office prior to being distributed.

A handful of residents spoke during public comment to share concerns about the new position, saying it's a move to control information and stifle communications after several critiques from OI-affiliated commissioners toward the Ottawa County Department of Public Health.

LGBTQ Community

Conservatives in both counties have focused heavily on their LGBTQ constituents.

This week in Livingston County's Hartland Consolidated Schools District, the board narrowly passed a policy change restricting what signs, posters and flags can be displayed in the district's buildings - effectively banning Pride displays.

The move drew backlash from parents claiming the conservative faction of the school board is attempting to "micromanage our LGBTQ youth completely out of sight in our schools."

In Ottawa County, similar themes are appearing, after Ottawa Impact commissioners repeatedly questioned if it was appropriate to ask county teens about their sexual health habits and orientation.

Moss also refused to approve long-promised grant funds to the Ottawa County LGBTQ nonprofit Out on the Lakeshore, as well as a nonprofit focused on a Black doula program for pregnant women.

On May 19, Moss "signed" the forms "vi coactus," Latin for "compelled by force" or "having been compelled," rather than his legal name (three days later, he re-signed them with his actual signature).

Opposition

As the parallels in conservative groups between the two counties emerge, two opposition groups have partnered to combat what they call Republican "extremism."

In April, Ottawa Integrity PAC announced a partnership with recently formed Livingston Integrity PAC. The groups have signed a memorandum of understanding, according to a joint news release, aligning their missions and agreeing to operate "under the same principles of integrity."

Ottawa Integrity became a rallying point for community members amid a wave of backlash following the actions of Ottawa Impact.

That inspired Livingston County's Julie Ohashi and Cori Charbonneau, who founded the grassroots group Hartland Truth, to join forces.

"We connected with Ottawa Integrity because they have been facing the same issues," Ohashi wrote in the joint statement with Ottawa Integrity. "We wanted to utilize their expertise in being received by moderate voters, who share a concern about

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where our local politics are headed.

"We need to reach out to those not necessarily aligned on all the political issues, but who want to see consensus in government in a way that works for the people, not for political ideology and culture wars."

- Sarah Leach is executive editor of The Holland Sentinel and The Livingston Daily. Contact her at sarah.leach@hollandsentinel.com. Follow her on Twitter@SentinelLeach.

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Company: Michigan Legislature; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; THOMAS M. COOLEY LAW SCHOOL; WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); Local Taxing Authorities (1LO66); Taxation (1TA10))

Industry: (Accounting, Consulting & Legal Services (1AC73); Contraception (1CO66); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Political Science (1PO69); Press Releases (1PR19); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92); Women's Health (1WO30))

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Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Ottawa Impact; Ottawa County GOP; Livingston County GOP; Moms for Liberty; SPLC Intelligence; Allendale Public Schools; Michigan Association of School Boards; National School Boards Leadership Council; Moms for America; Allendale Board of Education; Ottawa County Board of Commissioners; Allendale Schools; National School Board Leadership Council; Ottawa County Department of Public Health; LGBTQ Community Conservatives; Moss; Ottawa Integrity PAC; Livingston Integrity PAC; Hartland Truth; Michigan Legislature; Southern Poverty Law Center; Thomas M. Cooley Law School; Western Michigan University)

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June 18, 2023

Section: Letters

Republican culture wars

Bill Gerling

Dear Editor,

Culture wars are waged by Republicans who don't trust teachers, parents and health care professionals. It began with Critical Race Theory accusations that schools were indoctrinating students about systemic racism. Very few schools nationwide were teaching Critical Race Theory.

Laws were passed vaguely outlawing anything that would make students "feel guilty" about race in their coursework.

In the last two years, 15 states have passed laws restricting the discussion of race, racism, gender in our K-12 education with seven states applying it to higher education as well. Republicans have promised to restore their version of honest, patriotic education which in itself an indoctrination when only positive events and policies are included. Debatable political and social issues should be presented as such and not ignored. Students should be exposed to arguments they agree with as well as those they oppose. My own belief is that in some places and some institutions there still is racism, sexism and homophobia. Politicians exploit these issues to appeal to their base. In most cases, it will have the opposite effect of creating a backlash and generating support for people in marginalized communities.

Republicans have also tried to root out diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices in public education, universities and government offices. Public schools have always been diverse because they accept students irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status or immigration status. Obviously schools have to adopt strategies for English-Language-Learners and students who are autistic, dyslexic, transgender, and students with a whole range of mental and physical disabilities.

Students have to be provided with instructors and tools to make the learning more equitable for all. Students have to feel the learning environment is inclusive of their needs in order to achieve.

Parents have a right to be involved in their children's education. Many school districts have student portals in which they can check on their student's progress and assignments. They can participate in parent-teacher and school board meetings.

However, some states have passed laws enabling any parent to censor books they find objectionable. Over 2,500 book titles were targeted for censorship last year. The vast majority were about people of color or the LGBTQ community. Many of these bans were at the insistence of political action groups such as MOMs for Liberty. Schools are easy targets for politicians who try to sow fear and dissension among parents.

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News Subject: (Disabled Issues (1DI27); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Learning Disabilities (1LE39); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Special Education (1SP32))

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News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)
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June 18, 2023

Wake superintendent broke barriers and led through pandemic. Why she's now retiring.

By T. Keung Hui, News & Observer

Catty Moore has helped shape the future of thousands of Wake County students for more than a generation, first as a teacher and school administrator and now as district superintendent.

But 35 years of service in Wake County will come to an end this month when Moore, 59, retires from her job of leading North Carolina's largest school district. Moore said she's taken an "all hands, all feet in" approach over the years that helped guide Wake through challenges such as an unprecedented pandemic.

"Having been in the community for as long as I have, I do know bus drivers," Moore said in an interview last week with The News & Observer. "I know their kids. I know cafeteria workers. I know people at all levels of the organization, and I think that's fabulous and a gift."

Moore's supporters say her five years as superintendent showed her grace under pressure as she kept her attention focused on serving Wake's 160,000 students.

"I've been nothing but impressed by her, especially by the way she led us all through the pandemic," Teresa Jones, president of the Wake County PTA Council, said in an interview. "I am grateful for her sticking around for as long as she did after that. She did a great job under very difficult circumstances."

But Moore's critics say it's time for a change in leadership. Wake is in the midst of recovering from pandemic learning losses while also dealing with national culture war issues such as what books to allow in schools.

"While we wish Moore well on her retirement, we are looking forward to a new Superintendent," Julie Page, chair, and Becky Lew-Hobbs, vice chair, of the Wake County chapter of Moms for Liberty, said in a joint statement. "Moore leaves us with a plethora of problems to resolve."

Wake's first female and Latina superintendent

Moore, whose maiden name is Quiroz, was 2 years old when her family moved from Ecuador to the United States. She went for decades by the first name of Cathy before changing last year to go by her legal first name of Catty.

RAL_WAKESUPT-NE-061323-RTW_Wake County Public Schools Superintendent Catty Moore chats with the Leesville Road High School staff and students as she lines up to enter their commencement on Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at the Raleigh Convention Center in Raleigh, N.C.

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Moore went on to become the first member of her family to graduate from college. After initially planning to be an engineer, she opted for teaching and relocated to Wake in 1988 to teach French at Enloe High School in Raleigh.

She rose through the ranks in Wake and was put in charge of overseeing academics as deputy superintendent in 2011. In 2018, Moore became Wake County's first female and first Latina superintendent.

"She broke the glass ceiling and created a path for people like me and students that you can do anything," Rocío Anderson, president of the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals, said in an interview.

Anderson and Zamantha Granados, partnerships manager for the non-profit group LatinxEd, said Moore put the district's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion into practice with expanded services to help students of color.

This includes more interpreters to provide translation services and additional support for the district's Center for International Enrollment and Family Academy program..

"We were blessed to have her," Granados said in an interview. "Wake County is a county that is growing exponentially and also seeing an increase in refugees and mixed status families, meaning households that may have people who are undocumented as well as documented living under the same roof."

Superintendent connected to community

Wake County is the 15th largest school system in the nation. But Kristin Beller, the former president of the Wake County chapter of the N.C. Association of Educators, said Moore tried to make it feel as small as possible to the families and school employees.

RAL_WAKESUPER1NE052418CEL.JPGCatty Moore is greeted by students and faculty at Fuller Elementary School in Raleigh on May 24, 2018 after just being named Wake County superintendent.

Beller said she was amazed how Moore took the time to write handwritten notes to teachers and could remember the names and faces of students she hadn't seen in years.

"She held a loyalty to the parents, students and staff in Wake County that's unique for a superintendent," Beller said in an interview. "This was her community for so long."

School board member Monika Johnson-Hostler was board chair when Moore was hired as superintendent. Johnson-Hostler can still recall how during a 2018 visit to Bryan Road Elementary in Garner that a parent introduced herself to Moore as one of her former students.

"She was so floored that her kid was connected to someone she had fond memories of," Johnson-Hostler said in an interview.

Wake's response during COVID pandemic

Moore's leadership was put to the test during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the district shifted to remote learning in March 2020 and then to a hybrid of in-person and online classes. The district didn't resume daily in-person instruction in all schools until April 2021. Face masks remained mandatory in classrooms until March 2022.

RAL_BACKTOSCHOOL1-NE-110620-JEL.JPGWake County superintendent Caty Moore holds a press conference on Nov. 6, 2020, at Wake Forest Middle School discussing how middle schools are reopening during pandemic.

"Contrary to what some folks think, I'm not a physician and I didn't want to act like a physician during the pandemic," Moore said. "So I think it was really important for us to listen to the folks who were providing the guidance, who were giving us the recommendations on the work that we needed to do."

Moore and the school board were relying on advice from groups such as the state Department of Health and Human Services

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and the ABC Science Collaborative formed by Duke University.

"We were also experiencing the pandemic and the trauma of the pandemic while making decisions for 160,000+ kids," Johnson-Hostler said. "I certainly can say with all self assurance that the superintendent never lost sight of that we were making decisions for individuals with as much and sometimes as little information that was available to us."

Moore was also a leader at the state level before, during and after the pandemic, according to Jack Hoke, executive director of the N.C. School Superintendents' Association. Hoke said Moore's contributions on the state's Superintendents' Reopening Task Force were invaluable.

"We know that her leadership will be missed, but her impact on education in North Carolina will continue to be felt for years to come," Hoke said in a statement.

Moore took on all tasks during the pandemic

During the pandemic, Moore and other central office administrators volunteered at schools to help deal with short-staffing. Every Friday, Moore would do whatever was needed at Powell Elementary School in Raleigh, including substitute teaching, supervising recess, cleaning cafeteria tables and answering phone in the front office.

"At heart I am a teacher," Moore said. "It is how I started. It was a pleasure. It was an honor and a privilege to work at Powell Elementary."

Anderson of the Society of Hispanic Professionals watched her two sons graduate from high school during the pandemic.

"As a parent I was reassured at the end of the pandemic that we were going to be OK," Anderson said. "Now both of my boys are in college. As I look back, she did the right thing and the best she could to get us through the pandemic."

But Wake's decision to require face masks and not return to full-time, in-person classes sooner angered some parents. They were also upset about the rules put in place that limited school visitors during the pandemic.

"During the pandemic, Moore squandered the opportunity to partner with parents," Moms for Liberty said in its statement. "Instead, she implemented policies that kept students out of the classroom, then later limited and sometimes barred parents from being present at all."

How are Wake schools doing academically?

Test scores aren't out yet for this school year. But, as of last school year, Wake's passing rates on state exams were improving but still lower than they were before the pandemic.

In addition to the overall district drop in proficiency, Moms for Liberty points to statistics such as how passing rates on state reading exams for Black and Hispanic elementary students in Wake are both below 40%.

"Not coincidentally, since the Office of Equity Affairs was founded in 2013 and ramped up in 2020, she has allowed academics to take a back seat to social issues, political agendas and association (NCAE) demands," Moms for Liberty said.

But Moore calls it a "false narrative" to say that Wake isn't doing well academically. She says Wake is in the top 10% of school districts in North Carolina in proficiency. She also points to how Wake has the highest percentage of schools meeting or exceeding growth targets on state exams in 10 years.

"We're not doing a terrible job of educating our students," Moore said. "We're doing a really good job, and there is much work left to be done. Both of those are true."

RAL_WAKESUPT-NE-061323-RTW_(2)Wake County Public Schools Superintendent Catty Moore marches up the ramp to the stage for the Leesville Road High School graduation on Tuesday, Jun 13, 2023 at the Raleigh Convention Center in

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Raleigh, N.C.

Academic performance over the last three years should be looked at with an asterisk due to the pandemic, according to Keith Poston, president of the WakeEd Partnership. But Poston, whose business-backed group supports the district, said the recovery Wake has been making academically is remarkable.

"I would have loved to see what she would have done without the pandemic," Poston said in an interview. "But the fact is Wake County Public Schools is back and is growing and is continuing to deliver a world-class education offering a broader curriculum to a more diverse student body than ever before. I think she has positioned the district to do well moving forward."

What Wake wants in next superintendent

Moore, though, says she doesn't look back and wonder what things could have been like without the pandemic.

"I'm a person of faith and I do believe that I was here during the pandemic as I was supposed to be," Moore said. "I do think as we've come out of this now, we're back to a place of routines that are more established."

VIDEO: Wake Schools superintendent Catty Moore reflects on lessons learned as her retirement nears

Moore says she's retiring now because she feels Wake is in a good place with a new strategic plan and new equity policy in place. She plans to relocate to Charlotte to spend more time with her family, particularly a grandson who is about to start kindergarten.

"I have no professional plans on July 1st," Moore said. "I'm headed to the beach. My family is taking bets on how long I actually do nothing."

"There may be something else in my future. But whatever it is will have to be super flexible and something that I'm really passionate about."

The school board is interviewing, behind closed doors, the applicants who want to replace Moore. Wake received 28 applications.

Former Orange County Superintendent Randy Bridges will serve as interim superintendent until the new superintendent starts.

The next superintendent should be an educator who has high standards of integrity and is willing to listen to others, according to parents and school employees who filled out surveys.

School board chair Lindsay Mahaffey says the next superintendent should be like Moore in having both a high intelligence quotient and a high emotional quotient. Mahaffey said the superintendent needs to understand how the building program, human resources and academics work while also being responsive to the community.

"We can't recreate Catty Moore and what she's given to this county," Mahaffey said.

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Company: NEWS & OBSERVER PUBLISHING CO; Department of Health and Human Services; Latinex Holdings, Inc.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Higher Education (1HI55); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Coronavirus (1CV19); Healthcare (1HE06); Infectious Diseases (1IN99); Viral (1VI15))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA

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Other Indexing: (Wake County Public Schools; Leesville Road High School; Enloe High School; North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals; N.C. Association of Educators; Fuller Elementary School; Duke University; N.C. School Superintendents' Association; Powell Elementary School; Office of Equity Affairs; WakeEd Partnership; Wake Schools; The News & Observer; Department of Health and Human Services; LatinxEducation)

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June 18, 2023

Sunday Commentary: The Rise of New Extremist Groups Is Producing Impacts on the Most Vulnerable

David Greenwald

Jun 18, 2023

By David M. Greenwald Executive Editor

How concerned should we be? When I was out at Central Park a few weeks ago to cover the painting of the rainbow crosswalks and subsequent protests, talking with some of the folks there, they were clearly on edge, noting that what had been a safe space for them – Davis – and a benign activity – rainbow crosswalks – now suddenly turned into a confrontation.

While the protest was relatively benign, some of the actions and pushback were clearly having an effect.

Contained within the inspiring comments of Victor Lagunes a few weeks ago at the school board meeting was also a warning, “Our students, families and staff, our schools have not had the positivity that we would hope, and instead some having been met with intimidation, being othered and feelings of insecurity when we should be feeling quite the opposite. Pride.”

It is not just in Davis, but across the country, we are seeing a resurgence of right wing confrontation in the schools.

In June, the Southern Poverty Law Center added 12 conservative “parents’ rights” groups to its list of extremist and anti-government organizations. One of those Groups is Moms for Liberty, which citizens of Davis have become familiar with as they have made their presence felt at school board meetings pushing back not only on transgender education, but also things like Pride Day and rainbow crosswalks.

As SPLC describes them, “Moms for Liberty is a far-right organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and self-identifies as part of the modern parental rights movement. The group grew out of opposition to public health regulations for COVID-19, opposes LGBTQ+ and racially inclusive school curriculum, and has advocated books bans.”

The Right has pushed back against SPLC, arguing that they are in fact a far left group who is conflating hate groups like the KKK and other white supremacy groups with more conventional conservatives groups among which is Moms for Liberty.

For instance, Bridget Ziegler, one of the Florida-based group’s co-founders, reacted, “Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there’s no credibility behind it. It’s truly laughable.”

”They’re utilizing the term hate group in a very reckless manner and I think that they should be held accountable,” she added.

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At the same time, Ziegler seemed to not understand that SPLC has different designations. Moms for Liberty is not designated among the 523 hate groups, but rather, an “anti-government extremist group.”

But at least for me, the response they had to the criticism for SPLC is very telling about their mindset.

SPLC’s Susan Corke explained their reasoning to PBS.

She explained, “We’ve been tracking the rise of Moms for Liberty and the other, we’re calling them anti-Student inclusion groups. They’re trying to claim that they are just engaged parents, but, behind their statements, their actions really show different goals.

”We included them in this year’s report because of their anti-government principles. They traffic and conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government. They take actions to censor school discussions around race discrimination. LGBTQ identities.”

Another co-founder, Tiffany Justice told the Washington Examiner that her organization’s inclusion in the report was “insulting” and “absurd.”

”They just painted a target on our backs,” Justice said of the Southern Poverty Law Center. “They painted it on the backs of American moms and dads.”

Corke responded, “And what Moms for Liberty is trying to do, essentially, is to turn back the hands of time to the pre-civil rights era.”

She continued, “this movement that they are now, now spearheading is not new. They are trying to change curriculum so that we don’t cover our hard history of slavery and racism. What they want is a public education that prioritizes white cisgender children and otherizes children of color and different gender identities.”

She noted, “following the 1954 landmark and unanimous US Supreme Court brown versus Board of Education decision, which outlawed of course, segregation and public schools, that was when the real backlash arose, the birthing of this parental rights movement. The groups that arose comprised mostly middle to upper middle class white southerners that were seeking to preserve their segregationist way of life.”

She continued, “What we’re experiencing right now is this new wave of so-called parents rights advocates that really gained energy during the pandemic rallying together around Covid 19 mask and vaccine mandates in schools. And then they continued on going after critical race theory going after LGBTQ Trans Persons.”

And what she noted as well is a change “in the composition of the hard right.”

As I noted last week, one of the complaints locally are DJUSD policies “on confidentiality when a child comes out as ‘transgender’ at school.”

I noted last week, that the district lacks discretion on this issue, the school district is following state law, AB 1266.

I can also sympathize on the issue of parental notification.

But I also see this as an issue with no good solution. On the one hand, parents rightly want to be involved in the choices and decisions made by their children. But on the other hand, if we have parental notification laws, what is the recourse for kids trapped in gender dysphoria or experiencing depression and suicidal ideations?

There is no good way out of that dilemma when we know a sizable percentage of parents would react to such issues with ridicule, disdain, and in extreme cases, cutting the kids off and disowning them.

Sunday Commentary: The Rise of New Extremist Groups Is..., 2023 WLNR 21118491

And then what? You want to force a confused and depressed child to seek legal redress in a judicial system that might not be much more understanding than their parents?

I understand the concerns of parents, but I also know what even loving and tolerant parents have gone through trying to help their children navigate a confusing time and confusing issues.

One thing I do know – pouring gas on this fire is not helping us figure out ways to traverse difficult issues during a difficult time. And the people being harmed the most are the very people who are most vulnerable to begin with.

The post Sunday Commentary: The Rise of New Extremist Groups Is Producing Impacts on the Most Vulnerable appeared first on Davis Vanguard.

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NewsRoom

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June 18, 2023

Section: National

One wild school board meeting CASEY: Thursday's Roanoke County School Board meeting was a wild one (copy) More than 30 people, mostly Roanoke Count...

DAN CASEY The Roanoke Times

One wild school board meeting CASEY: Thursday's Roanoke County School Board meeting was a wild one (copy) More than 30 people, mostly Roanoke County residents, addressed school board members about May 18 accusations that "sexual predators disguised as teachers and staff" are "grooming" children at Glen Cove elementary.

Perhaps the best term to describe Thursday night's Roanoke County School Board meeting is "a doozy." If you haven't seen it yet, I urge you to watch the replay on YouTube. It lasted more than two hours. The interesting parts begin around the 34:50 time stamp.

In all, 32 citizens addressed the board. Among them were current and past Roanoke County students, current and retired Roanoke County teachers, a nurse, mental health therapists and more. A handful were residents of Roanoke.

Almost all focused their ire at child "grooming" accusations hurled during the board's May 18 meeting. During that, parent Damon Gettier went on a 4-minute, 30-second-long rant in which he publicly accused educators at Glen Cove Elementary of being "sexual predators disguised as teachers and staff." (Gettier's 9-year-old son attends Glen Cove.)

One by one, the speakers excoriated board members for failing to defend the school system's employees from Gettier's broadsides. One of the first was Ashley Hendrix, a biology teacher at Northside High who identified herself as a member of the LGBT community.

"Your silence on these disgusting claims against our staff and members and allies of our community shows that you do not support all your staff and all of your students," Hendrix said. "We are not predators, we are not child-groomers, we are none of the disgusting remarks that have been thrown our way these past few weeks."

Hendrix finished her 3-minute-limited remarks by telling her employer, the school board, that she would support efforts to recall and replace its elected members. Tiffany Sandifer, a parent who later told board members that she would support recalling them, emailed me Friday that she's launching a recall effort.

The room was so jammed that the school board opened up an overflow-crowd room into which video of the meeting was streamed. That was standing-room only, too.

After the speakers finished, Superintendent Ken Nicely seemed to address Gettier's accusations, though obliquely rather than directly.

One wild school board meeting CASEY: Thursday's Roanoke..., 2023 WLNR 21087156

"We're immensely proud of our over 1,200 teachers that work hard to teach our students, welcome them, support them and respect them. And to teach them to love to read, write, investigate scientific principles, perform in the arts, innovate and problem solve," Nicely began.

He ended with: ". . . We support and commend the efforts of our teachers and principals to provide a caring and respectful environment focused on learning for all students."

No school board member uttered a word about Gettier's accusations. Mike Wray and Tim Greenway said they appreciated the speakers' comments. Hudson said he "echoed" Nicely's remarks.

The meeting left a couple of other questions hanging, on which we'll focus.

One was the notable absence of Cheryl Facciani, the school board member who represents Windsor Hills. Where was she?

Friday morning, an answer seemed to appear via social media, on a Facebook group known as Roanoke County Parents for a Common Sense School Board.

It was a screenshot of a Thursday evening post Facciani purportedly put on Facebook, of her and some other women at Thursday night's Darius Rucker concert at Elmwood Park's amphitheater. (I didn't see the post Friday when I checked Facciani's Facebook page, but that may be because we're not Facebook "friends.")

The sold-out concert was a fundraiser benefitting the Life Ring Foundation. General admission tickets were \$60, and \$8 from each ticket supported the foundation's Fighting Kids Cancer initiative.

Friday morning via email I asked Facciani why she skipped Thursday's school board meeting, and whether she had instead attended a concert at Elmwood Park. Here's her reply:

"I do not like to miss school board meetings but raising money for cancer is a major priority of mine. I have a strong family history of cancer which includes both me and my husband," Facciani wrote.

"I felt compelled to support Fighting Kids' Cancer, Life Ring Foundation's five-year initiative to transform the state of care for children diagnosed with cancer in Southwest Virginia. 100% of the money raised will be used to add desperately needed resources to what will be the new pediatric cancer treatment center in Roanoke Valley," she added.

I responded, "Couldn't you have supported fundraising by the Life Ring Foundation by purchasing a ticket and attending the school board meeting?" She didn't answer.

The school board established its meeting schedule by unanimous vote on Jan. 5. According to a review of school board minutes, Thursday marked the third scheduled school board meeting Facciani missed in 2023, and the fourth overall. The others for which she was absent were work sessions March 2 and June 1. She also missed a "special" work session April 27, that had not been scheduled in January.

The other question concerns a brief verbal fracas near the meeting's end involving board Chairman Brent Hudson.

As he began his closing remarks, the crowd seemed frustrated that the only speaker's comments Hudson acknowledged during the meeting were those from a nurse, Judy Flinchum. Flinchum asked the board for low-carb school meals for diabetic students.

Hudson began his comments by congratulating Roanoke County student athletes and sports teams for athletic accomplishments. That's when a male voice from the crowd loudly interrupted him by calling out, "Actions speak louder!"

"Hold on a second," Hudson interjected. "Nope, nope, it's not time for public discussion now. You're going to allow the same respect that we allowed you for the past two hours. You're free to leave."

One wild school board meeting CASEY: Thursday's Roanoke..., 2023 WLNR 21087156

For the proceeding 30 seconds, Hudson continued the athletic congratulations, deeming them “very important.”

Next, a man from the crowd called out, “All four of you are cowards!” And as people exited, another unseen person in the room again said, “Actions speak louder!”

Up to that juncture, Hudson occupied the moral high ground, because he was the one being rudely interrupted. But then he suddenly and inexplicably let loose a two word-exclamation - “Parents’ rights!” - before picking up again with the sports congratulations. It seemed weird and out of context.

The phrase is a rallying cry of Moms for Liberty, a not-exactly grassroots conservative organization, founded three years ago in Florida, that has more than 260 county chapters across the country.

Among the battles it typically fight are “the LGBTQ agenda” in public schools. (There’s a Moms for Liberty chapter in Roanoke County, but nobody who spoke at Thursday’s meeting identified themselves as a member.)

In a Friday morning email, I asked Hudson the reason for the exclamation - and whether he agreed with Damon Gettier’s slur that Glen Cove Elementary educators are “sexual predators disguised as teachers and staff.”

Hudson responded: “I appreciate you reaching out. I have no comment at this time.”

The school board next meets for a work session July 13. Its next regular meeting is July 20.

Maybe he’ll have a comment at one of those.

Dan Casey (540) 981-3423dan.casey@roanoke.com@dancaseysblog

---- **Index References** ----

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June 17, 2023

PBS News Weekend for June 17, 2023

(BREAK)

JOHN YANG: Tonight on “PBS News Weekend,” a new report examines the changing face of extremists, hate and antigovernment groups in America. Then, a look at the shortage of urgently needed mental health services for children who survive gun violence and the importance of deaf children learning sign language early in life.

MAN: It’s very difficult to go back and fill in the gaps for their language functioning and for their everyday use of language.

(BREAK)

JOHN YANG: Good evening. I’m John Yang. President Biden held the first big rally of his reelection campaign today in Philadelphia. It was before a crowd of hundreds of enthusiastic union members. The day before, the president picked up the joint early endorsement of some of the biggest and most politically influential unions, including the AFL-CIO and groups representing teachers and city and state government workers. Organized labor support was key to his 2020 victory. Today, he struck a decidedly economic populist tone.

JOE BIDEN, U.S. President: If the investment bankers in this country went on strike tomorrow, no one would much notice in this. No, think about this in a literal sense. But if this room didn’t show up for work tomorrow or Monday, the whole country would come to a grinding halt. So tell me, tell me who matters more in America?

JOHN YANG: The president made news on other fronts, too. He told reporters he hopes to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the next several months. Secretary of state Antony Blinken is in China this weekend for talks aimed at easing tensions between Washington and Beijing.

And Mr. Biden condemned Russia’s deployment of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, calling it totally irresponsible. Russian president Vladimir Putin said he would send more nukes to Belarus later this year.

An overnight attack on a school in Uganda has left at least 41 people dead. Armed rebels linked to the Islamic state entered a dormitory and attacked students with machetes. Others burned to death after the rebels set the dorm on fire. The rebels crossed the nearby border into Congo with six people they had abducted. The rebel group opposes Uganda’s president, who is a U.S. ally.

And Pennsylvania governor Josh Shapiro said today a damaged stretch of interstate 95 in Philadelphia will reopen within two weeks.

President Biden toured the collapsed highway by helicopter today. Crews are using recycled glass pieces to fill in the

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collapsed area. They'll pave it to create a temporary roadway. I-95 is a key artery for car and truck traffic along the East Coast.

Still to come on PBS News Weekend, a look at mental health services for children who survive gun violence and the choices parents of deaf children have to make about sign language.

(BREAK)

JOHN YANG: Rarely have Americans been as polarized as they are today. And as hate groups edge toward the political mainstream, experts say they're employing new tactics and taking on new forms. Earlier this month, the Southern Poverty Law Center added 12 conservative parent's rights groups to its list of more than 1,200 extremist hate and antigovernment organizations.

Among those added Moms for Liberty, a group that works against school curriculums that includes gender, race and LGBTQ, plus topics. Earlier, I spoke with Susan Corke, who leads the team at the SPLC that tracks extremist groups. I asked her why the center ad these organizations to their list.

SUSAN CORKE, Southern Poverty Law Center: We've been tracking the rise of Moms for Liberty and the other. We're calling them anti student inclusion groups. They're trying to claim that they are just engaged parents, but behind their statements, their actions really show different goals. We included them in this year's report because of their anti-government principles. They traffic and conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government. They take actions to censor school discussions around race discrimination, LGBTQ identities.

JOHN YANG: One of the founders, co-founders of. Moms for Liberty, Tiffany Justice, was quoted in the conservative newspaper the Washington Examiner as calling the inclusion of her group on your list absurd and insulting and saying that it paints a target on the backs of American moms and dads. What's your response?

SUSAN CORKE: I am a mother too. I am a mother to a mixed race child. And what Moms for Liberty is trying to do, essentially, is to turn back the hands of time to the pre-civil rights era. This movement that they are now spearheading is not new. They are trying to change curriculum so that we don't cover our hard history of slavery and racism.

What they want is a public education that prioritizes white cisgender children and other children of color and different gender identities.

JOHN YANG: They're saying that they're a parental rights group. What would they have looked like in the past?

SUSAN CORKE: So following the 1954 landmark and unanimous U.S. Supreme Court *Brown versus Board of Education* decision, which outlawed, of course, segregation in public schools, that was when the real backlash arose, the birthing of this parental rights movement.

The groups that arose comprised mostly middle to upper middle class white southerners that were seeking to preserve their segregationist way of life. What we're experiencing right now is this new wave of so called parent's rights advocates that really gained energy during the pandemic rallying together around COVID-19 mask and vaccine mandate in schools. And then they continued on going after critical race theory, going after LGBTQ trans persons.

JOHN YANG: The SPLC in the past has tracked sort of gained notoriety because of Clan Watch. You track groups like the Ku Klux Klan, neo Nazis, other white supremacist groups, and now you're tracking a group that calls itself Moms for Liberty. What does that say to you about how extremist groups have changed their public face, have changed their tactics over time?

SUSAN CORKE: What we have seen is a change in the composition of the hard right since -- before Trump was in office. But particularly when he was in office, these hard right groups really had access to mainstream politics. They had direct access to the White House. So they really gained influence.

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In the wake of the insurrection they had to change tactics, and so they started moving to take the mainstreaming and the political influence that they were able to gain within the Republican Party, and they took it to the local level, and they have defined school boards and public education as one of their new battlefields.

JOHN YANG: What can be done, in your view? What should be done in response to groups like this and to combat groups like this? Are there policy changes you'd like to see?

SUSAN CORKE: One thing that we really recommend is that there be much more investment from government at the national level as well as at the state and local level and partnerships, public and private, to be really investing in preventing hate and violence before they occur, hand and hand with community resilience measures and a greater emphasis and funding for inclusive education and teaching our hard history.

JOHN YANG: Susan Corke of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Thank you very much.

SUSAN CORKE: Thank you so much, John. Happy to be here.

JOHN YANG: Children's firearm related injuries are on the rise. According to the gun safety group Brady, every day in America, 17 children younger than age 18 survive a gunshot wound. Ali Rogin has the latest on what this is doing to the mental health of children across the country.

ALI ROGIN: Since 2020, guns have been the leading cause of death for children in America. While many tragically lose their lives, child survivors of gun violence can endure a lifetime of physical and mental health challenges.

A new study from the American Academy of Pediatrics points to the urgent need for connecting children to mental health services following a firearm injury. The study analyzed Medicaid data of children aged five to 17 who suffered a nonfatal firearm injury. It found that 63 percent of these children do not receive mental health services within six months after a firearm injury.

The research noted black youth are less likely to have any mental health follow up than white youth.

Jennifer Hoffmann is a pediatric emergency medicine physician at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. She's also one of the lead authors of the new study. Jennifer, thank you so much for joining us.

First of all, this seems like such a no-brainer that if children are going through a traumatic event like a firearm experience, that they would have access to mental health services. Why is this not the case? Why is this not ubiquitous?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN, Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago: You know, unfortunately, there are so many barriers for children to access mental health care in the United States. We know that one in five children in the U.S. has a mental health condition, but only half receive needed mental health services. And there are many reasons for this, ranging from under recognition to stigma, but also structural barriers, such as workforce shortages of mental health professionals.

ALI ROGIN: For this study in particular, why look at mental health services following a firearm injury?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: You know as a pediatric emergency medicine physician, it's devastating to me every time I have to care for a child who's experienced a firearm injury. And if the child is lucky enough to survive, the experience can be very traumatizing for them.

Research shows that firearm injuries can have lasting impacts on child mental health. So we wanted to understand which children were able to connect with mental health services and which children could do so in a timely manner.

ALI ROGIN: And what did you find in terms of the differences between children who received follow up mental health care and those who didn't following a firearm injury?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: So we found that children who had mental health needs detected during their injury visit were

more likely to receive timely mental health services. So that means if mental health needs were recognized during the emergency department visit or hospitalization, they were able to connect sooner with mental health care.

That's important because early treatment is more effective, and it allows children to respond to more simple interventions, such as outpatient therapy, rather than waiting for symptoms to progress and become more severe, requiring intensive treatment like psychiatric hospitalization.

ALI ROGIN: What does that early intervention look like in the aftermath of a firearm injury? If a child is receiving mental health services, what sort of interactions are we talking about?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: So it can vary. It can be simple treatments provided in the primary care office, it can be a referral to a therapist for outpatient therapy, or it can be more intensive care as needed based on what the child's experiencing, such as a day program or occasionally even a hospital stay if needed.

We found that some of the most common mental health conditions that occurred after a firearm injury were traumatic related disorders such as PTSD. We also found increases in substance use among children after their firearm injury and double the rates of serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia and suicidal thoughts and self-harm.

ALI ROGIN: And what are some of the barriers to children receiving this type of care following these incidents?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: There are too many barriers. And one reason is that there are significant workforce shortages of mental health professionals in the U.S. but particularly in high poverty areas in those communities where most firearm injuries occur.

And this is also compounded by limited reimbursement rates for mental health services, particularly those offered by Medicaid relative to private health insurance. And the reason that we focus study on Medicaid enrolled youth is that most youth in the U.S. who sustain firearm injuries are enrolled in Medicaid.

ALI ROGIN: Wow. And that leads into my next question, I think, which is what did you learn about the racial disparity in these numbers? The fact that black youth are less likely to experience mental health services in the aftermath than other races are?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: You know, this is a troubling finding. But unfortunately, it wasn't surprising to our research team, given a large body of evidence showing there are disparities in access to mental health care among U.S. black youths.

And there are many possible reasons for this, ranging from familial factors, stigma, cultural barriers, but more importantly, structural barriers, such as a lack of mental health providers in the communities where black children live, and a substantial lack of diversity in the mental health workforce.

ALI ROGIN: And so what does that mean in terms of what policymakers can do? What would you like to see change?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: So, first of all, I think that policymakers should make more substantial investments to improving access to mental health services for children. And this includes meeting children where they are investing in school based mental health services. Also telehealth mental health services that can connect to children in communities that don't have an in person mental health provider. Also, policymakers need to increase research funding to address and prevent firearm injuries by applying a public health approach. We know that research on firearm injuries is substantially underfunded relative to the morbidity and mortality burden.

ALI ROGIN: Absolutely. And lastly, Jennifer, what types of resources should parents and caregivers be aware of when it comes to mental health related to these sorts of events?

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: It's important for parents to have open and honest conversations with their children. And if you have any concerns about your child's mental health, talk to your pediatrician first. They can provide an initial assessment and referrals if indicated. Also, if your child experiences a mental health crisis, don't leave them alone. Call the National Mental

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Health Hotline, 988 to be connected to a trained counselor 24/7.

ALI ROGIN: And of course, we could talk much more about the spate of gun violence incidents in this country, but we will leave it there. And Jennifer Hoffmann with Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. Thank you so much for your time.

JENNIFER HOFFMANN: Thank you for having me.

JOHN YANG: More than 90 percent of deaf children in the United States are born to hearing parents. For them, the path forward isn't just difficult, it's controversial. With the advent of cochlear implants, technology has the opportunity to change lives. Yet many deaf advocates say not teaching sign language is a risky proposition. Pamela Watts of Rhode Island PBS Weekly takes a look at the stark choices some parents face.

PAMELA WATTS: Jesus Flores was not diagnosed as deaf until he was three years old. His mother, Marta Gomez, spent years trying to figure out why he wasn't communicating. Doctors gave her a choice a cochlear implant or sign language.

They said --

MARTHA GOMEZ, PARENT: If you put a cochlear implant, Jesus can hurt. Jesus want to talk, or you can leave it there and just do a sign language. Of course I want to go to the side where he can talk, he can hear, because all my family can be like, good communication with him.

PAMELA WATTS: Jesus went through three surgeries for his cochlear implants. He also went to a specialty school in Rhode Island that exclusively focuses on spoken language. After seven years at the school, Jesus wasn't showing much progress.

MARTHA GOMEZ: And I'm asking for that second opinion. And with the second opinion, they did tell us we got that wrong diagnostic.

PAMELA WATTS: It turned out Jesus had an auditory nerve problem that the cochlear implant would never have been able to resolve.

And how did you feel when you heard that?

MARTHA GOMEZ: Oh, my God. My whole entire world is like everything is -- I cry. I cry a lot. I cry a lot. And then when I decide to thinking about something else and we're talking about School of the Death.

PAMELA WATTS: At Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

DAVID MULLOWNEY, ASL SPECIALIST, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF THE DEAF: What are we doing next?

PAMELA WATTS: Parents like Martha Gomez are learning American Sign Language or ASL together.

DAVID MULLOWNEY: The group hug is what this mouse needed.

PAMELA WATTS: David Mallowney is their teacher being interpreted aloud.

DAVID MULLOWNEY: This is a sign for I love you. You'll see this a lot in American Sign Language.

PAMELA WATTS: Nancy Maguire Heath is the director here.

NANCY MAGUIRE HEATH, Director, Rhode Island School for the Deaf: We frequently, especially the last few years, have had number of students referred to us who have no language or have little language. They may have 50 to 100 spoken words when they should have thousands by that age.

PAMELA WATTS: Most arrive never having learned any sign language.

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NANCY MAGUIRE HEATH: You and I, because we're hearing, we learn from our environment all the time. We learned from mom on the telephone, talking to the plumber. A deaf child may not get any of that. They're not getting that incidental learning that our brain grows from.

PAMELA WATTS: That brain growth is the focus of extensive research by Dr. Wyatte Hall, assistant professor of Public Health Sciences at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

DR. WYATTE HALL, Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences at the University of Rochester Medical Center (through translator): We've seen a lot of research that there appears to be a critical period, or a sensitive period, depending on who you talk with. That period is a time where we are born biologically ready to acquire language.

PAMELA WATTS: Studies estimate the window lasts from birth to ages three to five. If children can't easily hear people talking or see people signing, they run the risk of developing what's known as language deprivation.

NANCY MAGUIRE HEATH: Their thinking becomes locked in the concrete. They can keep learning, but they don't do well in the abstract, and they can't keep up.

WYATTE HALL (through translator): By the time the critical period is over, it's very difficult to go back and fill in the gaps for their language functioning and for their everyday use of language. There is a very powerful, a very strong structure and system, both medical and education in our country that strongly support using spoken language only approaches.

PAMELA WATTS: Hall says less than 10 percent of deaf children in America learn sign language. Jesus didn't start learning ASL until he was 11 years old at Rhode Island School for the deaf.

Where would you say he's in school now?

MARTHA GOMEZ: Way behind. Elementary, like, way, way, way, way behind.

PAMELA WATTS: So he has to work harder?

MARTHA GOMEZ: So hard.

PAMELA WATTS: Hall says that language deprivation shouldn't happen to any child.

WYATTE HALL (through translator): We already know how to prevent these problems. You give deaf children sign language, it's completely preventable. I've seen problematic framings that options are framed as or that you have to pick ASL or English spoken language. What I've also seen is it does not have to be that way. It can be, and you can have ASL and English. You can give all the options.

PAMELA WATTS: To prevent that language deprivation, more than 20 states across the country have passed laws to monitor deaf children's language development milestones. Similar bills have been proposed in Rhode Island, but have not passed.

WOMAN: Good morning. Good morning.

PAMELA WATTS: Another group of hearing parents.

WOMAN: If you've made a snowman with your child, you can explain the buttons.

PAMELA WATTS: Meet to learn sign language from David Mallowney, who is being interpreted aloud.

WOMAN: And there's more snow. He sees more snow. He's like, yes, there's more snow. And he's excited.

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PAMELA WATTS: He signs the picture book. The Snowy Day.

WOMAN: So Peter was sleeping all night.

PAMELA WATTS: And teaches key vocabulary to parents.

WOMAN: Morning. And then third sliding. He's walking along, he sees a tree, looks up, and he's poking the tree. Poking again.

PAMELA WATTS: So that they can sign bedtime stories to their children.

MAN: Pete. Pete. Pete got up. He woke up. He wake up, he woke up.

PAMELA WATTS: It's a familiar road for Gomez, who has been learning sign language for Jesus. She says helps her get better.

MARTHA GOMEZ: I think we cooking together and I'm going to ask Jesus, had I signed this or had I paid this, like I tried.

PAMELA WATTS: So he's teaching you?

MARTHA GOMEZ: Yes. He's my teacher. And when I do it wrong, he laughs at me.

PAMELA WATTS: What do you say to him to keep him motivated?

MARTHA GOMEZ: I just show how much I love him. And that's a matter of what happened. He always got all my support.

PAMELA WATTS: And that's the approach. Maguire Heath says all parents should take.

NANCY MAGUIRE HEATH: You're the oil that connects things. You're the link that connects things for your child.

Accept your child as he is, she is. Let them know that, and to give them every tool in the book, including American Sign Language, and they will let you know what works for them and what doesn't work for them. And they will appreciate that. You are open to all of that.

PAMELA WATTS: For PBS News Weekend, I'm Pamela Watts in Providence, Rhode Island.

JOHN YANG: There is more online, including an in depth look at the limited choices unhoused Americans have when they're dying and the organizations trying to fill that need. All that and more is on our website pbs.org/NewsHour.

And that is PBS News Weekend for this Saturday. On Sunday, a look at the challenges faced by Native American communities whose tribal lands cut across modern borders. I'm John Yang. For all of my colleagues, thank for joining us. See you tomorrow.

(BREAK)

END

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PBS News Weekend for June 17, 2023, 2023 WLNR 21073659

---- Index References ----

Company: American Academy of Pediatrics.; University of Rochester Medical Center; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; ANN & ROBERT H. LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO; National Mental Health Innovation Center

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Children's Health (1CH55); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Healthcare Services (1HE13); Psychiatric Disorders & Conditions (1PS79); Psychiatric Services (1PS61); Psychiatry (1PS63))

Region: (Africa (1AF90); Americas (1AM92); Asia (1AS61); Belarus (1BE72); CIS Countries (1CI64); East Africa (1EA80); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Illinois (1IL01); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); Rhode Island (1RH18); Russia (1RU33); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); USA (1US73); Uganda (1UG45))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (PBS News Weekend; U.S. Supreme Court; Moms for Liberty; Ku Klux Klan; White House; Republican Party; RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF THE DEAF; 2023 NewsHour Productions, LLC; 2023 VIQ Media Transcription, Inc.; American Academy of Pediatrics; University of Rochester Medical Center; Southern Poverty Law Center; Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago; National Mental Health)

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NewsRoom

A report asks: Why can't Massachusetts teach Johnny to read?, 2023 WLNR 20832152

NewsRoom

6/16/23 Boston Globe A
2023 WLNR 20832152

Boston Globe (MA)
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June 16, 2023

Section: Editorial Opinion

A report asks: Why can't Massachusetts teach Johnny to read?

Conservative 'science of reading' campaign pushes questionable data

Readers alarmed by your coverage of a report asserting that Massachusetts is “among the worst states ... for preparing teachers how to teach children to read in scientifically proven ways” should be aware that the National Council on Teacher Quality, which issued the report, is a political advocacy group founded by the right-wing Thomas B. Fordham Institute (“Colleges earn low grades on preparing reading teachers,” Page A1, June 14).

Some have understandably objected to the basis for the council's claims about what prospective teachers are actually being taught in education programs. But the problem here runs deeper. The “science of reading” campaign - with references to “evidence-based” methods - represents a distortion of the data. Many experts have objected to the claim that children must receive explicit phonics instruction in order to learn to read. In fact, that approach, particularly when imposed too early or for too long, can adversely affect children's depth of understanding (their comprehension of meaning) as well as their enjoyment of reading.

Religious conservatives from the late Pat Robertson to the current MAGA group Moms for Liberty have promoted a phonics-based approach to reading instruction. But we shouldn't be misled by the recent rebranding of this political crusade as “science,” let alone by a report claiming that universities that resist this simplistic strategy are failing to do right by our children.

Alfie Kohn

Belmont

The writer is the author of “The Schools Our Children Deserve” and other books on education.

There's no logic to English language. We should be pushing Spanish.

As a retired instructor of English as a second language, I took interest in the report criticizing how the state's academic programs are preparing educators to teach reading.

The problem is not so much one of technique but rather the language itself.

Anyone entrusted with teaching English to speakers of other languages grows aware of its defects. The worst is the gap between spoken and written forms. For example, the word “knight.” By what logic does that word rhyme with “kite”?

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By no logic, which leads to endless disputes between proponents of phonics and of sight reading (memorizing whole words at a time). Phonics people focus on those English words that follow phonetic rules, even though that excludes some of the most common ones, such as love, eat, do, and woman. Sight people want children trained to recognize the common words as they would pictographs.

What if, instead, we taught our children a language whose written form reflects the spoken one? One that is consistent, logical, euphonious? One whose grammar is more refined and precise, reflecting its Latin origins? One whose vowels are pure, its consonants unclustered, one free of the ugly Germanic sounds that so vex English learners?

I speak, of course, of Spanish.

It's time to admit that the rise of English as the global language was a misfortune, one that elevated a tongue that is barely learnable. Apparently, not even many of the children of Massachusetts, which thinks itself the smartest state, can learn to read it. Imagine if we made instruction in Spanish (it's the heritage tongue of one-fifth of the US population) more widespread in public schools, even mandated.

Tom Griffith

Beverly

Gordon College grad is not surprised to see program receive high marks

As a graduate of Gordon College, class of 1981, I was pleased, but not surprised, to read that a review of the instruction prospective teachers received was graded A+ by the National Council on Teacher Quality ("Colleges earn low grades on preparing reading teachers"). Being a part of the elementary education department meant that you learned approaches that included strategies to prepare a student to be a well-rounded reader. It made sense to embrace the idea that a strong foundation of reading in the elementary grades would be vital for students to move into middle and high school with reliable skills that would enable them to learn while dealing with a variety of content areas.

I fell in love with teaching reading. The aha moments that occurred when a student knew he or she was reading were worth all the work. After graduating, I received my master's degree in education, with certification as a reading specialist, honing my skills under the teaching and training of the legendary Jeanne Chall at Harvard.

It is wonderful to see that Gordon College continues to excel.

Beverly A. Rosario

Brighton

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Business Services (1BU80); Localization & Translation Services (1LO61))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Massachusetts (1MA15); North America (1NO39); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (National Council on Teacher Quality; Thomas B. Fordham Institute; MAGA; Moms for Liberty)

News; EditorialOpinion

A report asks: Why can't Massachusetts teach Johnny to read?, 2023 WLNR 20832152

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NewsRoom

DeSantis is wrong about book bans in Florida; they're a real threat, 2023 WLNR 20811479

NewsRoom

6/16/23 Columbus Dispatch (Ohio) A9
2023 WLNR 20811479

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June 16, 2023

Section: News

DeSantis is wrong about book bans in Florida; they're a real threat

June 16, 2023

It turns out nobody wants to be known as a book banner.

So when news broke last month that Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," was being restricted to middle school shelves in a Miami-Dade County school, the Florida district was quick to insist that the book had not been banned. Some conservative voices rallied to the school's defense, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. He has dismissed reporting on book bans by the news media as a "hoax."

Was the media mistaken?

The Gorman affair is the latest in a string of stories about book bans, in which the use of the term "ban" is being contested. To avoid charges of censorship, school administrators, government officials and groups like Moms for Liberty have taken to calling the results of their efforts "quarantine" or "curation" – anything but "ban."

This debate is not new. Advocates for free speech and intellectual freedom have long used the term "book ban" to refer to efforts by authorities to remove access to books based on objections to their content, ideas or themes.

Writing about book banning for The First Amendment Encyclopedia in 2009, Susan Webb explained, "Opponents of publications sometimes use the tactic of restricting access rather than calling for the physical removal of books."

Controlling access to information should be of concern

In this sense, it is not only the most blatant prohibitions on books that are of concern to those who believe in protecting the freedom to read, but also the full range of ways in which authorities may exert control over access to information.

This was the crux of Supreme Court Justice William Brennan's 1982 opinion in *Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico*, when he emphasized that school libraries were owed constitutional protection from efforts by school boards to impose political or ideological constraints on books available to young people. And that was affirmed by a federal court in a 2003 case, *Counts v. Cedarville School District*, which held that requiring parental permission for students to access Harry Potter books in the school library was an infringement on their rights.

What happened with "The Hill We Climb" is no small thing. A parent filed an objection with the district noting that the book "is not educational and have indirectly hate messages," [sic] and saying that she believed the function of the material was to "cause confusion and indoctrinate" students.

Despite the absence of further substance, school leaders took this challenge seriously and decided to move the book from

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general availability for elementary school students to the middle school shelves.

While district officials later told parents that the book was still accessible to all students, they also clarified that to access the book, elementary students will have to ask a media specialist for permission to see it and prove that they read at a fifth grade level.

Gorman's book was not shifted from one shelf to another only to better guide student readers, but rather to impose a new restriction on it.

School restricts kids' access to books written for their age group

The distinction between guiding students to books and restricting students from books is instructive. Consider that "The Hill We Climb" was not the only book challenged or moved off the elementary school shelves. Three other titles were relocated and restricted to middle school students at the same time: "The ABCs of Black History" by Rio Cortez, "Love to Langston" by Tony Medina and "Cuban Kids" by George Ancona.

The idea that students would need to demonstrate reading proficiency at a fifth grade level before accessing these books, which are written for elementary level readers, is alarming. After all, middle school students are not likely to be interested in an A-to-Z picture book.

Ultimately, what's at stake when we talk about book bans is student learning and well-being. Semantic gymnastics about what is or isn't a ban is an effort to deny and distract from the problem. When school districts reduce or prohibit access to books in response to the bogus demands of a single individual, they put the needs and interests of all on a back burner. When they determine that books representing historically marginalized identities are inappropriate, they send students and families a disturbing message about whose stories matter. When state legislators enable and support these actions, they are complicit.

The point is not whether one can get a book that has been prohibited in a school at the local library or purchase it on Amazon; it's about whether someone's ready access to ideas has been denied or diminished in a public institution and why.

In a democracy, liberty and free speech require robust protection in the face of cultural and political censors. Protecting students' freedom to read must be no different. In the face of a growing movement to censor public education, it's essential that we sound the alarm over book banning in its most insidious forms, especially those propelled by hate and ignorance.

If people don't want to be known as book banners, there's a simple solution: Stop trying to ban books.

Jonathan Friedman is director of free expression and education programs at PEN America.

Your Turn

Jonathan Friedman

Guest columnist

---- **Index References** ----

Company: Pen Co of America

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Books (1BO26); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Supreme Court; Cedarville School District; PEN America) (Ron DeSantis)

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NewsRoom

Degenfelder's political bias drives her classroom goals, 2023 WLNR 21041312

NewsRoom

6/16/23 Laramie Boomerang (Laramie, Wyo.) A4
2023 WLNR 21041312

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June 16, 2023

Section: News

Degenfelder's political bias drives her classroom goals

Kerry Drake

Wyoming's top public school official spoke last Saturday at a Denver conference also featuring the controversial Moms for Liberty.

While the extremist group and Superintendent of Public Instruction Megan Degenfelder made separate presentations, their missions seem to align.

Degenfelder's call at the Western Conservative Summit to take all political bias out of classrooms was laughable, in light of her farright political rhetoric. She called for bans on "critical race theory," transgender students competing in girls' sports and LGBTQthemed books in school libraries - echoing issues central to the national and Wyoming Republican agenda.

If you object to things like critical race theory, "then you will be met with slurs and protests," Degenfelder said. "You will be intimidated and you will be silenced. I will not be silenced." No, she was plenty vocal. On Degenfelder's list of public school enemies were teachers' unions, the Pulitzer Prize-winning "1619 Project" and lack of patriotism taught in classrooms.

By patriotism, the superintendent added, she does not mean we must teach that America is always right. "Indeed, it's critical that we teach about the mistakes of our country, because only then can we talk about the tremendous progress we have made," Degenfelder said. "That's the part the left wants to leave out." Tina Descovich, co-founder of Moms for Liberty, echoed Degenfelder's critique. That overlap is especially concerning because Moms for Liberty was identified as an "extremist" anti-government parental rights group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Descovich scoffed at the label, but it fits.

"We are at war," Descovich said. "It's a war of good versus evil. It's a war against truth versus lies. Some people call it a cultural war.

Some call it a spiritual war. And parents are on the very front lines because our families are under attack." Once parents lose the right to raise their children and direct their religious and moral upbringing, then "we're done.

Our families are done. This country is done," Descovich said.

Moms for Liberty is fighting back, she noted, with almost 300 chapters and 120,000 members in 45 states, with several Wyoming chapters.

The group initially organized to fight COVID-19 mask and vaccine mandates in schools and then launched a campaign to ban

Degenfelder's political bias drives her classroom goals, 2023 WLNR 21041312

books that “sexualize” children. It has a broader mission to dismantle public education.

Despite efforts to increase school choice, Descovich said, 75-80% of students are still in public schools. “Are we going to let our youngest learners truly believe that at 5 years old they can decide if they want to be a boy or a girl, or neither or both, or change their mind from day to day?” she asked.

Descovich said parents can’t sit back for 12 years and let their children be taught “that America is a horrible place, that it’s racist, that it’s sexist, that it’s homophobic and is not going to allow students to succeed.” One of the prime targets shared by Moms for Liberty and Degenfelder is critical race theory.

But CRT isn’t even taught in grades K-12. It’s a law school course that shows how systemic racism still negatively impacts our country. Degenfelder identified the fears it supposedly promotes: establishing “a sense of guilt and helplessness in our kids, dividing them by race, such that some kids are taught that they are oppressors whose success will be a product of their privilege, not their merit.” Degenfelder, who doesn’t want white kids to feel bad for the sins of their ancestors, didn’t address ongoing racism today.

Instead, she blamed teachers.

Degenfelder said minorities “are instructed that they are perpetual victims, stuck in a system and a society that will always be rigged against them.” Degenfelder charged that the left hasn’t been able to achieve its goals through political consensus, so in recent years progressives have been using classroom instruction to reach “impressionable future voters.” “[The left] should not cloak political agendas in lesson plans,” Degenfelder said. “It should not presume the righteousness of one side over another. It should not exclude important context in order to obscure the whole story or legitimize fringe ideas from either side of the political spectrum.” Degenfelder won last year’s primary against interim Superintendent Brian Schroeder, who previously ran a private Christian school in Cody. He often got teary during legislative committees and public meetings, presenting his vision for Wyoming education.

Lost during the campaign was the fact Degenfelder embraced nearly every far-right position that Schoeder did, but she didn’t openly weep.

Her claim that she’s trying to get politics out of classrooms is just plain silly.

After Degenfelder outlined six initiatives for a sweeping new WDE strategic plan, including a CTE ban, Sen. Chris Rothfuss, D-Laramie, pushed back.

”There shouldn’t be political bias in schools. There should be an objective marketplace of ideas,” he agreed. But Rothfuss said her positions are “effectively an expression of political bias” that Republicans have rallied behind.

Identifying what one sees as “divisive and inappropriate concepts” is an overtly political act.

Degenfelder’s defense was weak, noting that her strategic plan is based on the issues she campaigned on.

How much more political can she get?

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Wyoming (1WY84))

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Where you can read banned books for free, 2023 WLNR 20876634

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6/16/23 Mashable (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 20876634

Mashable
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June 16, 2023

Section: Life

Where you can read banned books for free

Meera Navlakha

Credit: Mashable / Vicky Leta.

Across the United States, efforts to ban books(opens in a new tab) have skyrocketed. In 2022, this push reached an unprecedented level(opens in a new tab), with the number of challenged books nearly doubling since 2021(opens in a new tab).

”The last two years have been exhausting, frightening, outrage inducing,” Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of The American Library Association (ALA)’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, told PBS(opens in a new tab).

These books vary in content and narration, but share the fact that they are in peril. Many of the books targeted feature Black or LGBTQ characters. Examples include Gender Queer(opens in a new tab) by Maia Kobabe(opens in a new tab), a memoir about adolescence and gender identity, banned and challenged(opens in a new tab) in schools in Florida, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Ohio, Washington, and Texas.

Then there’s The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas, a young adult novel inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement that examines systemic racism, police violence, class, and trauma, banned several times since 2017 in various states and schools(opens in a new tab).

Tweet may have been deleted(opens in a new tab)

The 1619 Project (and the children’s version titled Born on the Water) by Nikole Hannah-Jones, has also been frequently questioned - in 2021, the book was challenged in 27 states(opens in a new tab). Hannah-Jones has criticised the wave of state laws and proposed book bans in schools for texts that acknowledge America’s legacy of systemic racism and examine the academic framework of critical race theory.

Challenging books has become a priority for some government officials, such as Texas state lawmaker Matt Krause(opens in a new tab), who requested in 2021 that public school libraries disclose whether they held any of a lengthy list of 850 books(opens in a new tab) about topics including race and sexuality. Florida governor and presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis continues to implement measures(opens in a new tab) against certain books, furthering censorship and scrutiny of books(opens in a new tab) about race, gender, and LGBTQ issues. Groups like Moms for Liberty, a conservative group claiming to campaign for “parental rights,” have also tried to censor books in public schools that feature topics like sexual and racial identity (but also seahorses(opens in a new tab)).

Where you can read banned books for free, 2023 WLNR 20876634

Other titles that have faced challenges in libraries across the country include *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta, *Tomboy* by Liz Prince, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong, and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. In September 2022, the *Girls Who Code* book series was temporarily banned in a Pennsylvania school district, in a move that made headlines and angered many.

This attack on literature([opens in a new tab](#)) has sprouted counter-movements and resistance. In May 2023, for instance, PEN America and Penguin Random House filed a lawsuit against a Florida school([opens in a new tab](#)) for “unconstitutional” removal of books from libraries. PEN America is also running a campaign with poet Amanda Gorman([opens in a new tab](#)), whose inauguration poem “The Hill We Climb”([opens in a new tab](#)) was removed from an elementary school in Miami Lakes, Florida([opens in a new tab](#)).

Other campaigns are coming from libraries themselves. In mid-2022, the Brooklyn Public Library launched Books UnBanned([opens in a new tab](#)), a teen-led initiative catering to young readers across the country, regardless of state. The program allows young people across America to register for a free digital library card and access a whole bunch of banned and challenged books. The hope is to provide access to those who find themselves especially marginalized and who do not often see themselves reflected in the pages of most writing.

Tweet may have been deleted([opens in a new tab](#))

“Access to information is the great promise upon which public libraries were founded,” said Linda E. Johnson, BPL’s president and CEO, in a press statement.

“We cannot sit idly by while books rejected by a few are removed from the library shelves for all. Books UnBanned will act as an antidote to censorship, offering teens and young adults across the country unlimited access to our extensive collection of ebooks and audiobooks, including those which may be banned in their home libraries.”

“We cannot sit idly by while books rejected by a few are removed from the library shelves for all.”- Linda E. Johnson, Brooklyn Public Library

The initiative, and its ambitions, join a rank of resources hoping to fight against the crackdown on books and intellectual ventures. Below are some of the places you can access materials that have been challenged elsewhere.

Where to access banned books

Books UnBanned([opens in a new tab](#))

The Brooklyn Public Library has a number of support systems in place for teens struggling with the prospect of banned books in their hometowns and daily lives.

First, people aged 13-21 can apply for a free digital library card that’s valid for one year, and which opens the doors to the BPL’s full eBook collection and learning databases - that’s 350,00 e-books, 200,000 audiobooks, and more than 100 databases. You can do so by emailing or via the library’s Instagram account, [@bklynfuture](#)([opens in a new tab](#)).

The eCard is always free to teenagers in the state, who can apply through the library’s website([opens in a new tab](#)). The fee for the card for those who live outside New York is normally \$50 but currently, the library is waiving this.

Wider resources are available on the site, including information to help readers report book challenges([opens in a new tab](#)) at local libraries or to request book recommendations([opens in a new tab](#)) from fellow teens.

BPL has also compiled a list of banned and/or challenged books([opens in a new tab](#)), which continues to be updated. The list includes an array of libraries where the books can be found. The formats include actual physical copies but also eBooks and eAudiobooks. You can check all possible locations by clicking on the dropdown menu underneath each book title.

Where you can read banned books for free, 2023 WLNR 20876634

Com Library([opens in a new tab](#))

The College of the Mainland, a public community college in Texas City, Texas, has a dedicated page([opens in a new tab](#)) for banned books([opens in a new tab](#)), which explores the history of literature that has been challenged and why certain texts are more in peril than others.

To access these titles you have to be a member of the institution, but the library includes a list of frequently banned books that can be read for free on Google Books and other sites. Titles include *The Scarlet Letter*([opens in a new tab](#)) by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Of Mice and Men*([opens in a new tab](#)) by John Steinbeck. There are explanations beneath each book, detailing why they have been banned historically.

Upenn: Read Banned Books([opens in a new tab](#))

The University of Pennsylvania has compiled a list of banned books, some of which are available to read for free online. This includes *The 1619 Project*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and John Milton's *Areopagitica*.

Many Books([opens in a new tab](#))

On Many Books, a catalogue of thousands of free eBooks, you can access a variety of banned books, including political cornerstones like *Candide*([opens in a new tab](#)) by Voltaire and *The Rights of Man*([opens in a new tab](#)) by Thomas Paine. Simply click on the title you're interested in, and you'll be asked to sign in, either using your Google account or creating a new account on the site itself. Afterwards, click "Free Download" where you can choose the format you are seeking: a PDF, an eBook (which can also go directly onto your Apple Books library), and more.

You can also click "Read Online" to read entire texts on the site itself.

Other free eLibraries

A cluster of public, free-for-all online libraries offer access to titles that have been challenged. Libby([opens in a new tab](#)), for instance, allows readers to borrow ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, and more from your local library - in some instances you may have to visit the library in person to pick up your library card, depending on where you live. The app can be downloaded on the App Store([opens in a new tab](#)) or Google Play([opens in a new tab](#)). The company has previously outlined([opens in a new tab](#)) and discussed([opens in a new tab](#)) the importance of reading banned books.

Similarly, Hoopla([opens in a new tab](#)) allows access to your local library for free, providing access to a range of materials which can be downloaded or streamed from your smartphone or desktop. You can sign up online, by using any email address. After borrowing, titles are automatically returned at the end of the designated lending period - the same goes for Libby.

With vital texts([opens in a new tab](#)) being placed in jeopardy, these resources can hopefully restore accessibility, fight censorship, and open the doors to allowing teens, in particular, to read texts that matter.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION; Pen Co of America; PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE LLC; College of the Mainland

News Subject: (Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Teenagers (1TE59))

Industry: (Books (1BO26); Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Online & Electronic Publishing (1ON84); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA

Where you can read banned books for free, 2023 WLNR 20876634

(1US73))

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NewsRoom

ALEX WAGNER TONIGHT for June 15, 2023, MSNBC, 2023 WLNR 20847718

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2023 WLNR 20847718

MSNBC: Alex Wagner Tonight
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ALEX WAGNER TONIGHT for June 15, 2023, MSNBC

[21:00:15]

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC HOST, "ALL IN": All right, David Jolly, thank you very much.

That is "ALL IN" on this Thursday night.

ALEX WAGNER TONIGHT starts right now.

Good evening, Alex.

ALEX WAGNER, MSNBC HOST: It's a sign of the times that -- that when -- when Dave Jolly says things about -- predicting that Joe Biden is going to win this handily and Donald Trump is going to be defeated I get a little bit like nervous, right, like even though he's facing down potentially multiple federal indictments and multiple investigations --

HAYES: It's definitely not a sure thing.

WAGNER: -- I'm still like, oh, really? You really think Biden can beat him?

HAYES: Yeah, I know. It's -- nothing's a sure thing, but it's also like, if you're trying to get the least popular figure as your nominee like Donald Trump is definitely that, that's just what the -- that's what the data say. So --

WAGNER: That is what the data says.

All right. My friend, have a wonderful evening.

HAYES: You, too.

WAGNER: And thanks to you at home for joining us this evening.

If you are a Republican running for president in 2024, there is one question that you know you are going to have to answer, what do you think of Donald Trump being indicted on federal criminal charges? And you would think at this point that anyone entering the race for the Republican nomination would be prepared to answer that question and you would be wrong.

Today, Miami Mayor Francis Suarez announced that he is joining the pack of candidates running for the Republican nomination. He gave his first interview to "Good Morning America" and that interview went like this.

ALEX WAGNER TONIGHT for June 15, 2023, MSNBC, 2023 WLNR 20847718

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

INTERVIEWER: What did you make of the indictment?

MIAMI MAYOR FRANCIS SUAREZ (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Yeah, I think one of the things that happen in Miami is people were hoping that -- some members of the press were even hoping that there would be anarchy. And I think what Miami did is what Miami has done. We have lowered homicides --

INTERVIEWER: Sir, I asked you what you thought of the indictment. Sir, I asked what you thought of the indictment.

SUAREZ: Well, and I want to talk about Miami.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read the indictment?

SUAREZ: Of course.

(CROSSTALK)

INTERVIEWER: What did it say to you? What did it say to you? I mean, I'm just trying to get a simple answer to that question. I'd let you see why you're running for president. Answer that question.

Tell me what you think about the indictment. Do you think it shows that Donald Trump is fit to be president?

SUAREZ: I think what it shows is that people are frustrated in this country, particularly Republicans, who feel that there is an unequal administration of justice.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: That's what happens when you go on national television to announce your presidential campaign without a good answer to the most important question facing the Republican field right now. It is something that everyone else in the race has started to figure out, and that is why they have all started to coalesce around a new line, a new talking point whenever they are asked about Donald Trump, and that strategy is blame the Department of Justice and the FBI.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RON DESANTIS (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I think the DOJ and FBI have lost their way. I think that they've been weaponized against Americans who think like me and you.

MIKE PENCE (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We've seen the politicization at the Department of Justice for years and years.

SEN. TIM SCOTT (R-SC), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: What we've seen over the last several years is the weaponization of the Department of Justice against the former president.

NIKKI HALEY (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: The DOJ and FBI have lost all credibility with the American people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: That is the new Republican line when it comes to Donald Trump's handling of classified documents. The Department of Justice and the FBI have been weaponized.

And the person who is supposedly weaponizing those two organizations is in their mind Joe Biden. Now, never mind the fact that Joe Biden has stayed about as far away from Trump's prosecution as a sitting president possibly can, refusing to even comment on this case publicly, conservatives have gone all in on the idea that this is Biden's secret plot.

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On the day of Trump's arraignment, Fox News ran this graphic alongside their coverage of Biden and Trump: Wannabe dictator speaks at the White House after having his political rival arrested.

Fox later told NBC News that the chyron was taken down immediately and was addressed internally. But that central idea that Biden is some kind of autocrat who has turned the justice system against Trump, that idea remains the focus of practically every Fox News segment about the special counsel's indictment.

Meanwhile, Trump has taken all of this to a new level and has started saying things like this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT: I will appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president of the history of the United States of America, Joe Biden, and the entire Biden crime family, name a special prosecutor.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: Okay, so the former president who wants to be president again is now openly vowing to turn the Department of Justice against his political enemies at the exact same time that his defenders are accusing Joe Biden of doing exactly that, which is, wow.

The hypocrisy here seems to be lost on most people in Trump's party, because this vow or this campaign pledge or whatever you want to call this has now gained traction in the Republican Party on whole. Republicans have decided that the solution to this alleged plot between the executive branch and the Department of Justice is to erase the line that exists between the Department of justice and the White House.

Here is Governor Ron DeSantis in an interview on Fox News.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DESANTIS: Republican presidents have accepted the canard that the DOJ and FBI are, quote, independent. They are not independent agencies. They are part of the executive branch. They answer to the elected president of the United States.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: That view that the DOJ and the FBI should not be independent from the presidency is actually gaining traction among conservatives and not just the ones whose name end in Trump.

"The New York Times" points out today, Mr. Trump's promise to use the Justice Department to go after his enemies fits into a larger movement on the on the right to gut the FBI and abandon the norm that the department should operate independently from the president. The most powerful conservative think tanks are working on plans that would go far beyond reforming the FBI, even though its Senate confirmed directors in the modern era have all been Republicans. They want to rip it up and start again.

So, President Biden who has thus far maintained a strict division between himself and the Department of Justice is accused of being a wannabe dictator by the Republican Party, and the GOP solution to this entirely phantom problem is to give a future president complete control over the Department of Justice, so long as that president is a Republican.

Joining us now are "Slate" senior editor and host of "The Amicus" podcast Dahlia Lithwick and former Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill. Both are MSNBC legal analyst.

Thank you both for joining me tonight.

And, Claire, let me just start first with you on the surreality and I guess hypocrisy of this moment to see Republicans

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accusing Joe Biden of being a wannabe dictator and then embracing a kind of new form of governing that would effectively allow the next Republican president to become a wannabe dictator.

CLAIRE MCCASKILL, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: It's really weird. First of all, Harvard Law School is calling Ron DeSantis, they want their law degree back. You know, it is beyond embarrassing that he is an educated man who is spouting this stuff, the same thing with some of these other people who are saying let's blow up, you know, the rule of law in this country. The only reason, I want to talk about the Founding Fathers -- you know, the Founding Fathers would be good with this that we would have some kind of king-like figure that could direct to people to arrest people on a whim.

You know, the rule of law held under Donald Trump because there were good men and women who made sure it did, even though he tried to blow up that line.

And think about this for a minute -- if Joe Biden is somehow manipulating the Justice Department, why in the world would he leave a Trump prosecutor in charge of his own son's investigation?

WAGNER: Yes, that's a good --

MCCASKILL: You know, this is -- this is so bizarre to me. I mean, he clearly is trying to stay so far away from this just as they did in the Obama -- oh, they're forgetting the Obama administration when I actually tried to talk to the president about what was going on in Ferguson and he put up his hands and said, Claire, I will not talk about anything that has to do with DOJ, we'll not talk about it. You're welcome to call DOJ and talk to them and make sure they know what you think you know, but I will not talk to you about it.

That is the rule in this country. It's always been the rule. The only one who wants to blow that up is Donald Trump, because he doesn't have either the facts or the law on his side.

WAGNER: You know, Dahlia, I was surprised that it's not just Trump. It's the Heritage Foundation is now trying to make the case for blowing up the FBI, and I want to call everyone's attention to this great analysis that you have on "Slate" this week and I'll read an excerpt from it.

Yes, the legal walls are closing in, and as they do for some, the power of these legal walls is crumbling before our eyes. The more criminal trouble Trump finds himself in, the more his political capital rises. The more the rule of law triumphs, the stronger the forces that hate the rule of law actually become.

That is the conundrum of this moment, right, Dahlia, that the notion that this is the rule of law doing what it's supposed to do, you know, finding wrongdoing and prosecuting it, and at the same time the after effect of that is to erode the power of the rule of law.

DAHLIA LITHWICK, MSNBC LEGAL ANALYST: I mean, I think, Alex, so this is the mistake we keep making is thinking that the rule of law or the legal system or accountability are ends in themselves and that, you know, if Merrick Garland can just perform independence, if Joe Biden can just perform independence, if Jack Smith can just perform that he is acting independent of the White House, then somehow the rule of law gets vindicated.

And I think what we are learning very dispiritingly as you say is that the rule of law is not in an end in itself, and that all of these fancy Harvard law accredited people are perfectly happy to say this has nothing to do -- I didn't read the indictment, don't care what's in the indictment, don't really care what the Presidential Records Act says or what the Espionage Act holds, just want politics to win.

And the way you do that, you obviate the need to have a legal conversation by simply saying the words witch hunt, saying the fix is in, saying deep state, and then everybody who believes in you doubts that illegal resolution can never be fair. And I think, just the most depressing thing that I keep saying is this statistic that says, 76 percent of Republican primary voters are already convinced this is a purely partisan witch hunt investigation and they know there's a threat to national security that what was done the underlying sort of predicate facts here are deeply, deeply damaging to national security, and to, you know, relationships with allies, and don't care because it's a witch hunt.

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And I think once you're at the point where politics has outrun the rule of law, where politics and power are an end in themselves, you get to this exact place where whoever says witch hunt loudest, whoever says weaponize the Justice Department most ferociously wins the day.

WAGNER: Yeah, well, it feels like the end of something in the beginning of something else. I mean, Claire, to Dahlia's point about the "I don't care, I don't have to read the indictment", I was shocked that the work reported this week that Chuck Grassley, the former chair of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate said about the indictment: I haven't read it at all. I'm not a legal analyst, I'm going to leave that to the professionals to tell us about it. I've read everything I can of secondary sources of it but not the original.

I mean, Claire, you know Chuck Grassley. This person -- it's the former chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee saying, I can't read about that indictment, I'm not a legal analyst.

MCCASKILL: Yeah, and he's the same guy that's running around saying that somehow the Justice Department is being weaponized. How do you know, Chuck? You know, stop running for a minute, God love you. He's a very old man who has kept himself in great shape physically, but mentally he has got to absorb the fact that this indictment is full of evidence. It's evidence.

And they don't want to read it because they don't want to be confronted with evidence. They're way more comfortable doing this.

And, you know, my question for them is this, too -- you know, the FBI is widely respected around the world in terms of its training, in terms of the job they do, in terms of getting really bad guys that work worldwide and ones that particularly are good at doing crimes across state line, human trafficking, drugs, money laundering, all kinds of complex crimes. What do these guys think are going to happen if they just fire everybody? What -- all of a sudden, another FBI is going to spring up that's perfect?

I don't even understand how this would work. Who enforces the federal law while they're busy going out and finding hundreds and hundreds of guys that work in sheriff's departments in some rural community that you say, go Trump, and try to train them to do some of the most complex legal work -- investigative work in the world. I don't even understand how they can say this with a straight face.

WAGNER: Yeah, I mean, I think that that's a such an important point to make which is what they're proposing is actually on its face ludicrous.

And, Dahlia, I would go to you on this notion of the unified -- the theory of the unified executive -- the unified executive theory. The idea is that the president has all the powers and all the powers are consolidated under him which seems really and in unofficial legal parlance wackadoo, right, but it is -- it is incre -- I mean, it seems like this theory is actually being embraced by some on the far right.

I mean, can you talk a little bit about that? And what kind of threat that poses to a free and fair democracy?

LITHWICK: I mean, it's so fascinating in that piece that you cite from "The New York Times." The most amazing fact in it is that the big purveyor or one of the big purveyors of this theory that we should tear down the wall between the Justice Department and the White House and the Justice Department should just sort of serve at the pleasure and mercy of the president is none other than Jeffrey Clark, who was the guy you may recall who Donald Trump wanted to be attorney general, not because he was fit to be attorney general but because he was the only person at the DOJ who would have done whatever Donald Trump wanted done, so he could stay in power.

[21:15:17]

And so the notion that, you know, these post-Watergate reforms, these essential reforms that tried to construct a wall -- the wall that, you know, Senator McCaskill describes between the DOJ and the White House, the notion that we're going to take

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that wall down so that we can construct an entire Justice Department that does nothing for four years but go after the Bidens for no crime that has been named just for being Biden and that that is an idea that isn't being embraced under this theory of the unitary executive, this sort of monarchic theory of presidential power is -- shows to me how far we have moved.

Even Bill Barr, the most sort of discredited uh justice department official that we had pretended that there was a wall between the Justice Department and the White House. Now, we're not pretending anymore. That's a far, far move in a couple of years.

WAGNER: Claire, Biden has told the White House and aids to take a vow of silence on the topic of the indictment. He's directed the DNC to do the same. And I understand that from a legal perspective and to some degree a political one.

But, you know, if these calls are met unanswered, I mean what fills the void? Do you worry about that strategy?

MCCASKILL: Well, it's scary. I mean, I will admit um seeing people that are as educated as Ron DeSantis and Jeffrey Clark and the Heritage Foundation and people who purport to be constitutional originalists spout this stuff is scary. And the fact that they're feeding it to Trump supporters and Republicans as fact when it's not is also scary because dolly is right the rule of law is what we perceive it to be um it is if people have to believe in it and they are doing incredible permanent damage.

Now, I will say this -- I don't think most Americans want a president in charge of deciding who is prosecuted, and I think most Americans see that this is a serious case with real evidence. I wish the federal court would see the beauty of a televised trial in this instance, but regardless, I do think that most Americans will come down on the side of what Joe Biden believes in and what I believe in and what we all believe in, and that is cases should be decided on the facts and the law and nothing else.

And I think that provision will win the day politically even if the other side is feeding all his B.S. out to their supporters.

WAGNER: I appreciate you sounding a note of hope.

Claire McCaskill and Dahlia Lithwick, thank you both for your time tonight. I really appreciate it.

MCCASKILL: You bet.

WAGNER: Coming up, one South Carolina school district was shown this video about systemic racism. Wait until you hear what happened.

Plus, Donald Trump's reputation for not paying his bills, that reputation is catching up with him at a really, really inconvenient time. That's up next.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:23:01]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT: Are you ready? Are you ready? Food for everyone. Food for everyone!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: On Tuesday, shortly after he was charged with 37 federal criminal counts, Donald Trump visited the Cuban restaurant Cafe Versailles in Miami. It's an iconic restaurant where politicians love to stop for photo ops.

And while he was there, Trump promised to buy food for everyone. It was an unusually generous offer from Trump, who is not exactly known to have Santa-like instincts for giving.

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And so, everyone cheered, and there were presumably warm feelings in the room, and yay, free cafecitos for everyone. Except no one got anything.

"The Miami New Times" quotes a knowledgeable source who said that Donald Trump's stop at Versailles totaled about 10 minutes, leaving no time for anyone to eat anything, much less place an order. So, yeah, that sounds a little more familiar.

Trump is not really known for paying his bills after all. According to "USA Today", Trump has been involved in more than 3,500 lawsuits, a large number of which involve workers who say Trump or his companies have refused to pay them.

In 2021, Trump refused to pay Rudy Giuliani for his legal work as in Rudy Giuliani, the lawyer who spearheaded Trump's bogus claims of election fraud.

Last August, Fox Business reported that Truth Social stiffed a contractor out of more than a million dollars. A stand-up guy, free food for everyone.

This reputation is not helping Trump as he continues his search to find a lawyer to represent him in federal court in Florida. ABC News reported today that, quote, Trump's history of legal turnover has led some attorneys to turn him down while others have asked for retainer fees that Trump's team views as excessive.

However multiple sources also tell ABC News that Trump has several options for lawyers who could join his legal defense.

[21:25:06]

In the meantime, Trump's defense in Florida is being fronted by a man named Christopher Kise, a lawyer Trump retained last year and who made sure to get all of his money up front, \$3 million dollars to be precise.

Joining us now is Joyce Vance, former U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama and of course co-host of "The Sisters in Law" podcast.

Joyce, it's always good to talk with you and especially on a matter like this where I think a lot of people are -- don't know what exactly lawyers would be doing at this stage of the game and why it is important for Trump to have counsel representing him. Can you -- could you shed some light on that for us?

JOYCE VANCE, MSNBC LEGAL ANALYST: Sure. So this is a critical case to have a strong defense team from the start. And one of the reasons we know that, we saw Judge Cannon enter an order directing Trump's lawyers to proceed as quickly as possible to get security clearances so they can begin to review the government's evidence in this case. That's not a job for one lawyer. It may not even be a job for two lawyers. Frankly, the evidence looks to be fairly complicated and voluminous.

And the defense lawyers don't have a lot of time to get to work here. They'll need to prepare their emotions. They need to review the classified documents and under the CIPA statute, they'll have to indicate what they'd like to use at trial a lot of work to do you need your team in place to get there.

Joyce, in terms of Judge Cannon, I know that there's been a lot of -- well, we spent a lot of time on her CV yesterday, a lot of people have focused on her rulings in the special master case which were highly controversial and ultimately turned down, if you will. She today as you point out added an order to Trump's docket. That would suggest she's not recusing herself from this case.

Is that a fair assessment? And do you think at this point there is any chance she might/

VANCE: So I think she hasn't recused yet, but she has not been asked to. The Justice Department has not filed a motion asking her to recuse. We don't know what she would do if they file that motion. They may also decide to play the long game here and wait and see if she makes an additional ruling that's sort of in the same category as her earlier rulings on the search warrant case, the sort of thing that they would take an appeal on and then ask the court of appeals to reassign or to have the chief judge reassign the same case to a different judge on remand.

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The real risk here for the government though is they can appeal her now they can appeal her rulings pre-trial. Once there's a jury seated and double jeopardy has attached, her rulings will determine in large part whether or not there's a conviction. She controls for instance what evidence will be admitted at trial and if there's an acquittal, it's too late.

DOJ lawyers, prosecutors don't get a second bite at that apple.

WAGNER: Yeah, and I want to talk about that what evidence is admitted, it seems to be a big, big, big question that Trump's lawyers would like to litigate. They are not happy with the piercing of the attorney-client privilege, the crime fraud exception that was cited to effectively allow the DOJ access to Evan Corcoran, Trump's lawyer, his voicemail -- voice memos that have played a huge -- play a huge role in the indictment.

Do you think that there is a chance that Judge Cannon says these emails cannot be used or these voice memos cannot be used as evidence, none of the correspondence between Corcoran and Trump is admissible? And how much stock should we put in the 11th Circuit in terms of acting as a check on Judge Cannon?

VANCE: So lots of complicated difficult questions and, Alex, you know, my crystal ball -- I sort of try to not trot it out too often but I will do it in one regard here to the last part of your question about the 11th Circuit. The 11th Circuit has a good track record on this case in particular but in general over the sway of time. They believe in the rule of law. They follow the law. They're committed to doing that. They know how to move quickly one quick movement by the court is needed.

I think we can have confidence whether we like all of their rulings or not, I believe that the judges on that court will look at these issues and they will apply the law to the facts and that is something that we can have confidence in. You know, there are sophisticated nuances here, some involving the facts and some involving the law as to how Judge Cannon may look at this question of whether or not the government will be able to use evidence generated from Trump's lawyers.

There's a little bit of an aspect to this issue that that this particular issue has already been decided in this case by a judge in the District of Columbia, Trump tried to take an appeal.

[21:30:01]

And the court of appeals in the District of Columbia told him, no, we believe that the judge's decision that the government is entitled to use what would normally be lawyer-client material is one that will stand here. But there are still avenues to try to attack that we're in a different circuit. That decision was made in a pre-indictment posture, so perhaps Trump's lawyers will get some traction legally.

But when you look at the facts here, at least to the extent that we have seen in this indictment, what the government is alleging it can prove, it seems quite clear that this is a strong case -- as strong a case as I can remember seeing for piercing the attorney-client privilege, and when she gets down to considering the facts, she will have to rule the same way the judge in D.C. did.

WAGNER: As we're speaking about lawyers and Evan Corcoran in particular, it strikes me as in a word bonkers that this person has offered the most damning evidence in this Mar-a-Lago indictment and continues to represent Donald Trump in the January 6th probe that is launched by the special counsel's office. Does that strike you as odd?

VANCE: I think bonkers is the perfect way to describe this. You know, I don't really know what to make of it. As a lawyer, you have ethical obligations. The bar in the state where your bar license is issued certainly will hold you accountable if you violate those rules. It's a little bit curious of a decision by a lawyer that they wouldn't step aside, once a decision like this was made.

But Corcoran has maintained that he is not cooperating with the government that he was in essence a hostile witness and testified only to the extent that he was forced to. So this is unusual to say the least. I think that's fair.

WAGNER: Yeah. Well, also, given the difficulty that the former president is having in finding new counsel, it might not be

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wise to get rid of the counsel he does have.

Joyce Vance, thank you as always for making the time.

VANCE: Thanks, Alex.

WAGNER: We still have much more to come this evening.

Republicans are playing games with human lives, and creating a humanitarian crisis for Democrats to clean up.

Plus, what happens when you try and teach students about systemic racism in South Carolina? That's next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:36:59]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: This is Jamal. Jamal is a boy who lives in a poor neighborhood. He has a friend named Kevin who lives in a wealthy neighborhood. All of Jamal's neighbors are African-American, and all of Kevin's neighbors are white.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WAGNER: That video about systemic racism was part of an assignment that a high school teacher in South Carolina named Mary Wood, that she gave to her AP language class back in February. The video was supposed to prepare students for a writing assignment based on Ta-Nehisi Coates' book "Between the World and Me", an award-winning best-selling memoir that details America's complicated racial past and its present.

But Mary Wood's students never got to finish reading that book. Her school's administration stepped in and ordered her to stop teaching it in class after complaints from two students about the video you just saw. Last year, South Carolina state lawmakers passed a rule in the state budget that makes it illegal to use state money to teach any ideas related to race, including that an individual by virtue of his race or sex is inherently racist sexist or oppressive, and ideas that cause an individual to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of his race or sex.

If that language sounds familiar, it is because it's almost an exact replica of language in Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's Stop Woke Act, and thanks to the emails those two students sent to a member of their school board, we know just how uncomfortable these students were.

One email reads in part: hearing the teacher's opinion and watching these videos made me feel uncomfortable. I actually felt ashamed to be Caucasian. I understand in AP language where we're learning to develop an argument and have evidence to support it. Yet, this topic is too heavy to discuss.

Another wrote: I was incredibly uncomfortable and was in shock that she would do something illegal like that.

The students said their complaints not to the teacher but to a sympathetic school board member who was instrumental in escalating the matter. That board member, Elizabeth Barnhardt, ran for and won her seat with an endorsement from the Lexington County chapter of Moms for Liberty. And Moms for Liberty is quite enthusiastic about what is happening in Mary Wood's classroom.

Earlier this week, they retweeted teaching critical thinking does not require indoctrination. Students are pushing back.

Now, Moms for Liberty is an organization that first gained national attention by disrupting school board meetings in Florida over COVID policies intended to mitigate the spread of the virus. The group has since expanded its reach nationwide with what they say are 285 chapters in 44 states, and Moms for Liberty has expanded its focus as well to target books and the

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teaching of race LGBTQ rights and other inclusive curricula. That mobilization prompted the Southern Poverty Law Center to designate Moms for Liberty an extremist group.

[21:40:01]

Meanwhile, the group's influence is growing beyond the classroom. Last month or later this month, they are planning to hold a summit in Philadelphia and at least four Republican presidential candidates are expected to attend, because right now, culture wars are Republican policy.

Still to come tonight, 2024 presidential politics may be about to get weird. I mean, they are already kind of weird. But this time they are getting we are on the Democratic side. We are going to explain that.

Plus, Republican governors are using human beings as pawns to score political points, and in a game that has no winners. We will tell you what Democrats are doing about it, coming up next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:45:23]

WAGNER: At this point this stunt has become very familiar, migrants flown or bused from border states to liberal cities, often left in politically pointed locations like outside of Vice President Kamala Harris's D.C. residents. These are not coordinated humanitarian efforts. They are stunts by Republican governors using people as pawns to own the libs, often giving less than a day's warning to the local governments and charity groups helping migrants in those liberal cities.

It happened yesterday in Los Angeles. A local humanitarian group, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, in Los Angeles was tipped off just one night before Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott bused 42 migrants to their city. According to that humanitarian group, the migrants including children and toddlers arrived in Los Angeles after a 23-hour bus ride without food, a claim that Governor Abbott denies.

For many of these migrants, being shipped to a random liberal city means family separation and the disruption of their asylum claims, and that was the case for some of the migrants who arrived in L.A. yesterday.

One migrant told the California humanitarian group that he had an immigration interview in New York, which he now risked missing. He said: I don't know how to read. I don't know what this paper says. All I know is that they told me I need to be somewhere in New York. Is that nearby?

The group also told "The New York Times" that when they learned that Texas was busing migrants to L.A., they thought it could be a false alarm like the many they had heard in the past. In the past two weeks, Governor Ron DeSantis flew migrants to Sacramento, California, but the stunt has become so common that even though this was the first time a Republican governor sent migrants to California, the city was ready.

Last night, L.A. Mayor Karen Bass disclosed that she directed the city to plan for an event like this last year. So, yesterday, the migrants were immediately brought to a local church where they were given food and supplies and toys for the children. They were offered attorneys and help to getting to their actual intended destinations so that they might continue their legal immigration process.

This is not a natural disaster that Los Angeles developed a contingency plan for. It is a man-made one, and one that is now repeated so frequently that responsibly running a city requires planning for stunts like these.

Joining me now is Tim Miller, former communications director for Jeb Bush's 2016 presidential campaign and now writer at large for "The Bulwark."

Tim, thanks for being with me tonight.

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And I think the experience you had working with Jeb Bush is so critical in a moment like this when we try and understand how this sort of the cruelty, the expense, the gamesmanship that that all of this became good optics for Republicans seeking higher office. I mean, how did we get to this point?

TIM MILLER, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yeah, it's crazy how dramatically things changed. You know, I mean, Jeb -- to just as an example for how seriously -- he took this issue and he wrote an entire book with chapter upon chapter. And I'm sure not all of your viewers agreed with every single suggestion he had, but the whole point of it was how can we come up with a -- you know, reasonable policy that balances, you know, securing our borders with being humane, being compassionate -- remember compassionate conservatism, and just the departure from that to what we're seeing now just on both levels.

One, it's not a serious effort to solve the crisis, right? It's not as if Gregg Abbott was saying, oh, I'm going to go work with other governors, we need to share the burden, right? I mean, I interviewed Jared Polis for "The Bulwark."

Jared Polis is the type of governor who's reasonable, in Colorado. He's welcoming. He's libertarian. I have to imagine that's someone you could call up and cut a deal with Texas and say, hey, we'll share some of this burden. That's not what's happening.

This is -- this is not an effort to solve this problem. It's a total troll and it's a troll because, unfortunately, the reason why this has changed within the Republican Party, it's is it what -- it is what Republican voters want and the more relevant experience I have unfortunately, Alex, is not the Jeb campaign but last year during the midterm, going to a Kari Lake and a Blake Masters event in Arizona, the DeSantis migrant stunt, the B.S. migrant stunt was the biggest applause line of the day for Blake Masters.

Now part of that was because he has no personality, but another part of that just shows that this is what the Republican voters are motivated by this, and that's the most depressing part about the whole thing.

WAGNER: Yeah. I -- and I remember you going to that -- that event, Tim. The fact is -- I mean, there's -- there's the economic cost, right? Just -- if you're -- if you're an anti-migrant state, that is going to cost you economically given where labor is these days.

[21:50:05]

There's also the fact that Ron DeSantis has filled his coffers with \$12 million allocated to really just own the libs by using migrants as pawns. He's taking Texas migrants and paying for their flights to liberal cities, which is on so many levels absolutely -- I keep using the word bonkers in this program, but there is no other word for it. But the essence of this is what you point out, it's the cruelty piece.

And to me, it seems like immigration has become this kind of county fair for Republicans to show off their cruelest policies.

Why the lust to be mean to fellow human beings? Why is that -- why has that gotten such a toehold? Why is it -- why is that -- why is that seized the imagination of the GOP?

MILLER: Yeah. I mean, I think there is a lot of underlying elements. I don't -- I hate to blame everything on Trump, but I do think that Trump like did unleash people's darker angels, right, you know? I just -- I think that it's true. I think that people got a taste for this, of enjoying watching him insult, degrade, demean the people they didn't like, enjoy and make -- say things and propose policies that no one would ever have imagined, like a Muslim ban, or things like this.

And I think that opened the door to this and other copycats saw that there were these base instincts that within the Republican -- within the Republican electorate, that they had a response to this. And I just think that the DeSantis thing to your point, it is such a category difference. You have to say this.

I mean, the Greg Abbott thing is gross and like I said, he at least is on a border, you know? I mean, the DeSantis thing is a purely performative stunt that paid for by Florida taxpayers.

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So it's not conservative in that sense. There is no substantive need for it. He's surrounded by water. He's not on a border.

There is -- I -- there's no policy that he's solving. It is purely a "hey, I know Republican voters will respond to me being mean to these migrants" and more importantly, being mean to the liberals, the so-called snooty liberals that I'm going to send these people to.

And that is the sickest part about all this, at least with regards to DeSantis, is it's not even -- it's not even a policy issue that he's dealing with in the state. It's purely performative.

WAGNER: Yeah, and it bears mentioning that DeSantis won 58 percent of the Latino vote in Florida where he has enacted some of the most draconian immigration policy that's going to make it harder for migrants to go to the doctor and it's beginning to -- it's beginning to affect his support among Latinos. I just wonder if you think that so publicly broadcasting a just deeply cruel policy towards people who also happen to be largely of Hispanic origin is going to be a problem for Republicans seeking to win a general election.

MILLER: I do. I'm disappointed. DeSantis did do that and some of the rhetorical stuff was before the election, but the substance that was not, right? Like this bill that they passed in Florida, for example, where you have very deep punishments for people who are even traveling with you know migrants, giving aid to migrants, traveling across the state with them like bringing them from -- you know, where they might have traveled to, to another part of the state for shelter or whatever. Now, there's felony penalties for that at Florida.

So I do think that that will hurt him. I think that he benefited, you know, we could do a whole show on why Ron DeSantis ends up getting 58 percent. I think there are a lot of reasons for that. His opponent and some of the COVID elements and there are other things the Cuban community down there.

But I do think that it's going to hurt Republicans. And interestingly, some with Latinos, but a big portion with the folks they've lost -- college- educated suburban Republicans, my people who were attracted to a compassionate conservatism, you know, and who have abandoned the party in droves, and those are people of every -- of every race, a lot of white folks in the suburbs who are being turned off by this, and I think you're seeing that in Atlanta suburbs, Phoenix suburbs, you know, Republicans being punished. I think DeSantis would be punished in the same way that Trump would with those voters in particular.

WAGNER: And then there's just the weight on one's own conscience to send toddlers on 23-hour long bus rides with no food.

Tim Miller, thank you my friend for your time tonight.

MILLER: Thanks, Alex.

WAGNER: We have one more story for you this evening about how the 2024 race may be about to get weird for President Biden. That is next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:58:42]

WAGNER: You might remember this inflection point, back in February 2020. Following Representative Jim Clyburn's endorsement, candidate Joe Biden won the South Carolina primary, and that put him on a path to win the Democratic nomination.

Since then, President Biden has signaled of desire to get big, diverse states like South Carolina a larger role in his party's nominating process. Back in December, Biden has Democratic leaders to switch the parties primary calendar for 2024. He asked for South Carolina to go first, and leapfrog less diverse states like New Hampshire and Iowa.

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But, last February, when the DNC officially voted to adopt South Carolina's promotion to the front of the pack, New Hampshire and Iowa were not happy. New Hampshire officials said they would ignore the change and argued that state law requires them to hold the presidential primary at least one week before any other state. Officials in Iowa announced, they are in the process of holding their contest in the same day as the Republican caucus, which is in January. Also, at the front of a calendar.

And here is where things could get weird. If Iowa or New Hampshire go rogue, President Biden, the man who is certain to win the Democratic nomination, may be forced to keep his name off those ballots for noncompliance. And that means that long shot candidates like anti-vaxxer Robert Kennedy Jr., or spiritual adviser, Marianne Williamson, either of them could win the first two Democratic nominating contests of the year.

If that scenario, somehow, does play out, the DNC has warned it would strip those states of their national convention delegates, meaning their primaries would ultimately not count.

Tomorrow, in Minneapolis, the DNC's rules and bylaws committee plans to review and potentially finalize the primary plan.

That is the show for tonight. We'll see you again tomorrow.

And now, it's time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O'DONNELL."

Good evening, Alex.

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News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); World Elections (1WO93))

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NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 20658002

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June 15, 2023

We crashed a LEARNS town hall, and it was exactly what we expected

Gennie Diaz, For AR People

Jun 15, 2023

LEARNS is a baked cake, so why are Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Education Secretary Jacob Oliva traversing the state for feedback on a law that notoriously passed without input from public school educators?

Can Sanders “respect” teachers after calling them indoctrinators?

The answer is simple, especially after surveying who attends a LEARNS town hall: lackeys of the governor, Republican legislators, local GOP officials, Americans for Prosperity staff, and members of the recently-designated extremist group Moms for Liberty.

Every LEARNS town hall requires attendees to sign up via an RSVP link, but the signup page is not public. That’s because the link is passed around via invitation; maybe a few educators here and there end up with the link, but the vast majority of attendees are supporters of the governor and LEARNS. This is, of course, by design, so Sanders and Oliva can field softball questions and repeat tired and false LEARNS talking points.

When Sen. Bart Hester (R-Cave Springs) opened the town hall, he said its purpose was to get “the communities wrapped around the direction” lawmakers and the governor want. He also said that questions were not planted (several were), that all ideas were welcomed (they weren’t), and that they truly appreciate teachers and administrators (he’s on record calling administrators the “enemy”).

Even Governor Sanders joked that Hester was setting up the crowd to test her and Oliva. Everyone laughed, signaling attendees wouldn’t dare scrutinize the governor or her education plan.

But lightly sprinkled throughout the crowd of supporters were LEARNS skeptics, several of whom were public school educators. Joel Lookadoo, the 2020 Arkansas teacher of the year, reminded the governor that state leaders have regularly degraded public school educators. Lookadoo asked how Sanders planned to undo that damage. How would she instead inspire and support educators moving forward?

Sanders’ answer was as empty as her other LEARNS talking points. “We believe in you,” she replied. “If we didn’t, we wouldn’t have put such a huge emphasis on making sure our teachers are actually respected.”

The answer created some cognitive dissonance, considering Sanders has repeatedly referred to public school teachers as indoctrinators who fail to educate our kids. Sanders’ closest school-choice allies have echoed the accusations and gone a step

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further, accusing public school teachers of being morally bankrupt and calling their classrooms inferior products.

The governor tried to use teacher pay raises as evidence of her administration's respect for educators. But Sanders only added raises to her LEARNS agenda after a grassroots movement in demand of teacher pay increases became too loud for lawmakers to ignore. The Pay AR Teachers movement was so successful that both 2022 gubernatorial candidates added teacher pay raises to their policy platforms.

Question four was a soft lob to the governor and came from Nikki Beaver, who works for the Koch-funded group Americans For Prosperity. AFP is neck-deep in Arkansas's school choice movement; the group has hosted several school choice events, like their rally with Sanders at the Capitol. AFP is also running pro-LEARNS television commercials while the law awaits an Arkansas Supreme Court ruling on the bungled emergency clause vote.

Beaver tossed Sanders and Oliva an easy lawsuit question, giving the duo a chance to spout LEARNS propaganda. "I feel confident ... that the court will rule in our favor," Sanders said. "All of the new changes ... are on hold because I believe people are trying to play political games with our kids' future... I'm not going to let that happen."

We give kudos to the superintendent of Siloam Springs School district, Jody Wiggins, who asked about why the same standards for public schools are not applied to private schools and homeschool that will receive public dollars through vouchers. Oliva supplied a wimpy answer about how LEARNS is a pro-public school policy.

"If I was to push back a little bit, there is going to be accountability for the private school programs. It may not be the same — and I know that's what you're going to say — and it may not be there yet and it may get there one day ..." Oliva admitted. He continued with more deflections and pro-school choice rhetoric: "We can have this philosophical debate that it should be apples to apples... but we want to make sure those private schools have the autonomy to operate the frameworks that they have set up."

Somehow Oliva undercut his own accountability argument in a matter of a few sentences. No, the education standards for private schools receiving public dollars through vouchers are not the same as public schools, and those standards have yet to be developed. Admitting it proves vouchers are in fact providing choice for choice's sake, not so students in need of different educational care can explore quality alternatives.

To soften the blow of Superintendent Wiggins' question, mic jockey Rep. Delia Haak called on the University of Arkansas school choice program chair, Dr. Patrick Wolf. You can probably guess he peddled nothing but Sanders' praise and pro-school choice rhetoric.

Subsequent questions came from members of the Washington County chapter of Moms for Liberty, a newly minted extremist group that will host an upcoming summit featuring Oliva, Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley as speakers. Moms for Liberty is on record stating their desire to take over every level of government by electing their extremist members and pushing their far-right agenda.

But for those serious about public education, LEARNS is a crappy, already baked cake — and the cake makers know it. That's why regular stakeholders are not invited to the town halls. Instead, the governor's administration must pack out rooms with campaign supporters and GOP opportunists. The forum is neither serious nor meant to solicit genuine public feedback; it's a pep rally for pro-LEARNS messaging, Republican hobnobbing and gaslighting of the opposition.

The cake is baked and it definitely sucks. They're going to need a lot more fake town halls to sweeten it up.

The post We crashed a LEARNS town hall, and it was exactly what we expected appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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June 15, 2023

Musk Halts 'Trans' Censorship Spree on Twitter

Gabriela Pariseau

Jun 15, 2023

Many have suspected an internal rebellion at Twitter against owner Elon Musk's vision of a free speech platform. And now we have evidence to show that Musk's moves to make Twitter more of a free speech platform have been successful despite attempts by his disgruntled anti-free speech employees to thwart him.

In recent weeks, Twitter has begun to slow its censorship of those criticizing the "transgender" movement. The shift came after the platform changed its "deadnaming" and "misgendering" policy on April 18, and following several staff resignations, including the head of Trust and Safety chief Ella Irwin's departure on June 1.

Twitter saw a 261 percent drop in censored users and posts critiquing the left's radical "transgender" ideology in the month after the policy change (April 18 through May 17, 2023) compared with the month prior (March 18 through April 17, 2023), according to data found in MRC Free Speech America's CensorTrack.org database.

The month prior showed an unprecedented spike in censorship of content related to the "transgender" issue. Although it is too soon to tell whether this recent free speech win will last, the drop from 142 cases of censorship the month before the policy changed to just 37 cases after shows considerable promise.

MRC Free Speech America researchers have repeatedly found Twitter to be by far the internet's worst censor. Even when it came to Big Tech censoring critics of the left's radical "transgender" ideology in the past year (June 10, 2022 - June 9, 2023), Twitter made up 92 percent (or 635) of the total 689 cases of censorship and two thirds of those cases occurred under Musk's leadership. MRC Free Speech America Vice President Dan Schneider attributes this to embattled employees' fighting tooth and nail against Musk's vision of Twitter as a free speech platform.

"Right after Musk took over, he announced that he wanted to make Twitter a free speech platform for the world. But we immediately saw rank-and-file employees launch a mutiny against him," Schneider said. "Our numbers show that censorship exploded in the first few months after Musk bought the platform. Basically, there's been a civil war going on inside of Twitter."

It seems this "civil war" and "mutiny" escalated when Twitter staff blocked users from drawing attention to a "Trans Day of Vengeance" protest that was set to take place on April 1, just days after a Tennessee school shooting perpetrated by a radical left-wing "transgender" individual. Censorship skyrocketed, affecting prominent users like Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), The Federalist CEO Sean Davis and The Daily Wire podcast host Michael Knowles, RedState's editor-at-large Ben Kew, The Daily Wire's investigative reporter Luke Rosiak, The Post Millennial and its senior editor Angy Ngo, podcaster

Musk Halts ‘Trans’ Censorship Spree on Twitter, 2023 WLNR 20760173

and journalist James Lindsay and radio host Andrew Wilkow.

Twitter employees censored no fewer than 66 tweets exposing the disturbing protest over the course of four days. In the case of Knowles, Twitter censored a Bible verse condemning vengeance. He posted Romans 12:19 alongside the “Trans Day of Vengeance” promotional graphic calling attention to the protest. “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord,’” he tweeted. The platform later reinstated the tweet.

At the time, Twitter’s head of Trust and Safety Irwin defended the sweeping censorship related to tweets promoting the “Trans Day of Vengeance,” but she neglected to explain why those calling attention to the protest were also censored. “We had to automatically sweep our platform and remove >5000 tweets /retweets of this poster,” she tweeted. “We do not support tweets that incite violence irrespective of who posts them. ‘Vengeance’ does not imply peaceful protest. Organizing or support for peaceful protests is ok.”

The internal censorship scuffle came to a head when Musk tweeted The Daily Wire’s What is a Woman? documentary and said that “Every parent should watch this.”

It all comes back to Twitter’s infamous “hateful conduct” policy. The platform removed parts of the policy that prohibited “misgendering” and “deadnaming,” or referring to a “transgender” individual by the person’s birth name and pronoun instead of the preferred name and pronoun after “transition” on April 18. Six weeks after the policy change, The Daily Wire had planned to tweet out the What is a Woman? exclusive documentary on the anniversary of its release, June 1, but Twitter staff had other ideas.

The Daily Wire CEO Jeremy Boreing tweeted that Twitter employees claimed the platform would not promote the documentary as The Daily Wire initially paid the company to do because of “misgendering” included in the film. When Boreing brought up the policy change, Twitter staff reportedly informed him that “they only removed ‘misgendering’ from their policy because they didn’t need to be that specific, but that they still consider ‘misgendering’ abuse and harassment.”

Boreing noted that the platform planned to restrict the reach of What is a Woman? so that even The Daily Wire’s “own followers would not be able to see it in their feeds.” He added, “This, they said, is part of [Twitter’s freedom of] ‘speech not reach’ policy.”

Musk, however, was having none of it. He responded to Boreing, in a tweet saying, “This was a mistake by many people at Twitter. It is definitely allowed.” On the evening of June 1, Twitter initially restricted the reach of the film, preventing users from liking, tweeting or sharing the video. But by the morning of June 2, Musk himself tweeted the documentary and said via tweet, “Every parent should watch this.” That same day, Irwin announced her departure from Twitter along with Brand Safety employee Maie Aiyed and Brand Safety & Ad Quality head A.J. Brown.

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) June 2, 2023

Every parent should watch this <https://t.co/pIp6UP6vq8>

”It appears to me that the head of the mutiny decided to walk the plank instead of complying with orders,” Schneider said. He added that “Elon Musk finally put a halt to the mutiny when he tweeted Matt Walsh’s What is a Woman?. Censorship has been in rapid decline, and he is now able to make his platform a true platform for free speech.”

Musk’s efforts to promote free speech on the “transgender” issue have come just in time. A new Gallup poll found that “A majority, 55%, consider ‘changing one’s gender’ to be more ‘morally wrong.’” In October a similar poll conducted by McLaughlin & Associates found that 75 percent of voters “believe that the transgender movement has gone too far by encouraging underage minors to use drugs and surgery to transition to the opposite sex.” Now the majority of Americans can enjoy true free speech and speak their minds on Twitter.

Musk standing his ground is a good start to making Twitter a free speech platform, but it is impossible to ignore the massive amount of censorship that has occurred under his watch to date.

Musk Halts 'Trans' Censorship Spree on Twitter, 2023 WLNR 20760173

Censorship of those who speak out against the left's radical "transgender" ideology tripled over the last year, largely because of unchecked censorship on Twitter. Using the MRC CensorTrack.org database, MRC Free Speech America found that Big Tech collectively silenced 689 accounts or posts from users who dared critique the left's "transgender" narrative between June 10, 2022 and June 9, 2023. That's a 359% increase from the year before when platforms censored users 192 times between June 10, 2021 and June 9, 2022. The overwhelming majority of this year's cases (635 of 689, or 92%) were a result of Twitter censorship.

The platform silenced mothers concerned about children being indoctrinated by the left's woke, "transgender" narrative and detransitioned women sounding the alarm about the horrific reality of medical transition. The platform also halted users from exposing which children's hospitals offered transition treatments to minors.

Twitter suspended Moms for Liberty's account in July 2022, after the organization tweeted a response to a tweet about California's SB107 bill that made California a sanctuary state for minors seeking gender transition treatments, according to purported screenshots tweeted by the co-founder of the organization, Tiffany Justice. "Gender dysphoria is a mental health disorder that is being normalized by predators across the USA," the tweet read. "California kids are at extreme risk from predatory adults. Now they want to 'liberate' children all over the country. Does a double mastectomy on a preteen sound like progress?"

The Post Millennial reported that "Twitter claimed that the account was limited for 'violating our rules against hateful conduct.'" Twitter's rules prohibit users from "targeting individuals or groups with content that references forms of violence" and the "dehumanization of a group of people based on their ... gender [or] gender identity." Starting the day after Twitter locked the Moms for Liberty account, Justice tweeted at Twitter and Twitter Support every day for five days, asking for the platform to restore the Moms For Liberty account. The platform eventually did restore the organization's access to the account but never restored the censored tweet.

Last October, Sinéad Watson, a woman who identified as a man and has since detransitioned and identifies as a woman again, tweeted about her experience with gender dysphoria and supporting others who struggle with gender identity. "Gender dysphoria is a horrible mental illness that nearly cost me my life, but I am no longer willing to lie or be 'polite' about it. I've seen and felt too much pain to care anymore. The 'gender' industry is evil. It has ruined even more lives than I can count, and I'm done with it," she tweeted according to screenshots she shared. Twitter locked her account for allegedly "violating [its] rules against hateful conduct" and Watson had to delete the tweet in order to regain access to her account. "I appealed, as the tweet clearly isn't hateful, but they rejected it anyway," Watson explained in a tweet.

Twitter also placed sensitive content filters over tweets by the Libs of TikTok and Billboard Chris accounts which tried to expose children's hospitals that perform "gender-affirming" treatments and care.

Libs of TikTok tweeted a video of a local news segment reporting on Akron Children's Hospital's "Gender Affirming Center." The account noted that the hospital offers puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones and that "They treat kids as young as SEVEN. One of the doctors claims puberty suppression just 'buys time.'" Canadian traveling protester of gender ideology, Billboard Chris, shared several videos from Boston Children's Hospital that featured staff members discussing the process of surgical transition for underage children.

In both cases, Twitter placed a sensitive content filter over the videos shared. Such filters require users who have not changed their default settings to click through the notice in order to view the content. Those without using the default setting in the mobile application are unable to click to view the content at all.

Obviously, Twitter, although the primary culprit, is not the only platform with a censorship problem. Video platforms particularly targeted those attempting to share their personal experiences with gender "transition."

Independent Women's Forum created a series called "Identity Crisis," in which it interviewed the mothers of girls who "transitioned" to appear as men and then detransitioned. In one video, the organization interviewed a mother of a teen whose school began socially "transitioning" her daughter without her mother's knowledge. "[The school] proceeded to tell me I have no say over anything my daughter wants to go by, or what's in her record or anything. The only thing I had say over was what her name was on her transcript," the girl's mother Susie said.

Musk Halts 'Trans' Censorship Spree on Twitter, 2023 WLNR 20760173

[embedded content]

IWF attempted to help Susie and other women share their stories more widely by promoting the video series and turning some of the videos into YouTube ads, but the anti-free speech, Google-owned platform claimed the video was “not eligible” under the “Health in personalized advertising” policy. The policy restricts “Physical or mental health conditions, including diseases, sexual health, and chronic health conditions, which are health conditions that require long-term care or management,” and “Products, services, or procedures to treat or manage chronic health conditions, which includes over-the-counter medications and medical devices.”

A lesser-known video platform, Vimeo, similarly blocked a documentary detailing the very real damage the radical left’s gender ideology has caused children and families, according to The Daily Wire. The film *Dead Name*,” revealed the struggles and concerns of three parents whose children began identifying as the opposite sex, The Daily Wire reported. The film followed the stories of a mother of a 4-year-old boy who’s daycare reportedly began socially transitioning him, a mother who said Planned Parenthood prematurely prescribed her daughter testosterone during a Telehealth meeting, and a father who said cross-sex hormones hurt his son who died at just 18 while fighting cancer.

[embedded content]

Vimeo deleted the producer’s account and removed the video for allegedly “violating our Terms of Service prohibiting discriminatory or hateful content,” the platform reportedly told The Daily Wire. But the filmmakers patently disagreed with Vimeo’s assessment of the film. “The film is the opposite of hate speech,” documentary director Taylor Reece said, according to The Daily Wire. “It’s love speech. In no way do any of these three parents, who tell the story of what it’s like when their child starts a journey toward transition, spew hate or dogma. Their stories are painstakingly personal, and at times unimaginable.”

Reece added that, “Unfortunately, there are factions out there who do not want this narrative and they have perfected the playbook on getting work like this ‘canceled.’” Reece reportedly said that the anti-free speech left’s censorship strategy backfired, as the documentary’s sales actually increased after it moved to another platform.

Conservatives are under attack. Contact Twitter at (415) 222-9670 and demand that Big Tech be held to account to mirror the First Amendment while providing transparency, clarity on so-called hate speech and equal footing for conservatives. If you have been censored, contact us at the Media Research Center contact form, and help us hold Big Tech accountable.

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Company: BIG TECHNOLOGIES PLC; Akron Children’s Hospital; MEDIA RESEARCH CENTER; THE CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL CORPORATION

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June 15, 2023

Section: National

Freakouts about schools and libraries CASEY: Regarding recent public freakouts about local libraries and public schools What's behind seemingly gra...

DAN CASEY The Roanoke Times

Freakouts about schools and libraries CASEY: Regarding recent public freakouts about local libraries and public schools What's behind seemingly grassroots efforts to ban lessons, books and imagery relating to sex or gender orientation in public institutions? A lot more than you might realize.

Certain events in Western Virginia regarding public libraries and schools may have left some folks questioning our region's collective sanity.

Let us consider just a handful of recent examples.

Last week, the Bedford County School Board became the first in Virginia to adopt a new policy that's been compared to a Florida public schools law dubbed "Don't Say Gay."

The new Bedford policy forbids teachers and staff from initiating discussions with students about "sexual orientation or gender identity." It defines "sexual orientation" as "an individual's physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same and/or different gender."

That's so broad, it arguably prohibits teacher-led discussions of human reproduction. That's an important subject, because the survival of humanity depends upon it.

In Roanoke County, parent Damon Gettier publicly vilified employees of Glen Cove Elementary, where his 9-year-old son is a student. In comments to the Roanoke County School Board, Gettier called Glen Cove educators "sexual predators disguised as teachers and staff." He claimed they were engaged in "child abuse, grooming, conditioning and indoctrination" of pupils.

To support his claims, Gettier cited a personal visit to the school, where he discovered "LGBTQA decorations" in the main office, in a music classroom, and depicted in Glen Cove's current yearbook. One yearbook image he flagged was a rainbow-hued sign proclaiming "EVERYONE WELCOME."

In Botetourt County, the latest big fear stems not from teacher or rainbows, but from "pornography" in public libraries. And this brouhaha, allegedly, has taken a criminal turn.

Cloverdale parent Danny Goad is demanding certain books be yanked from Botetourt County library shelves. In a May 30 letter that he distributed outside the Blue Ridge Library, Goad wrote the offending volumes have "pornographic images

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promoting pedophilia.”

And “these images, if seen by your children, will be engrained [sic] in their minds for the rest of life” Goad wrote. He also published the letter on Facebook.

It singled out two Republican supervisors, Billy Martin and Donald “Mac” Scothorn, who are currently seeking re-election. Goad claimed that for months, Martin and Scothorn have “stonewalled and obfuscated our efforts at every turn” to ban the books in question.

Early in June, Goad picketed a Botetourt gas station and a supermarket, holding signs in which he accused both Martin and Scothorn of allowing “PORN for Children in Libraries.” After Martin confronted him outside a Food Lion, Goad charged the supervisor with misdemeanor assault and battery.

”This is crazy,” Scothorn told me Wednesday. “He said I’m supporting pornography, which is absolutely ridiculous and wrong. I don’t support pornography in libraries, for children or anyone else.”

He noted that every volume in the library system is carefully reviewed by staff before being made available to the public, in accordance with Virginia law.

What people need to realize is that none of the above is occurring in a vacuum. There’s a far bigger picture involved.

Identical outcries about the same books and rainbow imagery are springing up in disparate locations all over the United States. And that’s no coincidence. Such local “grassroots activism” is being fueled by big-money national groups whose aims appear political.

They used to target high-profile liberals, such as U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, D-New York, but got little traction with those efforts. Now, they’re challenging low-profile Republicans on school boards and local governing panels. In a lot of ways, it looks like Republicans cannibalizing themselves.

One of the national groups is the organization Moms for Liberty, which launched in Florida in 2020 to fight student masking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In three years, the group has spread to more than 260 local chapters across the country, including in Bedford, Roanoke and Montgomery counties. Locally, its members enthusiastically supported Bedford County’s ban on teachers initiating discussions about sexual orientation or gender identify.

One of the Florida founders is the wife of that state’s current Republican Party chairman. He’s a close associate of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican running for the White House.

Moms for Liberty also has financial ties to the Heritage Foundation, a more established national conservative organization that dates back decades. One of its stated goals is to support “traditional American values.”

When the pandemic subsided and student masking evaporated as an issue, Moms for Liberty turned its efforts toward banning LGBTQ+ imagery (such as rainbows) and library books it deemed objectionable.

The Southern Poverty Law Center recently labeled Moms for Liberty an “anti-government” group in its publication, “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2022.”

”The group’s primary goals are to fuel right-wing hysteria and to make the world a less comfortable or safe place for certain students - primarily those who are Black, LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ families,” the SPLC report notes.

Scothorn sounded unfamiliar with Moms for Liberty, but he identified another national group as behind book-banning efforts in Botetourt. It’s known as Mass Resistance.

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Mass Resistance's website says it dates to 1995, when it was known as the Parents' Rights Coalition and it fought sex education curricula in public schools.

Julie Phillips, Botetourt County's library director, said Mass Resistance is challenging a list of 59 titles in school divisions all over the country. Its homepage is filled with articles ballyhooing those efforts in a variety of states.

Scothorn told me he wished the complaining parents would put as much energy into something sane and worthwhile, such as advocating for higher math and science test scores.

Of the 59 titles objected to by Mass Resistance, 13 are in Botetourt County libraries, Phillips said. The books have been complained about by three parents, she added. Broadly the titles in question cover age-appropriate material involving physical changes during puberty, sexual orientation and sexuality in general, she said.

Phillips noted that current library regulations require that children 13 and under in Botetourt County be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult.

In other words, if a child is reading a library book to which a Botetourt parent objects, the parent has nobody to blame but the parent.

In local libraries, "there is no pornography," Phillips said. "Nothing is obscene or pornographic in our collection. This is someone's personal take on certain materials. Other parents may find them helpful."

Anyone who's seeking porn, Scothorn added, "can find it faster on their phone, or on the internet, than inside a public library."

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HERITAGE FOUNDATION (THE)

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73); Virginia (1VI57))

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Other Indexing: (Bedford County School Board; Glen Cove Elementary; Roanoke County School Board; Republican Party; Moms for Liberty; White House; Parents' Rights Coalition; Southern Poverty Law Center; Heritage Foundation) (Dan Casey)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20766764

NewsRoom

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June 15, 2023

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender, race

ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK - To its members, it's a grassroots army of "joyful warriors" who "don't co-parent with the government."

To anti-hate researchers, it's a well-connected extremist group that attacks inclusion in schools.

And to Republicans vying for the presidency, it has become a potential key partner in the fight for the 2024 nomination.

Moms for Liberty didn't exist during the last presidential campaign, but the Florida-based nonprofit that champions "parental rights" in education has rapidly become a major player for 2024, boosted in part by GOP operatives, politicians and donors.

The group that has been at the forefront of the conservative movement targeting books that reference race and gender identity and electing right-wing candidates to local school boards nationwide is hosting one of the next major gatherings for Republican presidential primary contenders. At least four are listed as speakers at the Moms for Liberty annual summit in Philadelphia later this month.

Former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy have announced they will speak at the meeting at the end of June.

The group said it is in talks to bring others to the conference, including Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a fringe Democrat known for pushing anti-vaccine conspiracy theories.

The high interest in the event underscores how fights surrounding gender and race have become core issues for Republican voters. It also spotlights Republicans' eagerness to embrace a group that has drawn backlash for spreading anti-LGBTQ+ ideas and stripping libraries and classrooms of diverse material.

The group was founded in 2021 by Tiffany Justice, Tina Descovich and Bridget Ziegler, all current and former school board members in Florida who were unhappy with student mask and quarantine policies during the pandemic.

In two years, the organization has ballooned to 285 chapters across 44 states, Justice said. The group claims 120,000 active members.

It has expanded its activism in local school districts to target books it says are inappropriate or "anti-American," ban instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity, require teachers to disclose students' pronouns to parents, and remove diversity, equity and inclusion programs from schools.

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The group also has sought to elect like-minded candidates to school boards. In 2022, just over half the 500 candidates it endorsed for school boards nationwide won their races, Justice said.

Moms for Liberty pitches itself as a nonpartisan, grassroots effort started by passionate parents who call themselves “joyful warriors.” Yet the group’s close ties to Republican organizations, donors and politicians raise questions about partisanship and doubts over how grassroots it really is.

Co-founder Ziegler, who stepped down from the board in late 2021 but remains supportive of the group, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. Still a school board member in Sarasota County, she also is a director at the Leadership Institute, a conservative organization that regularly trains Moms for Liberty members.

Marie Rogerson, who took Ziegler’s place on the Moms for Liberty board, is an experienced political strategist who had previously managed the 2018 campaign of Florida state Rep. Randy Fine, a Republican.

The group also has quickly gained a close ally in DeSantis. In 2021, he signed Florida’s “Parents Bill of Rights,” which identified parents’ rights to direct their kids’ education and health care and was used to fight local student mask mandates.

In 2022, he signed a law barring instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through the third grade, a ban opponents had labeled the “Don’t Say Gay” bill and which has since been extended through 12th grade. Moms for Liberty had loudly advocated both pieces of legislation.

Ziegler appeared behind DeSantis in photographs of the latter bill’s signing ceremony. When the group held its inaugural summit in Tampa last year, it hosted speeches by DeSantis and his wife, Casey, presenting the governor with a “liberty sword.”

Even as Moms for Liberty has aligned with establishment Republicans, researchers say its activism is part of a new wave of far-right anti-student inclusion efforts around the country.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate and extremism around the country, designated Moms for Liberty as an “anti-government extremist” group in its annual report released last week, along with 11 other groups it said use parents’ rights as a vehicle to attack public education and make schools less welcoming for minority and LGBTQ+ students.

“They’re so loud and so aggressive that people are kind of scared into silence,” Defense of Democracy founder Karen Svoboda said of Moms for Liberty. “You know, if you see bigotry and homophobia, there is a civic responsibility to speak out against it.”

Moms for Liberty, in turn, said it will increase security for its meeting. Marriott hasn’t responded to the petition, and the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “extremist” designation hasn’t deterred any Republican candidate who plans to speak.

Haley responded by tweeting, “If @Moms4Liberty is a ‘hate group,’ add me to the list.”

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Government (1GO80); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20766764

Other Indexing: (GOP; Moms for Liberty; Leadership Institute; Defense of Democracy; Southern Poverty Law Center)

Keywords: (dcc;wire;lee-national;moms for liberty;gop;republicans;conservative groups;school boards;desantis;florida;parent revolt;parents;extremists)

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NewsRoom

Watchdog identifies nearly a dozen active hate and..., 2023 WLNR 20641994

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2023 WLNR 20641994

Hartford Courant
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June 14, 2023

Watchdog identifies nearly a dozen active hate and antigovernment groups in Connecticut

Alison Cross; Hartford Courant

Eleven Connecticut organizations appeared in the Southern Poverty Law Center's latest report on national extremist activities as local officials warn that hate-crimes are on the rise in the state.

The 2022 Year in Hate and Extremism study by the SPLC, a civil rights watchdog that works to track, expose and counter hate and extremism in the United States, included two Connecticut parents rights groups on its list of hate and anti-government organizations.

Connecticut Parents Involved in Education and the Fairfield County chapter of Moms for Liberty appeared alongside the Proud Boys and the neo-Nazis as groups that the SPLC tracked last year.

Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich said that the SPLC designation as an anti-government organization "can do real harm" in a response published by the Wall Street Journal.

"If it is now 'hate' or 'extreme' or 'antigovernment' to ask questions of public education officials, what does that say about parents' ability to be involved in their children's education?" Justice and Descovich said. "They (the SPLC) find it threatening that parents have become vocal and involved in the education system since the pandemic, and they want us to sit down and shut up."

The SPLC describes Moms for Liberty as "a far-right organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and self-identifies as part of the modern parental rights movement." They said the group "grew out of opposition to public health regulations for COVID-19" and now "opposes LGBTQ+ and racially inclusive school curriculum, and has advocated books bans."

In their fight against "woke ideology," Moms for Liberty pushes indoctrination and groomer conspiracy theories, SPLC said. The SPLC said chapters have referred to teacher unions as terrorist organizations, advocated for eliminating the Department of Education and teamed up with the Proud Boys and other controversial groups at rallies.

"The national organization and its chapters reflect views and actions that are antigovernment and conspiracy propagandist, anti-LGBTQ and anti-gender identity, and anti-inclusive curriculum," the SPLC said.

CTPIE, an offshoot of the U.S. Parents Involved in Education, which describes itself as a part of "national coalition of states attempting to abolish the US Dept. of Education," employs much of the same dogma.

A perusal of the Connecticut Facebook group of 359 members unveiled homophobic memes, anti-trans and critical race

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theory rhetoric, talk of a "war for the souls of our children," and users claiming a claim that the "antichrist" will be LGBTQ a member of minority religious groups.

In response to the anti-government group classification, the USPIE Facebook account called the SPLC's 2022 report a "hit job hate group list." Connecticut members called the label a "#badgeofhonor."

Other SPLC-identified extremist groups in Connecticut included statewide chapters of the anti-Muslim organization Act for America, the neo-Nazi Nationalist Social Club (NSC-131), the white nationalist Patriot Front, and the Proud Boys hate group.

The National Constitutional Coalition of Patriotic Americans, a group which believes that "this country has reached a place that our constitution never intended and are working diligently to correct the course through a variety of measures," was also added to the SPLC's list of active anti-government organizations in Connecticut.

Other groups with an anti-government label included two conspiracy-pushing media organizations, Waterbury-based We Are Change CT and The Post and Email based in Canterbury, as well as the Connecticut branch of The American State Assembly, which believes that the "original Government" unknowingly gifted its powers to a corporate government entity in DC, and that U.S. citizens are "governed by foreign corporate governmental service providers."

In 2022, the SPLC tracked 1,225 active extremist organizations in the U.S. Mirroring recent headlines in Connecticut, the SPLC said that these groups have shifted to grassroots efforts including flyering, demonstrations and displays, with schools emerging as "a primary target for locally driven extremist mobilization."

"We are exposing a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary," Margaret Huang, president and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center said in a statement. "These groups are descending on Main Street America and disrupting people's daily lives, too often with dire consequences for communities of color, Jewish people, and the LGBTQ+ community."

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Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); International Terrorism (1IN37); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Connecticut (1CO13); North America (1NO39); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Southern Poverty Law Center; Moms for Liberty; Proud Boys; Department of Education; US Dept. of Education; SPLC; neo-Nazi Nationalist Social Club; National Constitutional Coalition of Patriotic Americans; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

EDITORIAL:Another warning about danger to democracy..., 2023 WLNR 20617827

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Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era (PA)
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June 14, 2023

EDITORIAL:Another warning about danger to democracy posed by FreePA and Moms for Liberty

LNP, Lancaster, Pa.

Jun. 14—THE ISSUE — “Moms for Liberty and FreePA, two political entities that have been at the vanguard of Republican politics in Lancaster County since 2021, were labeled (recently) as ‘antigovernment’ groups that oppose democracy,” LNP — LancasterOnline’s Brett Sholtis reported last week. “The Southern Poverty Law Center included the two organizations in its annual report on hate and extremism. Both groups have Lancaster County chapters and have been embraced by some Republican elected officials. The groups’ critics say the designation will help spread the word about broader threats to electoral democracy, while defenders accuse the Southern Poverty Law Center of playing politics.”

We can’t say we weren’t warned.

In January 2022, Joe Mohler — then the chairman of the Lancaster Township Republican Committee — wrote a column for this newspaper decrying an election training partnership between the Republican Committee of Lancaster County and FreePA.

Who “a political party aligns itself with matters,” Mohler wrote. “FreePA is not an organization the county GOP has any business associating itself with. Its website has been a hub for spreading inflammatory and verifiably false information.”

He described FreePA’s conduct as “reckless, provocative and designed to exploit people’s base instincts.”

Mohler, of course, was right. But for the sin of being right he stepped down from his leadership position as members of the Lancaster Township committee prepared a resolution to remove him from it.

The Florida-based Moms for Liberty is cut from the same cloth as FreePA, but it wields far more power and influence. It’s a right-wing organization seeking to take over local school boards in the guise of protecting children from “dangers,” such as the accurate teaching of history, compassionate policies relating to transgender students and library books that reflect the realities of students’ lives and prepare them for the complexities of living in a diverse world.

Without the freedom to read, without free and fair elections, without truthful history, our democracy is doomed. Moms for Liberty is intent on speeding democracy’s demise at the local level, promoting liberty for its members and like-minded supporters — but for no one else.

We’re not surprised that Moms for Liberty and FreePA leaders were dismayed to be labeled “antigovernment” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. They view themselves as patriots, but the patriotism they espouse is narrow-minded and exclusionary.

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We were startled, however, by the willingness of Republican Lancaster County Commissioner Josh Parsons to attack the Southern Poverty Law Center in response.

"This is a political tactic to try to oppose those groups who they see as conservative," said Parsons, whose photo with FreePA activists is on the group's website.

His fellow Republican commissioner, Ray D'Agostino, was more measured. He told LNP — LancasterOnline's Sholtis that he wanted more information about how the Southern Poverty Law Center came to its decision to place FreePA within "the antidemocratic hard-right movement."

D'Agostino got perhaps more than he bargained for when Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, the law center's senior research analyst, provided a statement.

"Overall, FreePA trades in the rhetoric and goals of the larger antigovernment movement, fearing UN power and calling their political opponents Marxists and communists," Wiinikka-Lydon wrote. "They demonize their opponents, attack inclusive education and scapegoat LGBTQ persons, and they work with other organizations to undermine faith in legitimate democratic elections. They have also engaged in extremist activities and with extremism groups, from the January 6th insurrection to Moms for Liberty."

FreePA's connections to violent extremism are exemplified by some members' involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, Wiinikka-Lydon added. Three members of FreePA were arrested for their participation in the Jan. 6 riot, including Sandra Weyer of Mechanicsburg, who was convicted earlier this month of obstructing Congress' work and illegally entering the Capitol.

After Mohler's forced exit from leadership in the local Republican Party, we asked this question in a February 2022 editorial: "What does it say that the county GOP does not have space for a Liberty University graduate who believes in Reagan Republicanism?"

We'd ask another question now: What does it say that some within the county GOP have made room for two organizations deemed to be "antigovernment" by the Southern Poverty Law Center?

What does it say about the local school boards that have cowed to demands from Moms for Liberty and FreePA to implement policies targeting transgender student-athletes and restricting access to certain library books?

Sholtis interviewed Elizabethtown Area School District board Vice President Michael Martin, who said FreePA members have taken over the local Republican committee and helped to get election deniers and conspiracy theorists such as Danielle and Stephen Lindemuth elected to the school board.

Martin is concerned the FreePA school board members and candidates may "embark on a Christian nationalist agenda that will end up tying up the school district in lawsuits."

A self-described "fiscally conservative lifelong Republican," Martin did not seek reelection this year. Like Mohler, he now feels he has nothing in common with the right-wing extremists seeking to take over local GOP politics.

County Republicans can slam the Southern Poverty Law Center all they want, but they'd be better off heeding this newest warning about the forces with which they've become aligned.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Elizabethtown Area School District

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Legislation (1US12); World Elections (1WO93))

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Language: EN

Other Indexing: (FreePA; Moms for Liberty; Lancaster Township Republican Committee; LNP; Republican Committee of Lancaster County; Congress'; Republican Party; Southern Poverty Law Center; Elizabethtown Area School District)

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June 14, 2023

AP Notices “Moms for Liberty” and Disapproves

Dr. Tar

Jun 14, 2023

AP

To its members, it’s a grassroots army of “joyful warriors” who “don’t co-parent with the government.”

To anti-hate researchers, it’s a well-connected extremist group that attacks inclusion in schools.

And to Republicans vying for the presidency, it has become a potential key partner in the fight for the 2024 nomination.
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News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42))

Industry: (Transportation (1TR48); Transportation New Technology (1TR05))

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Ledger, The (Lakeland, FL)
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June 14, 2023

LGBTQ-plus supporters speak against removal of Pride proclamation at School Board meeting

LGBTQ-plus advocates criticized the Polk school superintendent's recommendation to delay a Pride Month proclamation until a policy can be adopted.

Paul Natcher, The Ledger

BARTOW — LGBTQ-plus supporters on Tuesday aired their opposition to the removal of an annual Pride Month proclamation before a packed Polk County School Board meeting.

Speakers ranged from former students and a former School Board member to teachers past and present as well as parents during more than an hour of public comments.

Days before the meeting, Superintendent Frederick Heid had recommended the School Board pull the proclamation from its agenda until a policy for bringing proclamations forward could be developed. The recommendation by Heid divided the School Board and disappointed members of Polk County's LGBTQ-plus community, their families and their allies.

Heid gave a statement as the board moved to approve its agenda Tuesday evening to clarify his recommendation and explain his reasoning.

"This is the second time now in a short period of time that we have removed a proclamation due to a lack of procedures," he said.

He cited the sporadic nature of the process over time by listing past proclamations that have skipped years. "You'll also notice that for Black History Month, we've only recognized that one for three out of the five years. Same is true for Hispanic Heritage Month.

"The LGBTQ History Month has been done interchangeably along with Pride Month," Heid said.

"The recommendation is not to pull and eliminate the pride proclamation altogether," he said. "The recommendation is to move it to October to allow us adequate time to address and create a proper procedure for the submission, review, modification and approval of proclamations going forward."

The district is expected to reach out to NEOLA for guidance in developing a proclamation procedure. The Ohio-based consulting firm provides policy-making assistance to school districts nationwide.

School Board member Kay Fields favored reading the proclamation on Tuesday like she has in past years.

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"I know that we have had a practice; we went from approving proclamations to just presenting because of some controversial things like tonight," she said. "I was very pleased to be asked to read the proclamation tonight, and I would have read it with pleasure. I read it in June of last year and I would have read it tonight.

Previously Polk school superintendent recommends removal of LGBTQ pride proclamation from agenda

For first time Florida United Methodists approve LGBTQ clergy at Lakeland meeting

Juneteenth 2023 Polk County celebrations start Thursday and run into July

"And I say, God expects us to love everybody and so no matter what, I am going to do what I am supposed to do because I am trying to go to heaven," she said.

Board member Lisa Miller also spoke about the inclusion, support and love from the community for all of the district's students.

"I appreciate what Mrs. Fields said, I hate to say it, it shouldn't take God telling us or the government, it should be we love every kid in this district."

Miller said Polk County was better off in this regard than other school districts and the rest of Florida.

"We don't have adversarial community support. There is a small group who keeps rebranding to try to sell it," she added, referring to Citizens Defending Freedom, a conservative group that recently shortened its name.

"But I'm telling you, your neighbors love your kids and love the school system and they volunteer every day," Miller said.

Taking to the microphone during public comments, Kerri McCoy, vice president of Polk Pride said, "I would like you all to know that Polk Pride, the group asking for this proclamation declaring June LGBTQ-plus month, does not have a problem moving the proclamation to October."

Others were not as diplomatic.

Former School Board member Sarah Fortney opposed the proclamation's withdrawal and used her time at the podium to counter some of Florida's recent laws impacting districts and classrooms.

"I am, however, very troubled about the right-wing extremist attack and the removal of DEI," she said, adding that the acronym meant diversity, equity and inclusion, in case "seat warmer" and School Board member Rick Nolte did not know what the letters stood for.

"Polk County sometimes lacks support much like the supposed delay in the Pride proclamation, and that leads to an unequal playing field for our various cultures, backgrounds, races, beliefs in public education," Fortney said.

"What is the true agenda? Forced ignorance, self-censorship elimination of cultural diversity and true history via whitewashing by whites in power, namely the one in Tallahassee (Gov. Ron DeSantis)," she said. "Book banning and curriculum manipulation are strategic, make no mistake."

During the 2023 Florida legislative session, the American Civil Liberties Union identified 10 bills that targeted LGBTQ people. Four were passed by the legislature and signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has announced he is running for U.S. president in 2024.

Kyle Moore of Women's Voices of Southwest Florida said, "Did you know that Florida is actually the most dangerous state for trans people – between the bathroom ban, gender-affirming care bans, everything else going on. I mean Manatee County just tried to remove queer students from their yearbook."

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Polk County budget Commission directs manager to reduce property tax rate by 3% for next budget

Sponsored by Lakeland's Scott Franklin US House passes bill to help citrus industry

Top home sales Home owned by Publix CEO is Polk County's most expensive sold in May

Moore said all marginalized communities needed to be recognized, including Blacks and Hispanics, and by refusing the Pride Month proclamation, "You're refusing to acknowledge a marginalized community that is actively under attack.

"You decided to reject our proclamation for the sake of order, decorum and policy, an excuse many school boards and other boards are making as an excuse to push harmful anti-trans, anti-queer ideology," Moore said. "Ideology that is in many cases being fed to these boards by recognized hate groups such as Moms for Liberty seeking to further the attacks on the LGBTQ-plus community."

Donna Windsor, a mother, told board members, "I am raising two Polk County students in a household where Black lives matter, women's rights are human rights, no human being is illegal, science is real, love is love and kindness is everything.

"That is the creed by which I am raising my children who attend your schools," Windsor said.

She also said it took courage for two of the School Board members to speak in favor of a proclamation and agreed with Heid that other groups worthy of a proclamation have not, on a consistent basis, had one, including veterans and librarians, among many others.

Still, she added that the actions of the Florida Legislature and the governor this year have posed a threat to LGBTQ-plus people, and that the board should not be taking away the proclamation.

"The pride community has had such a horrible year of being so threatened and so marginalized in this state just so that Ron DeSantis can run for president," Windsor said. She added, "They deserve the same rights, the same equality, the same safety that we all enjoy."

Windsor wore rainbow colored attire, like many others present at the meeting and an adjacent cafeteria with simultaneous televised coverage of the meeting. Unlike the others, Windsor also wore a body camera to record the events, a device she wears because of confrontations with opposition groups, she said afterward.

There had been long lines to get into the district's administration building in Bartow and through a metal detector. Also, there was a larger than usual contingent of sheriff's deputies in the hallways and board room.

The proclamation was not addressed by any members of conservative groups in attendance. At least two speakers read passages from books they said were currently in Polk school libraries that they wanted to be removed.

At one point, a woman from the Pride community placed a pair of white underwear near the purse of a woman who spoke about taking a book she found objectionable out of school libraries. The underwear fell on the floor and the women exchanged words.

Deputies then escorted both women out of the buildings and to their cars in the parking lot without filing any charges, a sheriff's spokesman said.

This article originally appeared on The Ledger: LGBTQ-plus supporters speak against removal of Pride proclamation at School Board meeting

---- Index References ----

Company: U.S. House of Representatives; The Florida United Methodist Children's Home, Inc.; American Civil Liberties Union

LGBTQ-plus supporters speak against removal of Pride..., 2023 WLNR 20634795

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

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Other Indexing: (Polk County School Board; Citizens Defending Freedom; Polk Pride; Polk County budget Commission; Moms for Liberty; Florida Legislature; US House; Florida United Methodists; American Civil Liberties Union)

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June 14, 2023

Section: News

Livingston County tightens down on communications after Pride Month promotion

Jennifer Eberbach

June 14, 2023

LIVINGSTON COUNTY — Livingston County has tightened down on communications after a promotion of local Pride Month events appeared in a newsletter from its Human Services Collaborative Body.

Commissioners passed a resolution Monday, June 12, that county-appointed entities cannot promote private events or activities outside the scope of the entity's mission.

Commissioner Wes Nakagiri proposed the resolution, but argued the move wasn't discriminatory. He told The Daily on Friday the newsletter, published May 25, promoted three local Pride Month events organized by the Livingston Diversity Council and the Pride Alliance of Livingston.

"I surmise there are people who will say this is discriminatory," he said, insisting the resolution "is not going after any specific ideology or group."

"I don't want the county to be promoting private events for anybody," he said. "It's just not appropriate. The events have nothing to do with the mission of the HSCB."

He reiterated those sentiments Monday, adding he wouldn't approve of county-appointed groups promoting events from the National Rifle Association or the Proud Boys, either.

The HSCB comprises 26 appointed members that coordinate health and human services across systems, according to the county's website.

Livingston Diversity Council Executive Director Nicole Matthews-Creech told The Daily on Monday that, despite his assertions, she believes Nakagiri's resolution is likely targeted.

"I don't want to speculate on the intention of someone else, and I can't speak for (Nakagiri) or the other commissioners, but I know there is a national movement to silence LGBTQ voices, and it seems to fall in line with that movement," Matthews-Creech said.

"The fact is that this community is made up of all folks, including folks in the LGBTQ communities," she said. "Any of the events we host are to provide services, provide support and connect people with resources. To me, that fits the mission of (the HSCB)."

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"It really disheartens me and concerns me that perhaps the commissioners are looking to restrict access to information to our community."

More than two dozen residents voiced their opinion Monday. Nearly all were opposed to the resolution.

Some warned the board that passing the resolution would hurt the LGBTQ community and impede access to support and resources. Some spoke about struggles like suicide, depression and facing discrimination, and the importance of feeling supported and included. Others said passing the resolution would send a message that people aren't welcome.

Representatives of the HSCB addressed the county board, as well, wondering why officials didn't reach out to discuss the newsletter before drafting a resolution.

"I think there's been some major misconception about exactly what our mission is and exactly what our scope is," said HSCB Chairperson Mark Hymes.

He said, while the resolution included a section from the HSCB's bylaws, it didn't include its actual mission statement, "which is ensuring a system of support for members of our community." Based on that, he said, "it seems well within our bounds (to) promote the events that we have in our newsletter."

David Christensen said he attended the Pride Parade on Saturday, "and can attest that human services were indeed provided. For instance, there were multiple booths connecting people to organizations, groups and religious institutions that would help provide them with other services and resources."

"Having an opportunity to connect marginalized people with each other is an essential human service," he said. "The opportunity for belonging and community is really important. It strikes me that this proposal is a bad faith attempt to stifle the connections of those in need or, to put it another way, to increase the barriers they face in their day-to-day lives."

"The language of the proposal is vague enough that, given the context from which it's coming, I don't have faith that it will be fairly applied in the future."

Opponents' comments weren't enough to sway the all-Republican board, which passed the resolution in an 8-1 vote.

The resolution

"This resolution prohibits any body, committee, board, authority, or any other entity appointed by the Livingston County Board of Commissioners from promoting events or activities of any entity when these events/activities are not clearly within the scope of the mission of the appointed entity."

Nakagiri added an amendment to the resolution Monday that says the county administrator will be the point of contact for follow-up questions.

Commissioner Jay Gross wanted to table the vote for "more exploration" and a chance to communicate with the HSCB and other boards, but he supported the county having oversight over what's promoted.

"It strikes me that perhaps we've got the cart before the horse in this situation," he said, but added, "We don't have a good process for monitoring activities of the various boards."

"Livingston County has a total of 39 different boards and committees that people are appointed to, and there's well over 300 people appointed to those boards for varying periods of time, and we literally have no follow-up at all."

He said the county board needs to establish a process for how it interacts with members of other boards.

"We have an oversight responsibility because all of these are under the umbrella of Livingston County," he said. "They are viewed as part of Livingston County, and what was the impetus for this resolution was something that appeared on the Livingston County website. It wasn't a separate, independent website, it was our website, and so by being in that location for

publication, in the eyes of the public, we're supporting this and advocating for it."

Commissioner Roger Deaton voiced his support for the resolution, but would have tabled it to learn more.

"When I thought about this ... it's pretty cut and clear that the county shouldn't be promoting any group, anything from the NRA or from the LGBTQ on our sites, and that's the way I looked at it," he said.

Commissioner Martin Smith was in favor of having guidelines for county communications, but was critical of how the resolution came about, noting policies are normally set by directors of departments and then brought to the board.

"This is something that should have come to us through administration," he said.

He also asked people to refrain from judging Nakagiri's intentions.

"I certainly understand. I have a similar experience in my family. There are issues of same sex attraction. There are issues of this gender fluidity, whatever we call it. I don't understand it. I'm not subject to it, but I don't think anyone up here is casting a stone that way. I really don't.

"If the public's feelings were hurt, if there is a cloud that exists, then I beg the pardon of anyone injured by this, but it certainly was not a deliberate attack by this board on anyone or any group."

Connections to Ottawa County?

Some have drawn comparisons between actions in Livingston County and West Michigan's Ottawa County, which recently moved to lock down its own county's communications. Nakagiri, who is often outspoken on conservative issues and was once a leader of the Livingston County Tea Party, has previously made comments in support of Ottawa Impact, which helped a slate of far-right candidates win a majority on the county's board in 2022.

The Holland Sentinel reported the most recent order from Ottawa County Administrator John Gibbs — a controversial figure hired during a tumultuous January meeting in which newly elected Ottawa Impact commissioners took several actions without providing the community warning in the agenda handed out prior — requires all media interviews, website updates, social media posts, press releases and newsletters from all departments be subject to administrative review, with some notable exemptions.

Those exceptions don't include the Ottawa County Department of Public Health, which is also embroiled in a battle with the board over what communications and actions constitute appropriate services and resources. Ottawa County Health Officer Adeline Hambley has an ongoing lawsuit against the board, claiming Ottawa Impact-linked commissioners have repeatedly interfered with her ability to do her job and wrongfully "demoted" her in January in an attempt to appoint their preferred candidate, Nathaniel Kelly, a COVID-19 minimalist with no experience in public health.

They also dictated to Hambley that Ottawa County will not issue any health orders that "overstep parental rights."

During a September meeting in Livingston County, when four commissioners voted to remove from the agenda a presentation by a parent who claimed the county health department overreached its authority with school quarantines, Nakagiri called the move "appalling."

"It's important to understand who you're voting for," he told the public. "I would urge all of you to Google Ottawa Impact. Remember Ottawa Impact, because Ottawa Impact was an organization of citizens who were fed up in Ottawa County with their board of commissioners. ... There's 11 commissioners in Ottawa County. They ousted eight of them over this COVID-related crap. So, I'm just telling you this. It can be done. People can be heard, and I encourage you to stay engaged."

A group formed to combat what it calls Republican extremism in Ottawa County has also spread its influence eastward to Livingston County. Ottawa Integrity announced in April a partnership with recently formed Livingston Integrity, which grew from the grassroots group Hartland Truth, created by concerned parents in the Hartland Consolidated Schools District in response to a group of candidates who campaigned together under the platform "education not indoctrination."

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Tumultuous school board meetings followed, and far-right ideologies have appeared to gain a foothold in the county, including through the Livingston County GOP, where Moms for Liberty member Jennifer Smith was elected chair for 2023.

Florida-based Moms for Liberty, a self-labeled “parents’ rights” group, was recently labeled an “anti-government extremist group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

— Contact reporter Jennifer Eberbach at jeberbach@livingstondaily.com. Local editor Cassandra Lybrink and executive editor Sarah Leach contributed to this report.

---- Index References ----

Company: NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Local Government (1LO75); Local Taxing Authorities (1LO66); Taxation (1TA10))

Industry: (Accounting, Consulting & Legal Services (1AC73); Real Estate (1RE57); Zoning (1ZO58))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Canada (1CA33); Michigan (1MI45); North America (1NO39); Ontario (1ON96); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Human Services Collaborative Body; Livingston Diversity Council; Pride Alliance of Livingston; Proud Boys; Livingston County Board of Commissioners; Livingston County Tea Party; Ottawa County Department of Public Health; Ottawa Integrity; Livingston Integrity; Hartland Truth; Livingston County GOP; Moms for Liberty; National Rifle Association)

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June 14, 2023

Section: News

Posting on pride divides Pulaski County Special School District meeting

Ainsley Platt

It all started with a social media post.

That social media post, which was shared June 1 on all of the Pulaski County Special School District schools' social media pages, read "June is Pride Month. This month we reflect on the progress of the LGBTQI+ community in the continued fight for equality and inclusion. #pcssdproud #equityandexcellence" followed by the words "Be Proud" over a rainbow-colored background.

According to some community members who spoke at Tuesday's School Board meeting, the outcry over the post -- which one parent said was made without the knowledge of school principals and the board -- led to the school district limiting interactions on the posts.

More than 15 people signed up to speak during the meeting, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, district teachers and parents, with dozens more in attendance.

Lizz Garbett, the first of nine to speak in support of the district's recognition of Pride Month, said she is the parent of four kids who attend district schools, some of whom are members of the LGBTQ+ community who had faced "horrible" bullying at the hands of their peers for their identity.

"Our diversity is what makes us strong as a community," she said. "I am a proud PCSSD parent tonight."

Other parents, such as Michelle Shirley, who has a child attending Oak Grove Elementary, said that the school district was focusing on the wrong thing.

"Please just focus on real education and not your sexual preference," Shirley said.

Karyn Maynard, the chairman of the Moms for Liberty chapter in Pulaski County, also addressed the board on behalf of her organization.

"We are very disturbed that the communications department felt the need to make a post about pride on every school page," Maynard said.

"We have emails stating that they removed the references to LGBTQ from the elementary pages because we complained that every one of those letters is describing a sexual relationship, but still refused to take the post down."

Posting on pride divides Pulaski County Special School..., 2023 WLNR 20733823

Ben Light, a teacher at Robinson High School, who described himself as being “stone-cold gay,” said that the post was one of the reasons he had continued to teach in the district despite having the opportunity to leave for jobs with less work and better pay.

”I see it in my own gay students who need a voice and you were there for them,” Light said.

Shirley, and other speakers such as Richard Maxwell, brought up religion, while another said the post made by the district was “indoctrination, plain and simple.”

”All this offends the LGBTQ, but what about Christians -- we aren’t allowed to be offended?” Shirley said. “Where is Jesus and God?”

Maxwell read from the Bible during his time at the podium and urged attendees to “stand and fight.”

”Take your stand against the devil’s schemes,” Maxwell said. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil.”

Jamie Young, a parent who just had a child graduate from the district, said her family was a Christian one that values the Constitution -- and that “in no way” had her family been indoctrinated by the school district. She said that groups were using religious ideology to threaten democracy.

”If we bring back Jesus into public schools, we will also have to bring back Allah,” Young said.

Raylan Smith, a transgender man, said he came to speak on behalf of those that couldn’t for fear of “social repercussions.”

”Thank you for showing support,” Smith said. “Your post offers hope to the many youth who don’t have support elsewhere. That hope is vital to their well-being and to their academic success.”

Superintendent Charles McNulty addressed the community complaints and provided the district’s reasoning behind the post.

”The district has an obligation under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the federal Equal Access Act to treat students and clubs equally,” he said. “The district posts content related to students and student clubs. To exclude only the LGBTQ+ students or clubs from inclusion in the district’s communication would single out those students and clubs for exclusion and would be a violation of the students’ and families’ right to equal access protection.”

In addition to discussion on the post made on the school social media pages, the board passed a number of policy changes to bring the school district into compliance with the LEARNS Act, such as requiring record keeping of material that was moved to prevent access by minors and making the meetings of committees that make decisions on material challenges open to the public.

CORRECTION: A social media post, which was shared June 1 on all of the Pulaski County Special School District schools’ social media pages, read “June is Pride Month. This month we reflect on the progress of the LGBTQI+ community in the continued fight for equality and inclusion. #pcssdproud #equityandexcellence” followed by the words “Be Proud” over a rainbow-colored background. An earlier version of this story incorrectly worded one of the hashtags.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Posting on pride divides Pulaski County Special School..., 2023 WLNR 20733823

Other Indexing: (Pulaski County Special School District; Oak Grove Elementary; Moms for Liberty; LGBTQ)

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Section: Main

Rep. Frost, anti-hate group went too far Orlando Sentinel Editorial

Last week saw two events that since then have been burrowing their way toward each other in our brain. First came the appearance of U.S. Rep. Maxwell Frost, D-Orlando, at a June 2 Washington, D.C., concert of the band Paramore. After being invited to the stage by lead singer Hayley Williams, Frost leaned into the microphone she offered and bellowed “F- Ron DeSantis! F- fascism!”

A few days later, the Southern Poverty Law Center added Central Florida-based group Moms for Liberty, along with a handful of other organizations, to its list of hate and extremist groups operating in the U.S.

In both cases, the backlash has been as fierce and vicious as expected. We suspect that, among the vast and growing number of Americans who view themselves as unaffiliated with - and often disgusted by - either side of the yawning political divide in our country, both Frost and the SPLC have undercut their own credibility. That’s a critical mistake in times like these, where voices of reason and unquestionable moral authority are desperately needed to burn through the noise of irrational, misleading rhetoric.

Frost’s shifting role

First, to Frost’s outburst: Most, by now, are aware of Frost’s story. He is the youngest member of Congress, its first member from Generation Z and possessed of a multi-cultural background as varied as Congress has ever seen.

He surged to national prominence on the strength and broad appeal of his innate political skills - which saw him evolving into a skillful orator and activist years before he was old enough to vote himself. As the New York Times pointed out, when Frost took office he was, at 25, less than half the average age of the House combined. We suspect he’s also the first member of that august body to be featured on the cover of Teen Vogue.

But that doesn’t change the nature of the office he now holds. He was not elected simply to burnish his own celebrity. By behaving in a way that undercuts his reputation among his colleagues, he plays into the narrative that he should be taken less seriously because of his youth.

In fact, the opposite is true. Frost is seen by many as the first champion from the ranks of a generation betrayed, a vanguard against the woeful legacy that the nation’s children and young adults are being left by the unprecedented irresponsibility of their elders. To rise to that challenge, he must first hold himself to a higher standard.

There’s another reason to lament this outburst, one that hits closer to home. Members of the House are called “representative” for a reason: As soon as he stepped into the role of congressman, he took on the duty of defending the interests of 700,000-plus constituents - most of whom never voted for him, but now rely on him to advance local needs and help

residents of House District 10 interact with federal agencies.

Nobody expects Frost to suddenly start behaving like a Brooks Brothers autobot, or even to mimic the studied, disciplined demeanor of his own icon Barack Obama. (For one thing, Frost - as he demonstrated later in the Paramore concert - is a much better dancer.) But as a member of Congress, he must realize that he has surrendered the right to casually misbehave in public. And that includes dropping F-bombs on the elected leaders of his own state in a way that undermines his own moral authority and ability to carry out his duty to all the people whose interests he now represents, both in his district and as part of a generation that is just starting to come into its own.

Mislabeling the misguided

In our troubling times - where Nazi flags are being waved on public streets, and “anti-woke” tirades have become (as one letter-writer points out below) a dog whistle for racist and terror groups across the nation, the historic work of groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center has surged to renewed importance.

That’s why it’s so alarming to see the revered SPLC commit an unforced error. By naming political activists such as the book-banning group Moms For Liberty among the ranks of other far more dangerous groups, the SPLC elevates them to the status of (false) martyrs. It also dilutes the SPLC’s focus and cheapens its mission.

We appreciate SPLC Director Susan Corke’s impassioned defense of the decision to include book-banners on this year’s lists, but still think she’s wrong. This nation has always dealt with self-righteous crusaders who seek to inflict their version of morality on the general population. Anita Bryant’s cruel crusade against gay adoption comes to mind, as do the efforts to preserve Confederate icons in positions of reverence, misrepresent the impact of pandemics and deny Florida students comprehensive, reality-based sex education. Sometimes these battles persist for years, inflicting real pain on Americans when retrograde advocates move politicians to sacrifice reality on altars built of propaganda.

But there is a line that divides political activists from groups that forcefully promote sedition and violent conspiracy. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan and various iterations of American Nazi-affiliated militants don’t just deal in rhetoric. One recent example: The sorry citizens who now face charges of conspiring to murder Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood, some of whom have admitted to posting messages like “Just shoot Chitwood in the head” after the sheriff verbally blasted lowlifes accused of defacing a local synagogue. Others revealed the addresses and names of his children and grandchildren on an underground message board. These are real, tangible threats, not just rhetoric: They have crossed the line.

By blurring the critical distinction between speech and threat, the SPLC makes it harder to defend that line. They do so at a time when people like Ron DeSantis are attacking that distinction from the other side - attempting to criminalize protests and bully groups such as Black Lives Matter into silence.

In the long run, blurring lines will always enable society’s bullies and act to the detriment of those groups whose only defense is their right to speak out, loudly and with passion, about perceived injustice and abuse of power.

A higher standard

As we’ve noted, both Frost and the SPLC must recognize that this nation is facing critical turning points. Frost is in the vanguard pushing back against the political forces that have strip-mined Gen Z’s prospects for their own profits. The SPLC has long served as a leading voice against the nation’s darkest, most hidden threats.

That does not make this nation’s true defenders of liberty superhuman, or constrain them to be overly meek. It does, however, require them to hold themselves to standards much higher than those they seek to counteract. It’s not always easy. But it’s necessary - because they are speaking not just for themselves, but for huge numbers of Americans who are most vulnerable to abuse of power and threats of violent aggression.

The Orlando Sentinel Editorial Board consists of Opinion Editor Krys Fluker, Editor-in-Chief Julie Anderson and Viewpoints Editor Jay Reddick. Contact us at insight@orlandosentinel.com

Rep. Frost, anti-hate group went too far Orlando Sentinel Editorial, 2023 WLNR 20582967

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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NewsRoom

NJ says LGBTQ+ kids' rights still at risk after Hanover..., 2023 WLNR 20645516

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June 14, 2023

NJ says LGBTQ+ kids' rights still at risk after Hanover Township district revises policy
The township school district has adopted a controversial parental notification policy the
state says could violate the rights of LGBTQ+ youth.

Mary Ann Koruth, NorthJersey.com

The Hanover Township school board gave final approval Tuesday night to a parental notification policy that was revised after the state Attorney General's Office sued the district, saying the original policy violated the privacy rights of LGBTQ+ students.

But the Attorney General's Office has said even the revised version would still unlawfully discriminate against LGBTQ+ children.

The original version of the policy laid out criteria that teachers were expected to use to inform parents about concerning behavior exhibited by their children related to a range of problems, such as eating disorders and depression, but also sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Attorney General's Office argued that both the original and revised versions of Policy 8463 could violate a child's right to privacy by exposing gay and transgender children, who are protected by New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination.

Last week, the board rewrote the policy and took out any language about sexual orientation and gender identity, but lawyers for the state said it still did not pass legal muster and repeated their request for a temporary injunction to be put in place until the lawsuit is resolved.

For subscribers: Hanover school district removes 'gender identity' from disputed parental notice policy

Even the amended policy "is likely to unlawfully discriminate against LGBTQ+ students," the state attorney general said in a letter to the judge sent Monday, responding to the school board's argument that the legality of the original policy was "moot" after it changed the language.

"We are grateful that while the Superior Court considers this matter, it has continued the temporary restraints prohibiting Hanover Township from implementing any policy that would require staff to out LGBTQ+ youth to their parents in violation of the law," the Attorney General's Office said in a statement released Tuesday after a court conference involving the judge, lawyers representing the Board of Education and the Attorney General's Office.

Assignment Judge Stuart Minkowitz did not rule at that meeting and did not lift the status quo emergency restraint on the original policy.

NJ says LGBTQ+ kids' rights still at risk after Hanover..., 2023 WLNR 20645516

Yet, just hours later, Hanover Township's school board adopted the revised policy. The policy is "in effect," board attorney Matt Giacobbe told NorthJersey.com after Tuesday night's Board of Education meeting, where people praised or criticized the trustees for the policy.

Supporters included a self-described "former homosexual" who called LGBTQ+ a "made-up ideology," a former state senator, and a parent who said schools must inform parents about "everything" and that children do not get to decide.

Critics included public school teachers and speakers who said they did not trust the board's intentions behind the amended policy, even after it removed language that describes sexual orientation and gender.

Giacobbe told NorthJersey.com the policy was in effect notwithstanding the Attorney General's Office's statement about the restraints staying in place.

"The revised policy is adopted, it is in effect, and we will continue working with the judge and the attorney general," Giacobbe told the audience at the meeting.

He also said the parties are scheduled to meet in court for another mediation conference next week aimed at reaching an agreement. The meeting in state Superior Court in Morris County is scheduled for June 20 at 9:30 a.m.

LGBTQ+ a protected category

The board's decision appears to up the ante with the state over the question of whether parents should be informed when their children confide in teachers or counselors about their gender identity or sexual orientation. State law treats this information as confidential, because LGBTQ+ children are a protected category under the Law Against Discrimination.

The Attorney General's Office said it had evidence that the district's intention with the first version of the policy was to expose these youth, and it has indicated that it opposes even the reworded version. The two parties could not come to a "mutually agreeable solution," the office said in its letter to the judge.

Speakers who supported the policy accused the government of "overreach" and argued that the state Education Department's guidance encourages teachers and children to "keep secrets" from parents.

The Murphy administration was trying to "strong-arm" parents, said Tayfun Selen, a Morris County commissioner. "I commend you for doing this," he told the board. "Let our parents raise our kids."

Public school teacher Stacey Van Seggern criticized the board for floating policies that create mistrust toward teachers and hurt children seeking out trusted adults in the safe space of a school to talk to.

"No teacher is looking to keep information away from parents," Van Seggern said. "I stand here in solidarity with the educational community." Putting additional reporting burdens on teachers would drive them out, she told the board.

'You spit in the judge's eye'

Retired Newark schoolteacher Terri Baird told the trustees that they were relying on bad legal advice in adopting the policy. "He's laying the groundwork for taking this to the state Supreme Court, and it's on our dime," she told the school board, referring to Giacobbe, the board attorney.

"You poke the bear, and now you spit in the judge's eye," Baird said. "Because the attorney general did not approve that change in that policy and you just went ahead."

Baird's spontaneous outrage made both audience and board members chuckle in the middle of a tense meeting. She chided "the group of five" — the board members who approved the policy — for sitting "stone-faced" on stage, and then pointed out that they had broken into knowing grins while she spoke.

Parental rights platform

Christine Egbert, Gina Johnston and Gregory Skiff, members who won the last election and took office in January, campaigned under "Hanover Education First," a parental rights platform that was endorsed by the Florida-based parental rights group Moms for Liberty. Board President Lisa Bomengo supported the original policy's intention to have teachers inform parents if their children wanted to change their sexual orientation, according to meeting minutes from April 25.

NJ says LGBTQ+ kids' rights still at risk after Hanover..., 2023 WLNR 20645516

Bomengo was elected in 2021.

Meanwhile, the state's request to Minkowitz for an injunction to be put in place while its lawsuit plays out remains in limbo. The school district's "eleventh-hour amendment to the policy does nothing to lessen the need" for an injunction, the Attorney General's Office told the judge in its letter Monday.

The injunction was necessary also because of the district's "steadfast refusal" to include in the new policy any information about the Department of Education's Transgender Student Guidance for School Districts, it said.

The revised policy requires all staff members to "take necessary steps" and "promptly inform a student's parent(s) whenever a student discloses an issue and/or exhibits behaviors that may have an adverse impact" on their well-being.

This article originally appeared on NorthJersey.com: NJ says LGBTQ+ kids' rights still at risk after Hanover Township district revises policy

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Government Litigation (1GO18); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Board of Education; Moms for Liberty; Department of Education)

Keywords: (Hanover, NJ,LGBTQ Rights,K-12 education,People & Society,Primary & Secondary Schooling (K-12),Discrimination & Identity Relations,Lobbying,Legal,Sensitive Subjects,Local News,Courts & Judiciary)

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June 14, 2023

California school district considers policy of outing transgender students to parents

By Andrew Sheeler, The Sacramento Bee

Chino Valley Unified School District staff would be required to out transgender children to their parents or guardians, under a proposal being considered by the school board Thursday.

If approved, that policy would put the school district at direct odds with the California Department of Education, which has issued guidance to school districts to protect the privacy of transgender students who may not be out at home.

A spokeswoman for the CDE said that the department stands by its guidance, “which promotes the goals of reducing the stigmatization of and improving the educational integration of transgender and gender nonconforming students, maintaining the privacy of all students, and supporting healthy communication between educators, students, and parents to further the successful educational development and well-being of every student.”

The proposed policy would require schools to notify parents and guardians in writing within three days of learning that a student has requested to be identified by a different gender. They must also be informed if a student has used a name other than their legal name, or accessed a bathroom other than the one for their sex assigned at birth.

”This policy is meant to foster trust between district employees, and our students’ parents and guardians,” said District Board President Sonja Shaw in a statement. “I stand for the authority of parents to guide the upbringing of their children and their involvement in decisions related to their education, health, safety, and wellbeing.”

The policy is supported by the Coalition for Parental Rights, which includes the California Family Council, the Pacific Justice Institute, and Moms for Liberty. The latter group recently was designated an anti-government extremist organization by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

In a statement, the coalition pointed to a recent Rasmussen poll showing that 62% of California voters would support a law requiring schools to inform parents and guardians if their child is transgender.

The group also included a statement from Riverside Republican Assemblyman Bill Essayli, author of Assembly Bill 1314, which would have required notification. The Chino Valley school board voted in April in favor of a resolution in support of that bill.

The bill never got a hearing. The chair of the committee that would have heard the bill called it bad policy that “would provide a forum for increasingly hateful rhetoric targeting LGBTQ youth.”

Essayli called his bill “a commonsense proposal.”

California school district considers policy of outing..., 2023 WLNR 20618211

"It was stopped by the supermajority Democrat(sic) Party in Sacramento despite strong support from parents. While they certainly have the votes to control the agenda in Sacramento, they do not have the votes to stop us in our communities," Essayli said.

Transgender youths often have a reason for keeping their gender identity secret at home.

An August 2021 study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* found that transgender and gender-nonconforming adolescents are more likely than their peers to experience physical, psychological or sexual abuse. A 2022 survey by the Trevor Project found that fewer than a third (32%) of trans and nonbinary youths view their home as a gender-affirming place.

The proposal, which comes during LGBTQ Pride Month, is happening amid a wave of violence and hostility toward that community. State legislatures across the country have passed laws restricting access to gender-affirming care, prohibiting trans people from accessing the bathroom matching their gender identity and removing trans children from the custody of gender-affirming parents.

Even in liberal California, there are pockets of anti-LGBTQ sentiment throughout the state.

In Chico, the school district has been sued by a mom angry that the district allegedly helped her child transition genders without informing her. Rep. Doug LaMalfa recently testified against that district's policy of protecting the privacy of transgender students.

In Temecula, the school board voted to reject a social studies curriculum that included San Francisco politician Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in the state.

In Glendale, a brawl broke out outside the school board meeting as the board voted to affirm a resolution recognizing June as Pride Month.

And a school district near San Diego is facing a lawsuit from two teachers who allege that the First Amendment protects their right to inform parents and guardians whether a student is transgender.

Jorge Reyes Salinas, of the LGBTQ advocacy group Equality California, said that Chino Valley Unified's proposal is "truly sick" and that it "directly, blatantly goes against state law."

"This is not the first time that we're seeing this from the Chino Valley Unified school board," he said.

The board in November 2021 narrowly voted down a resolution that would have excluded transgender students from using bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identity. Both Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and Attorney General Rob Bonta's office issued a statement warning the board against voting for the resolution, according to EdSource.

Salinas accused Assemblyman Essayli of carrying out his agenda at the local level after failing to get it passed statewide.

"It's disgusting, it's truly disgusting for a person who has a position of leadership to target LGBTQ youth," Salinas said.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; California Department of Education

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

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Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); North America (1NO39); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Coalition for Parental Rights; California Family Council; Pacific Justice Institute; Moms for Liberty; Chino Valley school board; Southern Poverty Law Center; California Department of Education)

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June 14, 2023

School Boss' Pro-Trump Rant Is Definition of Indoctrination
Photo Illustration by Elizabeth Brockway/The Daily Beast/Getty/AP/HandoutOklahoma
schools rank 49th in the nation, so you might assume the official...

Michael Daly

Photo Illustration by Elizabeth Brockway/The Daily Beast/Getty/AP/HandoutOklahoma schools rank 49th in the nation, so you might assume the official in charge of running them would have more pressing concerns than issuing a completely bonkers statement regarding Donald Trump's arraignment in Miami federal court."Joe Biden Leading a Banana Republic Coup Against American Justice," announced the press release from Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters on Monday. The accompanying statement has nothing to do with education and proved that the dunce elected last year to supervise the schooling of 700,000 kids is either a result or a perpetuator of far right indoctrination-possibly both."We are seeing the most profound unwinding of the U.S. Constitution that our country has ever experienced since the Civil War," Walters' statement begins. "The impending arrest of former President Donald Trump is Joe Biden wielding power that one would find in a third-world dictator attempting to end his opponent's political campaign."Walters, who is 38, then proceeds from falsehood to conspiracy theory."The investigation is a highly coordinated trap by the DOJ, and the entire Democratic establishment promoting these actions."Walters ends by saying, "These are illegal actions by Biden as part of a banana republic coup on the entire judicial system and the Constitution."The truth is that Trump sought and failed to thwart the 2020 result with a Big Lie that he continues to voice daily-one that his followers still buy into wholeheartedly. He has bolstered his fantasy by installing a facsimile of the Oval Office desk in his Mar-a-Lago home and referring to himself in the third person. His pronoun is the royal, not the all-inclusive pronoun WE.He has also held onto a stash of classified documents and refused to relinquish them despite numerous pleas and warnings from investigators. He once said that nobody is above the law-but he strenuously sought to make himself an exception.Trump's arrest and arraignment in Miami on Tuesday afternoon should have been a teachable moment for school kids in Oklahoma, along with everywhere else. The lesson is that even a former president is subject to the law. That is one of the central principles that made America great in the first place and will continue to do so as long as we honor it.But in his statement, Walters chose fantasy over education-and you have to ask yourself why. Does he actually believe it?A recording of him talking about kitty litter boxes in classrooms-a wacky falsehood spread by him and other far-right loonies to rile up their base-sounds like he would believe almost anything about the "the radical left" that he has pledged to vanquish from his state's schools, along with their "woke ideology."Walters defended the far-right group Moms for Liberty when the Southern Poverty Law Center branded it an extremist group in its annual report released last week. And two days before he posted his delusional press release about Trump's arraignment, he retweeted an announcement by the Moms for Liberty that he would be one of the speakers at the group's upcoming summit in Philadelphia. Other scheduled speakers include Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who Walters seems to parrot often.Moms for Liberty bills Walters as one of "the most innovative leaders in education in America." Some of those who work with him might disagree. A state education official named Matthew Colwell who had, until last month, been in charge of overseeing Oklahoma's federal education funds told a local news outlet, "We had to convert a 1-pager to 4 to 6 bullet points for Supt. Walters because I needed to translate it like I'm talking to a five-year-old."Colwell, whose duties included the complex task of ensuring each of the state's 541 school districts received its due share, told The Daily Beast that Walters

School Boss' Pro-Trump Rant Is Definition of Indoctrination, 2023 WLNR 20523686

did not seem interested in the particulars of running a huge educational organization.”At some point you start to expect that somebody in a position of that importance is going to learn something about how to do the job,” Colwell said. “It felt more and more like he’s not really interested in doing the job that he has. I don’t know what job he wants, but it doesn’t seem to be being the leader of the school system in Oklahoma. It just kind of seems like maybe there’s something else out there.”Whatever that something might be, Walters’ strategy for getting it seems clear.”Tweeting and talking and spinning,” Colwell said. “Most of his attention [is] on really national political type stuff.”That would include what Walters calls liberal indoctrination-as well as so-called wokeism. He has also spoken out about supposed porn in schools, an issue that Colwell says is not on the forefront of most teachers’ or students’ minds.”None of that is like the concerns that people are raising in Oklahoma,” Colwell said. “These are not the actual issues that we hear every single day from teachers and superintendent and principals, what they’re really dealing with. Like the porn in libraries, nobody’s worried about that in schools. They’re worried about trying to get kids to go to the library.”He added that if principals see porn as a danger, it is the porn that kids can summon instantly on their cellphones.”And like sharing pictures of each other,” Colwell said. “That’s what principals are worried about. They’re not worried about, you know, some random book. No enterprising 13-year-old is going to search for porn by sneaking into his school library and find the one naughty book that got hidden there 10 years ago.”In terms of innovation, Walters prepared to offer teachers big signing bonuses with a five-year commitment. Colwell, who says he is fiscally conservative and politically centrist, pointed out that Walters’ plan appeared to violate state law-and maybe also federal regulations.”I guess the charitable way to say this is [Walters] has a higher tolerance for not complying with the law than I do,” Colwell said.Colwell was summoned to human resources on May 26.”They said, ‘I just got a call from your boss’” Colwell said. “[HR] got it directly from Ryan Walters that I was to be terminated, effective immediately.”Colwell subsequently filed a wrongful termination lawsuit. A Walters spokesperson dismissed it as “Yet another example of a baseless claim.””Contrary to being a public servant, this individual is a political activist who has no business being funded by Oklahoma taxpayers,” the spokesman went on. “This administration will not tolerate pre-existing bureaucrats who are not 100% committed to empowering parents, ending leftist indoctrination, and making Oklahoma’s public education the best in the nation.”The response sounded like a melding of Trump and DeSantis.Walters’ spokesperson did not respond to an inquiry from The Daily Beast about the Trump press release and how that fits with the duties of a state superintendent-or whether his bananas banana-republic version of the event is what he would like to see taught in the state’s schools.Read more at The Daily Beast.

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News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Oklahoma (1OK58); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Donald Trump)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty to rally against Pride Month at tonight's..., 2023 WLNR 20493717

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2023 WLNR 20493717

Arkansas Times
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June 13, 2023

Moms for Liberty to rally against Pride Month at tonight's school board meeting

Stephanie Smittle

Jun 13, 2023

Thought "don't say gay" was soooooo 2022? Think again. Pulaski County's chapter of Moms for Liberty is keeping the homophobia flame burning tonight at a Pulaski County Special School District board meeting, where they evidently plan to protest against ... "equality and inclusion?"

Make no mistake; when this post says "inappropriate topics for minors," it's tapping into a wellspring of rightwing ideology that reduces LGBTQIA peoples' entire identities to sex. Pretending we need to somehow protect kids from knowing gay people exist is an old trope, but it's one that's worked wonders with a right-leaning voter base since the Reagan years and beyond, back when Christian conservative alarmists were fear-mongering about the dangers of the so-called "gay lifestyle."

The Moms are gonna be so disappointed when they find out queer folks are everywhere in Arkansas, mowing their lawns and clipping coupons and paying taxes and, ya know, trying to exist as humans in a community with their fellow humans.

The post Moms for Liberty to rally against Pride Month at tonight's school board meeting appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Human Rights (1HU19); Social Issues (1SO05))

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Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Keywords: (Arkansas Blog); (homophobia); (Moms for Liberty); (Pride Month); (Pulaski County Special School District)

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NewsRoom

Ed secretary not available for town halls until you drop your..., 2023 WLNR 20484200

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Arkansas Times
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June 13, 2023

Ed secretary not available for town halls until you drop your lawsuit, Oliva tells CAPES

Austin Bailey

Jun 13, 2023

Arkansas Education Secretary Jacob Oliva declined an invitation from Arkansas CAPES to participate in a town hall with them, and asked that they refer any further correspondence to his attorney.

Oliva is referring here to a lawsuit challenging the effective date of the Arkansas LEARNS Act. Parents and community members in Marvell-Elaine joined CAPES (Citizens for Arkansas Public Education and Students) members to sue, arguing that because lawmakers did not vote on the emergency clause separately as required by the state constitution, the act is not yet in effect and won't be until Aug. 1. That means the Arkansas Department of Education does not yet have the authority to hand over the Marvell-Elaine School District to a charter management organization, they say.

CAPES volunteer Veronica McClane shared the exchange between CAPES and Oliva on social media Tuesday, noting that she didn't plan to go public with it but grew frustrated by how difficult it is to make it to the governor's town halls about the LEARNS Act, or to log in to watch live feeds.

We weren't going to publicly post this, but since @Sarahhuckabee and her friends @alexahenning and @JBarkerAR keep gaslighting us about the LEARNS town halls, we would love to know what organizations are allowed to host one? CAPES has been denied a town hall by @ArkansasEd. pic.twitter.com/vWLdUyPqSX

— Citizens for Arkansas Public Education & Students (@arkcapes) June 13, 2023

Oliva has made himself available to speak publicly with other groups, namely the pro-voucher, pro-school choice group Reform Alliance.

And next month, Oliva will be a featured speaker at the Moms for Liberty conference in Philadelphia. The announcement of his speaking engagement with a group known for its efforts to ban books and oppose mask mandates in schools during the covid pandemic came the same week the Southern Poverty Law Center added Moms for Liberty to its watchlist for anti-government extremism.

Clearly Oliva has been less accommodating and available to opponents of LEARNS, the 145-page behemoth education legislation that throws higher starting teacher salaries and new literacy resources together with charter school expansion and universal vouchers parents can tap to use public money for private school tuition.

Arkansas CAPES predicts LEARNS will chisel away at rural school districts, who will lose funding and support as charters,

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church schools and private schools compete for voucher funding. CAPES aims to put LEARNS before the voters in November of 2024.

They've got some high hurdles ahead of them, though. CAPES has only until July 31 to collect enough signatures to make the ballot. It's an expensive and labor-intensive proposition, but CAPES leader Steve Grappes says they're going full throttle.

He said Oliva's response, the verbal equivalent of a glove slap to the cheek, tracks.

"It's indicative of how this administration has treated us from the beginning," he said.

The post Ed secretary not available for town halls until you drop your lawsuit, Oliva tells CAPES appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Arkansas Department of Education

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Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (CAPES; Marvell-Elaine School District; Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center; Arkansas Department of Education) (Jacob Oliva)

Keywords: (Arkansas Blog); (CAPES); (Jacob Oliva); (LEARNS)

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NewsRoom

Targeting race, gender in schools, Moms for Liberty rises..., 2023 WLNR 20416311

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2023 WLNR 20416311

Boston Globe (MA)
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June 13, 2023

Section: News

Targeting race, gender in schools, Moms for Liberty rises as GOP player At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of the F...

Ali Swenson; Associated Press

At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of the Florida-based nonprofit.

NEW YORK - To its members, it's a grass-roots army of "joyful warriors" who "don't co-parent with the government."

To antihate researchers, it's a well-connected extremist group that attacks inclusion in schools.

And to Republicans vying for the presidency, it has become a potential key partner in the fight for the 2024 nomination.

Moms for Liberty didn't exist during the last presidential campaign, but the Florida-based nonprofit that champions "parental rights" in education has rapidly become a major player for 2024, boosted in part by GOP operatives, politicians, and donors.

The group that has been at the forefront of the conservative movement targeting books that reference race and gender identity and electing right-wing candidates to local school boards nationwide is hosting one of the next major gatherings for Republican presidential primary contenders. At least four are listed as speakers at the Moms for Liberty annual summit in Philadelphia later this month.

Former president Donald Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy have announced they will speak at the meeting at the end of June.

The group said it is in talks to bring others to the conference, including Republican Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina and Democrat Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The high interest in the event underscores how fights surrounding gender and race have become core issues for Republican voters. It also spotlights Republicans' eagerness to embrace a group that has drawn backlash for spreading anti-LGBTQ+ ideas and stripping libraries and classrooms of diverse material.

The group was founded in 2021 by Tiffany Justice, Tina Descovich, and Bridget Ziegler, all current and former school board members in Florida who were unhappy with student mask and quarantine policies during the pandemic.

In two years, the organization has ballooned to 285 chapters across 44 states, Justice said. The group claims 120,000 active

Targeting race, gender in schools, Moms for Liberty rises..., 2023 WLNR 20416311

members.

It has expanded its activism in local school districts to target books it says are inappropriate or “anti-American,” ban instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity, require teachers to disclose students’ pronouns to parents, and remove diversity, equity, and inclusion programs from schools.

The group also has sought to elect like-minded candidates to school boards. In 2022, just over half the 500 candidates it endorsed for school boards nationwide won their races, Justice said.

Moms for Liberty pitches itself as a nonpartisan, grass-roots effort started by parents who call themselves “joyful warriors.” Yet the group’s close ties to Republican organizations, donors, and politicians raise questions about partisanship and doubts over how grass roots it really is.

Cofounder Ziegler, who stepped down from the board in late 2021 but remains supportive of the group, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. Still a school board member in Sarasota County, she also is a director at the Leadership Institute, a conservative organization that regularly trains Moms for Liberty members.

Marie Rogerson, who took Ziegler’s place on the Moms for Liberty board, is an experienced political strategist who had previously managed the 2018 campaign of Florida state Representative Randy Fine, a Republican.

The group also has quickly gained a close ally in DeSantis. In 2021, he signed Florida’s “Parents Bill of Rights,” which identified parents’ rights to direct their kids’ education and health care and was used to fight local student mask mandates. In 2022, he signed a law barring instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through the third grade, a ban opponents had labeled the “Don’t Say Gay” bill and which has since been extended through 12th grade. Moms for Liberty had advocated both pieces of legislation.

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News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. President (1US75); U.S. Presidential Campaigns (1US04))

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Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; GOP; Florida Republican Party; Leadership Institute)

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Section: News

Pierre school board, administrators and public delve into reading

Michael Neary Capital Journal Reporter

Pierre School District board members dug into the topic of reading proficiency and approved – or considered – various handbook changes during a regular meeting Monday evening in the district board room.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt addressed the issue of reading early in the meeting during the phase devoted to superintendent’s comments.

”For quite some time we’ve heard that only half our students can read,” he said, noting that he wanted to “dispel just a little bit ... that information that you’ve heard.”

He said that the English Language Arts portion of the state assessment contains a number of components, with reading making up 37% of the assessment.

”You have writing, listening and research that’s also part of that,” he said. “So when we get our reading score from that one state assessment test, and it says 54% district wide ... that says that 54% were proficient or advanced on the ELA (English Language Arts) test, not a reading test.”

Glodt also noted different results from other tests done during the school year, noting that teachers do “all kinds of other assessments.” He mentioned assessments from NWEA and Acadience.

”If we look at those numbers, and we look at how many students are reading at grade level, that’s right at 70% district-wide,” he said. “Of course, we’d love that to be 100%.”

He stressed that students who aren’t reading at grade level receive extra services.

Board member Joan Adam described some of her own children’s experiences in the school district.

”One of our children scored consistently in the basic group for English Language Arts,” she said. “So when you hear the statistic only one out of two children in Pierre is proficient in reading, our son would not be one of those one out of two. He could certainly read, but as Dr. Glodt pointed out, there are many other factors in that assessment.”

Adam said her son’s “basic” level scores led to his receiving extra help.

”The wonderful thing about him scoring in the basic (level) is that immediately the teachers were very involved in number one finding books he was interested in,” she said, adding that all of her children graduated from high school in the Pierre

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School District and proceeded to higher education.

The Pierre School District's proficiency rate in the state assessments for the 2021-22 school year stood at 54% for English Language Arts, 51% for mathematics and 50% for science. Statewide, those rates for the same year were 51% for English Language Arts, 43% for mathematics, and 42% for science.

During the public comments portion of the meeting, Maggie Seidel, president of Moms for Liberty in Hughes County, also addressed the topic of reading. She began by asserting support for public schools.

"I just want to start by reiterating that our parents' group came forward to fight for strong public schools, and if we didn't want public schools we wouldn't be here," she said, and she stressed that she has used state data and terminology in her presentations.

Seidel posed several questions focused on reading.

"Why do we have to wait two years to change out the reading program? What can we immediately do to drive literacy improvement? Do we really need to spend another \$700,000 on textbooks like Journeys? Will there be a benefit to the students if that's the case, or are we continuing to prop up the big corporations selling those textbooks?"

She also asked how the board would "incentivize teacher participation in the state's Move Literacy Forward program" and advocated financial compensation for teachers who participate and complete the program.

Seidel voiced support for teaching phonics – noting that pieces in news outlets such as CNN and The New York Times have reached affirmative conclusions about phonics. She also stressed the need for parents "to know how to help their child if they're not proficient, whether that's reading, ELA ... math or science."

Later in Monday's meeting, the board approved revisions in several handbooks, including those for administrators, as well as classified and certified staff members. They also heard first readings of athletic and high school handbooks.

Kelly Hansen, principal of Riggs High School, noted that online learning – instituted to support students in the heart of COVID 19 – would now be eliminated as an alternative learning option.

After the meeting Glodt said the option was no longer heavily used and asserted the district's preference for in-person learning, contending that it has achieved better results.

Board President Dan Cronin also discussed school board goals for the coming school year. He noted that said improving attendance was now among those goals.

"Good attendance is a pathway to more opportunities for school success," he said.

Glodt said after the meeting that school attendance had not rebounded as robustly as desired in the wake of COVID 19.

"We had hoped this year that it would bounce back, and it did – but not to where we want it," he said. "We want to emphasize to parents how important it is that their kids are in school every day. It's pretty easy to get behind if you miss, especially if you miss a significant amount of days."

The board also approved results of this month's election, in which Cronin retained his seat by winning a three-year term. It will be his third term on the school board.

The board adjourned with plans to gather for a special meeting the following day: a fiscal year 2024 budget workshop led by Business Manager Darla Mayer. Mayer said she expects to present the budget at the board meeting on July 10, at which time the board will likely vote on it. No action was taken during the budget workshop.

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Pierre school board, administrators and public delve into reading, 2023 WLNR 20500527

Company: Acadience; THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

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NewsRoom

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June 13, 2023

Section: World Nation

Commentary: Purveyors of 'hate'? Concerned parents find themselves listed alongside the KKK

Tyler O'Neil, The Heritage Foundation

The far Left has found a new ultimate villain: homeschooling moms.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has added parental rights groups like Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education to its "hate map," plotting them alongside chapters of the Ku Klux Klan. The SPLC has long smeared conservative groups in this manner, but this move represented an attack on the parental rights movement on a grand scale.

The SPLC claims schools have been on the "receiving end" of "ramped up and coordinated right-wing attacks," completely ignoring the recent sickening leftward lurch in education. From "Drag Queen Story Hour" to pornographic books in school libraries to schools encouraging kids to hide gender transition from their parents, left-leaning school officials are the real aggressors here, and parents are struggling to keep up.

Yet the SPLC demonized concerned parents as an "anti-student inclusion movement" and put them on the map with the Klan. The SPLC drew a connection between parental rights groups and the "uptown klans" of the 1950s, which opposed *Brown v. Board of Education*. Susan Corke, director of the SPLC's "Intelligence Project" said groups like Moms for Liberty are "rooted in age-old white supremacy."

The attack would be laughable coming from somewhere else, but coming from the SPLC, it is both sinister and foreboding.

In fact, the SPLC's attack seems eerily similar to the Department of Justice's crackdown on parental rights protesters in 2021. Days after the National School Boards Association sent a letter comparing concerned parents to domestic terrorists back in 2021, Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a memo announcing the DOJ would direct resources to the "rise in criminal conduct directed toward school personnel."

An internal memo revealed that the Biden White House had collaborated with NSBA to draft the language of the letter, which urged the use of federal law enforcement and counterterrorism tools, including the Patriot Act, against parents.

That effort blew up in their faces. The FBI rescinded the memo and NSBA withdrew the letter, issuing an apology.

Yet the attacks on the parental rights movement have not stopped, and now the SPLC has gotten involved.

As I wrote in my book, "Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center," the SPLC began as a civil-rights nonprofit representing poor people in the South. It later began to target the Ku Klux Klan, suing many Klan

Commentary: Purveyors of 'hate'? Concerned parents find..., 2023 WLNR 20449608

groups into bankruptcy. All well and good, but after bankrupting many Klan groups, it took the program it used to monitor the Klan and weaponized it against conservative organizations, branding them "hate groups" and placing them on the map with Klan chapters.

The SPLC uses the "hate group" accusation to shame conservatives into silence. Former SPLC spokesman Mark Potok said the organization's "aim in life" is to "destroy these groups." In 2012, a deranged man targeted the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., for a mass shooting, using the "hate map."

Amid a racial discrimination and sexual harassment scandal in 2019, a former employee called the SPLC's "hate" accusations a "highly profitable scam." Even left-leaning litigators like former ACLU President Nadine Strossen and Military Religious Freedom Foundation President Mikey Weinstein have defended the mainstream religious freedom nonprofit Alliance Defending Freedom from the SPLC's attacks.

Yet many on the Left and in the legacy media still uncritically cite the SPLC, and the Biden administration has also engaged with this discredited smear factory.

President Biden nominated an SPLC attorney by the name of Nancy Abudu to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Democrat-majority Senate confirmed her, even though 18 state attorneys general raised the alarm about her nomination.

Biden's FBI also cited the SPLC in a memo targeting "radical-traditional Catholic hate groups." While the FBI rushed to rescind the memo after a whistleblower published it, the fact that the FBI even considered such a memo speaks volumes.

Now that the SPLC has followed the DOJ's lead in targeting concerned parents, it seems likely that the Biden administration may use the SPLC to relaunch the witch hunt it started in 2021.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Tyler O'Neil, managing editor of The Daily Signal, is the author of "Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center."

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Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; National School Boards Association

News Subject: (Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (11th Circuit Court of Appeals; Ku Klux Klan; Department of Justice; Biden White House; Family Research Council; Military Religious Freedom Foundation; FBI; Alliance Defending Freedom; Southern Poverty Law Center; National School Boards Association)

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NewsRoom

Erika Booth announces campaign for HD 35, 2023 WLNR 20468728

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 20468728

Florida Politics
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June 13, 2023

Erika Booth announces campaign for HD 35

Jacob Ogles

Jun 13, 2023

Osceola County School Board member Erika Booth wants a seat in the House. The St. Cloud Republican announced she will run in the Special Election to succeed Rep. Fred Hawkins.

"I've dedicated the last 20 years of my life to educating our children. Most importantly as a parent and also as a classroom teacher," Booth said. "As I began my service on the School Board, I have realized the issues facing educators, parents and our students cannot simply be solved locally and so, today, I have decided to run for State Representative."

Booth won her School Board seat just last year, winning the open Seat 5 post with more than 54% of the vote in August, according to Positively Osceola.

But the opportunity to run for a House post arose when South Florida State College voted to hire Hawkins as its new President.

Booth aligned herself with Gov. Ron DeSantis and the parental rights movement that has elevated organizations like Moms For Liberty to the political forefront.

"Governor DeSantis and this Legislature have made great strides in protecting students, giving greater control to parents and placing Florida at the forefront of innovation when it comes to classroom education — but the job is far from over," Booth said.

"For half a century, the Left has embedded themselves in our entire education establishment and it will take time and focus to root them out. Florida is now the beacon on the hill President (Ronald) Reagan spoke of. I will work day and night to keep that beacon lit and freedom alive here in the great state of Florida."

Booth is the third Republican to enter the field. Former Navy Commander Demetrios Grimes filed in May and former congressional candidate Scotty Moore announced this week.

Before her election to the School Board, Booth worked in education, and in 2014 was named Harmony Community School's Teacher of the Year.

She also worked as a project manager for Youth Leadership Osceola and Project OPEN, and has been involved in civic groups including Florida Farm Bureau, Bookmark Buddies Mentor Program, Silver Spurs Riding Club and the PEO

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Philanthropic Organization.

She is notably married to Osceola County Commissioner Ricky Booth, who won election locally in 2020.

Post Views: 0

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty founder says SPLC hate label 'painted a...', 2023 WLNR 20597575

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June 13, 2023

Section: Wex

Moms for Liberty founder says SPLC hate label 'painted a target on our backs'

Jeremiah Poff, Washington Examiner

The co-founder of the grassroots parent organization Moms for Liberty says the Southern Poverty Law Center has "painted a target" on the backs of parents by labeling her organization an extremist hate group.

The SPLC added several parental rights groups, such as Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education, to its "hate map" after it released its "The Year in Hate and Extremism" report for 2022. The map labels the parent groups as "anti-government."

DOCKWORKER TALKS THREATEN BIDEN WITH ANOTHER TOUGH DECISION BETWEEN LABOR AND ECONOMY

Tiffany Justice, the co-founder of Moms for Liberty, told the Washington Examiner in an interview that her organization's inclusion in the map and report was "insulting" and "absurd" and could have safety implications for the organization's thousands of members.

"They just painted a target on our backs," Justice said of the Southern Poverty Law Center. "They painted it on the backs of American moms and dads."

Justice, along with her co-founder Tina Descovich, wrote a Wall Street Journal op-ed on Sunday that said being included on the SPLC's hate map "can do real harm" and cited a retracted FBI memo that relied on SPLC reports to justify investigations into communities of traditional Catholics.

"If you're an American parent, you should be paying attention," the Moms for Liberty co-founders wrote. "The SPLC map could lead to a government crackdown on you - your ability to question school officials, testify at school board meetings, or be involved in what curriculum your child is being taught."

Justice told the Washington Examiner that she is "weighing all of my options," including a lawsuit against the SPLC over the organization's inclusion.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE FROM THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER](#)

"The media and others have tried to paint us as a far-right-wing organization, and it's just not true, and it's unfortunate because it's the silencing and suppressing of the voices of the American people," Justice said. "Moms for Liberty is not backing down. We're going to stand our ground. We're not doing anything wrong."

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The Southern Poverty Law Center did not respond to a request for comment.

Original Location: Moms for Liberty founder says SPLC hate label 'painted a target on our backs'

Washington Examiner Videos

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Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

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NewsRoom

What's the being called 'Anne Frank pornography'?, 2023 WLNR 20408564

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2023 WLNR 20408564

Jpost.com (Jerusalem Post online)
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June 13, 2023

What's the being called 'Anne Frank pornography'?

A new version of the famous Holocaust diary is being called 'Anne Frank pornography' and is in turn getting banned from schools.

Among the many books that conservative parents have recently asked their children's schools to remove is a lushly illustrated version of the most famous Holocaust diary.

The graphic adaptation of Anne Frank's diary, published in English in 2018, has found itself at the center of a growing number of controversies involving book removals from school libraries. A small number of passionate activists have pushed for the book to be removed from schools in Florida and Texas, calling it "pornography" and even "antisemitic." Sometimes, they've succeeded.

The movement to police children's literature - particularly graphic novels - on the basis of race, sex and gender has encompassed thousands of different titles, and it has grown to become a potent political force with potential reverberations for the 2024 presidential race. The official who has played one of the biggest roles in enabling parents to challenge school library books, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, is now running for president.

To defenders of the illustrated book - including the foundation created in Frank's memory, historians and Jewish groups - the inclusion of Anne Frank's diary among the list of banned books is a sign that the movement is bigoted and misguided.

Proponents of removing the book from schools say the graphic adaptation is essentially an obscene version that distorts Frank's legacy and aids in "grooming" children. Even some Jewish parents and at least one Jewish lawmaker have objected to the book's presence in schools.

"I read the diary of Anne Frank many times as a kid. I don't remember any of that stuff that they put in that graphic novel," Florida Rep. Randy Fine told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Calling the adaptation an "Anne Frank pornography book," Fine continued, "And frankly that graphic novel is antisemitic. To sexualize the diary of Anne Frank in that sort of inappropriate way, it is antisemitic."

Here is what you need to know about the book, the criticism it's facing and the context that has made it a flashpoint in a deepening culture war.

What is 'Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation'?

Published in 2018, "Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation" is a new, abridged version of Frank's famous diary presented in comic-book format. The project was authorized by the Anne Frank Fonds, the Switzerland-based foundation started by Anne's father Otto Frank, which controls the copyright to the diary Otto rescued after he survived the Holocaust. Anne herself perished in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after hiding out for most of the war with her family in an

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Amsterdam annex.

The Oscar-nominated Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman, together with illustrator David Polonsky, put the new book together. It was intended as a companion piece to the 2021 animated film "Where Is Anne Frank," which Folman directed.

While the film tells the fanciful story of Anne's imaginary friend Kitty coming to life and wandering through modern-day Amsterdam, the book is a straightforward, though heavily truncated, rendition of Anne's original diary. All of the entries it reproduces are taken from her original text, and dialogue between the characters in the annex is based on Anne's own recollections of their conversations. Some of its supporters resist the label "graphic novel," which they say implies the story is fictional.

The new book, the foundation says, is not meant to replace Frank's original diary, first published in Dutch in 1947 as "The Secret Annex" and in English in 1952 as "The Diary of a Young Girl." That book, along with subsequent editions that restored some passages edited out of the first publication, continues to be published and widely read in dozens of languages.

Why and how is the book being challenged?

A handful of parent activists, the largest "parents' rights" group in the country and at least one Republican state lawmaker - Fine - have specifically gone after "Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation" as part of their larger campaign against what they say is obscene and pornographic content in schools. After a few isolated incidents of parental opposition to the book over the last year, their efforts have gained steam in recent months.

Organized by members of "parents' rights" groups such as Moms for Liberty and No Left Turn in Education, parents nationwide have brought challenges against thousands of books in school libraries, the vast majority of which deal with topics of race, gender and sexuality. This movement began as parents organized to oppose COVID-19 mask mandates in public schools, and picked up steam in the aftermath of the 2020 racial justice protests following George Floyd's murder, as well as recent political controversies involving LGBTQ-focused issues such as medical procedures for trans children.

The groups operate under the presumption that their children's educators and librarians might be trying to sneak leftist viewpoints (including what they call "critical race theory" and "gender ideology") into the classroom, or even that they are "grooming" their children.

Increasingly, such parents have trained this focus on books, and have become particularly sensitive to any literary depictions of sex and/or LGBTQ identity - particularly in graphic or comic-book format. Some of the most-banned books in schools across the country are graphic novels and memoirs with LGBTQ themes, including "Gender Queer" and "Fun Home."

"People are just so uncomfortable with the idea of seeing anything represented visually," said Kasey Meehan, director of the Freedom to Read program at the literary free-speech activist group PEN America. "Time and time again, when graphic novels are taken, an image is pulled out of context or an image is held up and declared as porn."

Florida has emerged as a frontier for this movement under the leadership of DeSantis, who is a Republican. Under new laws he championed, educators can face felony charges for making obscene material accessible to students; the state also has a new law, dubbed "Don't Say Gay" by its critics, that prohibits any classroom instruction on sexual identity or orientation in elementary and middle school, and limits it in high school.

Why are parents complaining specifically about the graphic adaptation?

Critics of the book say they are objecting to the small handful of passages in which Anne describes sexual matters. In one, she discusses a time she asked a female friend if they could show each other their breasts, but was rebuffed. ("If only I had a girlfriend," she muses.) In another, she describes clinical details of her own vagina.

These passages are Anne's own writing, and were part of her actual diary. Folman and Polonsky reproduce them in the book and show a full-page illustration showing her wandering through a garden of female nude statues in the Greco-Roman tradition.

This illustration, which is presented as coming from Anne's imagination, has garnered the most intense blowback from

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parents. In Facebook groups devoted to book challenges, some members have shared screenshots of the page as evidence of the adaptation's obscene qualities, questioning why any parent would want their child to read it.

Some people challenging the book have offered other explanations. Tiffany Justice, a co-founder of Moms For Liberty whose Florida district has removed the book, told JTA that she was troubled by the fact that the adaptation only replicates a small percentage of the original diary, while leaving out what she believed to be crucial context: the original epilogue that shifted from Anne's first-person narration to a larger study of the victims of the Holocaust. (An afterword does appear in the graphic adaptation.)

Inveighing against current child literacy levels she said are woefully low, Justice was also infuriated by the idea that Frank's diary needed an illustrated version to begin with.

"Anne wrote the diary when she was 13," she said. "So the diary is written at a level where children of that age can completely understand it."

What has happened when parents have challenged the book?

The book first grabbed headlines in August 2022, when administrators at Keller ISD, a public school district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas, ordered staff to remove it (along with a selection of other books) from their shelves. The book had been challenged by a single parent the previous year, and the school's new board, backed by right-wing special interest groups, had ordered its review policy for classroom materials to be completely overhauled.

Any books that had ever been challenged in the district were to be removed from circulation until the matter had been resolved. Following public outcry, the book was returned to Keller's shelves a week later.

A second Texas school district, Katy ISD outside Houston, had also placed the book under review during the 2021-22 school year, ultimately determining it was only appropriate for high school students.

The book soon landed on the radar of parent activists in Florida. One Florida school district, Indian River County Schools on the state's Atlantic coast, ruled in April that the book was "not age-appropriate" at any level of instruction, including high school. A parent there had challenged it, claiming that the book "minimizes the Holocaust."

After a review, the district agreed with the parent, telling JTA it had determined the book to be "a fictional novel," "not the real diary of Anne Frank," and filled with "inappropriate content." The district superintendent issued a statement backing the ruling, citing Florida's statewide Holocaust education mandate as a reason why the school should not make the book available to students.

The national leadership of Moms For Liberty issued a statement siding with the district - and emphasizing that Anne Frank's diary is not itself objectionable.

"There are multiple versions of Anne Frank's diary of varying age appropriateness available to students," the statement said. "Only this ONE version was removed."

Justice, the Moms for Liberty cofounder, is a former board member for Indian River County Schools and still lives in the area. She told JTA she does not like the book either and said its removal was a sign of the system working as it should: School administrators took a parent's challenge seriously and came to a decision.

"If the superintendent and the school board wanted it there, it would be there," she said. "If the Holocaust education group in the county had wanted it there - these are Jewish people - had wanted it there, it would be there."

Another Florida school district, Clay County Public Schools outside Jacksonville, has kept the book restricted from student access for some five months and counting, following a single parental complaint earlier this year. That parent, Bruce Friedman, is Jewish, and has become a leading voice of the broader book challenge movement. He challenged the graphic adaptation along with hundreds of other books in his district that he deemed to be inappropriate for students. "As far as I'm concerned, it's grooming," he told JTA about the adaptation.

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Facing a backlog of book challenges, Clay County in April altered its challenge policy to make it harder for parents like Friedman to file blanket requests to remove many books at once for broadly defined reasons. But notably, the district retained the pending challenge to “Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Adaptation” even after its policy change. A final decision on the book is still pending.

How are the book’s supporters responding to the criticism?

Activists opposed to the book banning movement and experts on the diary’s publication history say critics of the Anne Frank adaptation are wrong even about the most basic facts of their objections.

First, while the visual format of the graphic adaptation (which incorporates some surreal imagery) arguably lies somewhere between fact and artistic interpretation, and its rendition of the diary is severely abridged, the book did not invent the passages these parents find objectionable, as some have alleged. Those came, word for word, from Frank herself. Both passages were fully restored to her English-language diary beginning with versions published in the 1980s, largely without incident.

A crucial part of the argument against the graphic adaptation is the idea that both of these passages were excised from the initial English-language edition of the diary. Both Friedman and Fine have told JTA they have no recollection of having read the passages with sexual content in their own childhood memories of the diary.

They almost certainly did, said Ruth Franklin, a book critic and author who is writing a book about Frank and her diary to be published next year by Yale University Press. According to Franklin’s research, the very first English-language edition of the diary did indeed include one of the two passages the parents are now objecting to: the part where Anne discusses her attraction to another girl.

Franklin said that, contrary to popular belief, Otto Frank was the one who pushed for the passage to be included in the diary’s first English-language edition after it was excised from the Dutch original. Otto is often portrayed as having been responsible for removing the passage so as to sanitize Anne’s language for a general audience.

Contemporary parents who insist they did not read the passage as children, she said, are “misremembering.”

“If they were to actually go to the library and open up the edition that has been in print since 1952, they would be unhappily surprised to find what’s there,” Franklin said. “It seems inconsistent to me to go after the graphic adaptation and not the diary itself.”

At least one parent has objected to the unabridged text-based version of the diary before. In 2013, a Michigan mom challenged an unabridged edition of the diary, citing the same passages that today’s parents are objecting to in the graphic adaptation. She argued that the unabridged diary was “inappropriate for the middle school,” and tried to push her daughter’s district to swap out the “definitive” edition of the diary for the original version that excised one of the objectionable passages. The parent’s objection made national news, was the subject of much condemnation and was ultimately rejected by the district.

Conditions in schools have changed in the last decade, with parents in multiple states newly empowered to challenge books in their children’s schools. The movement has caught up not only the graphic version of Anne Frank’s diary but a growing number of other titles with Jewish and Holocaust themes.

Meehan of PEN America suggested that the parents who objected to Anne exploring her sexuality were doing so because of the passages’ latent LGBTQ themes, meaning that the text had become an example of “intersectionality,” or representing more than one marginalized group. Some of the book’s opponents, including Justice, have separately attacked the idea of intersectionality.

“When there are multiple themes represented in a book,” Meehan said, “then that book becomes even more a focus of efforts to remove it.”

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For the Anne Frank Fonds , the Swiss group that controls the diary and authorized the adaptation, the situation is clear-cut. From across the Atlantic, the group issued a statement responding to challenges of the diary in all its forms: "We consider the book of a 12-year-old girl to be appropriate reading for her peers."

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Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Central Europe (1CE50); Europe (1EU83); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Switzerland (1SW77); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73); Western Europe (1WE41))

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June 13, 2023

Section: Politics

Rep. Mooney to Newsmax: Congress Should 'Restrict' DOJ Funding

Nicole Wells

Rep. Alex Mooney, R-W.Va., told Newsmax Tuesday that Congress should "restrict" funding for the Department of Justice to limit their ability to persecute political opposition, as he believes is being done to former President Donald Trump.

"It's an insult to all Americans, and especially my constituents in West Virginia," Mooney said of Trump's federal indictment during an appearance on Newsmax's "American Agenda." "It's a very sad day for America when our own government is witch-hunting political opposition. I mean, you have the Department of Justice here that's been going rogue for years. They investigated traditionalist Catholics, calling them extremist organizations. The FBI was going to infiltrate Catholic churches. They investigated a Mom's for Liberty member a couple years ago, and, frankly, I don't know why my colleagues here in D.C. continue to fund this organization."

"The Department of Justice has to come to Congress and request money this year, and I think we should restrict their funding and make them prove to us that they're not using it inappropriately," he continued. "These are taxpayer dollars. This is our government, funded with our dollars, witch-hunting the former president of the United States who's a candidate for president."

Mooney said what is being done to Trump is not so dissimilar to how the legal system works in communist countries.

"My mother fled communist Cuba and in these countries, the communists declare you guilty until you prove yourself innocent and that's what they're doing to President Trump here," he said. "They're hitting him up on all these charges that have no justification. He was president of the United States - he can decide what's classified and what's not. And they're doing it one-sided ... they haven't done this to Hillary Clinton and Biden and all the other presidents. They're just doing it to Donald Trump. It's a total shame."

When asked about the existence of recorded conversations between an executive at Ukrainian energy company Burisma and President Joe Biden, Mooney said, "It deserves a full investigation."

"You have these things that have been hidden and not pursued with President Biden and his family and, frankly, many other Democrat politicians and sunlight is the best disinfectant here," he said. "Turnabout is fair play. Now that this is the new normal - that we go after political opposition - I think that we need to fight fire with fire. Now that Kevin McCarthy is Speaker of the House and Jim Jordan is chairman of Judiciary Committee, we have subpoena power. We need to use that to fight back and these gentlemen are doing that."

The West Virginia congressman predicted that Trump "will not only prevail but be stronger because of it."

Rep. Mooney to Newsmax: Congress Should 'Restrict' DOJ..., 2023 WLNR 20787206

"I think they've misjudged politically," he said. "I think that the jury, the judges will find President Trump completely innocent of all charges under the Espionage Act."

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---- **Index References** ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Legislation (1LE97); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

Industry: (Financial Services (1FI37); Investment Management (1IN34); Pension Fund Management (1PE01); Personal & Institutional Investing (1PE62); Retirement Investment (1RE05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Caribbean (1CA06); Cuba (1CU43); Latin America (1LA15); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73); West Virginia (1WE81))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (NEWSMAX TV; Congress; Judiciary Committee; FBI) (Alex Mooney)

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NewsRoom

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6/13/23 N.Y. Post 29
2023 WLNR 20482987

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June 13, 2023

Section: OpEd

FAST TAKES

Compiled by The Post Editorial Board

Eye on Albany: Killing Care-Home Reforms

With union support, “nearly half of New York’s nursing homes would be effectively exempted from a two-year-old minimum spending law under terms of a rollback” passed last week, grumbles the Empire Center’s Bill Hammond. Before the 2021 law mandating nursing homes to spend “at least 40 percent [of revenue] on patient-facing staff” could kick in, “the Legislature unanimously voted to overhaul the law as part of its end-of-session rush.” And “the revised law would also roll back penalties.” Notably, powerhouse health-workers union SEIU 1199 pushed both the 2021 law and this rollback bill — “reportedly with the understanding that” for-profit homes “will renegotiate their contracts with 1199 if the bill becomes law.”

Liberal: Don’t Rely on the Youth Vote

Democrats are fools to see “the youth vote as a tsunami about to overwhelm the Republican Party,” explains The Liberal Patriot’s Ruy Teixeira. Millennial/Gen Z voters boosted Dems in 2022, but that’s partly just because more of the cohort was eligible to vote, and voters turn out more often as they age. More: They also shift toward the center. And it’s a huge mistake to assume “generations post-Z and post-post-Z” will lean the same way: “One political carbon copy of the Millennials after another cannot go on forever and, yes, it will stop.” Crucially, “Demographics are not destiny”: “Voter preferences do not generally remain the same.” Witness how “white working-class voters moved toward the Republicans and, more recently, nonwhite voters themselves have become more Republican.” Bottom line: “The boring, tedious, difficult task of persuasion is still the key to building electoral majorities.”

Economist: EPA’s Electric-Vehicle Insanity

The EPA’s “latest proposed rule on car emissions” would “effectively eliminate the choice of gasoline-powered cars for American drivers,” warns Diana Furchtgott-Roth at The Hill. It’d require 60% of new vehicles sold in the U.S. “to be battery-powered electric by 2030,” vs. just 6% now. This “will increase drivers’ costs,” as “gasoline-powered vehicles are more affordable than their battery-powered equivalents.” EVs also “have to be recharged every 200 to 300 miles, and recharging takes 45 minutes to an hour.” The rule would also “make the economy more dependent on China,” as “China produces almost 80 percent of global batteries and controls a substantial share of the minerals used to produce batteries.” Considering the drawbacks, Americans’ “choice of cars should be preserved.”

From the right: Fix Medicaid, Save the Poor

”Instead of blindly continuing and expanding it,” asks Dr. Scott Atlas at RealClearPolitics, “shouldn’t we consider the actual access to care and results under Medicaid?” Yes, “socioeconomic differences correlate to health outcomes,” a key point in

FAST TAKES, 2023 WLNR 20482987

arguments “to expand single-payer.” But the same “disparities for minorities” occur in “the countries with the longest history of single-payer healthcare systems.” E.g., in the UK, “black Caribbean and black African infant mortality rates are double those of whites.” And Medicaid’s low payments for care limits “access to doctors, treatments, medications, and technology” and so produces “worse outcomes from disease than private insurance.” So let’s “change Medicaid to a bridge to private insurance” by “adding the same choices of health care” for “the poor as for the rich.”

Libertarian: To the SPLC, We’re All Extremists

The number of US hate groups in the Southern Poverty Law Center’s yearly report is “always rising,” thanks to the outfit’s “characteristically clever counting,” rails Reason’s Robby Soave. A falling number would “strike most people as good news,” but “cut against SPLC’s long-documented goal of raising money by inspiring concern about rising levels of hate.” So SPLC now counts groups like Moms for Liberty, not distinguishing “between activities that could reasonably be described as hateful (i.e., violent and incendiary rhetoric toward the LGBT community) and normal, right-of-center political organizing.” And it counts each of the Moms chapters separately, whether or not “members have espoused genuinely hateful views.” “They’re just all extremists, extremists everywhere.”

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

Industry: (Automobiles (1AU45); Automotive (1AU29); Automotive Environmental Initiatives (1AU68); Automotive Technology (1AU48); Battery Technology (1BA32); Electric Vehicles (1EL48); Energy & Fuel (1EN13); Environmental (1EN24); Environmental Solutions (1EN90); Fuel Cell & Battery (1FU90); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Economics (1HE56); Healthcare Regulatory (1HE04); Land Transportation (1LA43); Low Emission & No Emission Vehicles (1LO79); Passenger Transportation (1PA35); Transportation (1TR48); U.S. National Healthcare Reform (1US09))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

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NewsRoom

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AP State News

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June 12, 2023

Florida News Digest

The Associated Press

Here's a look at how AP's general news coverage is shaping up for select Florida stories. For up-to-the minute information on AP's complete coverage of Florida and the rest of the world, visit Coverage Plan at newsroom.ap.org

Questions about coverage plans are welcome and should be directed to the AP-Miami bureau at 305-594-5825 or miami@ap.org. Arthur Brice is the assistant news director and can be reached at abrice@ap.org.

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TOP STORIES:

NEIGHBOR SHOOTING-FLORIDA — Civil rights leaders and ministers demanded justice for a Black mother who was fatally shot in front of her 9-year-old son by a white neighbor firing through the door of her central Florida home during a memorial service Monday in which Ajike Owens was remembered for her deep faith and devotion to her children. 635 words.

TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS-MIAMI — The federal charges against former President Donald Trump over classified documents have propelled the city of Miami to the center of a storyline that had been thought to be unfolding in Washington. By Adriana Gomez Licon and Joshua Goodman. 975 words.

— **With TRUMP CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS** — Donald Trump has arrived in Florida ahead of a history-making federal court appearance Tuesday on dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents and thwarting the Justice Department's efforts to get the records back.

ELECTIONS 2024-MOMS FOR LIBERTY — At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based nonprofit that didn't exist in 2020 but that has become a power player in conservative politics ahead of the 2024 elections. By Ali Swenson. 1220 words.

ORLANDO NIGHTCLUB MASSACRE — Across central Florida, the 49 victims killed and dozens more survivors of the

Florida News Digest

massacre at a gay-friendly nightclub were remembered with the unveiling of a 44-foot (13.4-meter) -wide mural and an overnight vigil at the site of the Pulse club on the seventh anniversary of the tragedy.

SPORTS:**NBA:**

NBA FINALS-HEAT-HERRO — Miami guard Tyler Herro has been upgraded to questionable for Game 5 of the NBA Finals. It's a strong indication the Heat plan on having him available to play against the Denver Nuggets on Monday night as they try to extend their season. By Tim Reynolds. 250 words.

NHL:

STANLEY CUP-GOLDEN KNIGHTS DEFENSE — The Vegas Golden Knights are one win from the Stanley Cup with a big defensive corps that bucks the trend of smaller blue lines. By Stephen Whyno. 460 words.

NFL:

JAGUARS-ALLEN — Jacksonville Jaguars edge rusher Josh Allen skipped voluntary workouts because he wanted to "prioritize" himself. He's counting on it paying dividends on and off the field. By Mark Long. 600 words.

Golf:

SAUDI GOLF-CONGRESS — The leader of a Senate subcommittee wants the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's LIV Golf to present records about negotiations that led to their new agreement and plans for what golf will look like under the arrangement.

LOCALIZATION:

PRIDE-TRANSGENDER-LOCALIZE IT: As LGBTQ+ communities and their allies hold Pride events this month, transgender people especially are in the spotlight. A driving force for attention for a minority group within a minority group is a bevy of state laws across the U.S. on treatment of transgender people. In some states, there are bans on gender-affirming medical care for minors, restrictions on which bathrooms they can use and whether they can play on girls and women's sports teams. In other states, there's been a move to protect some rights for transgender people. We offer ideas for local coverage. Find the latest Localize It guides.

DECRIMINALIZING FENTANYL TEST STRIPS-LOCALIZE IT: A growing number of states are decriminalizing fentanyl testing strips, seeking to protect people who use drugs from unwitting exposure to the highly potent synthetic opioid ravaging the U.S. with overdose deaths. We provide a look at these states and offer tips for localization. Find the latest Localize It guides.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT-LOCALIZE IT: This month marks the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder*, which dismantled a key provision of the Voting Rights Act requiring certain jurisdictions to submit voting-related changes for federal review. We provide tips and resources for localizing the story, plus an audio Q&A. Find the latest Localize It guides.

WITH: Audio Localize It: Q&A with AP writer Christina A. Cassidy

ELIMINATING RAILROAD CROSSINGS-LOCALIZE IT: The Biden administration is handing out more than \$570 million in grants to help eliminate railroad crossings in 32 states just as the industry is increasingly relying on longer and longer trains to cut costs. We point you to the list of projects and offer local reporting suggestions. Find the latest Localize It guides.

VIDEO

Florida News Digest

Trump leaves NJ home for Miami to face indictment

Long commutes in Philadelphia due to I-95 collapse

Medgar Evers' legacy, 60 years after his murder

Schumer says send Canada more firefighting help

AUDIO

Biden to undergo root canal, will miss collegiate athletics event at White House

Trump and his allies escalate attacks on criminal case as history-making court appearance approaches

JPMorgan Chase reaches tentative settlement with victims of Jeffrey Epstein

Long commutes start after part of I-95 collapses in Philadelphia following tanker truck fire

U.S. STORIES

I-95 COLLAPSE — Drivers have started longer commutes after an elevated section of Interstate 95 collapsed in Philadelphia following damage caused by a tanker truck carrying flammable cargo catching fire. Sunday's blaze closed a heavily traveled segment of the East Coast's main north-south highway indefinitely. Newscasts warned of traffic nightmares Monday and gave advice on detours, urging drivers to take more time to travel. Officials said the tanker was carrying a petroleum product, possibly hundreds of gallons of gasoline. A massive concrete slab fell from I-95 onto the road below. There were no reports of injuries. SENT: 610 words, photos, video, audio.

TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS — Donald Trump is traveling to Florida ahead of a history-making federal court appearance Tuesday on dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents and thwarting the Justice Department's efforts to get the records back. Trump's appearance in Miami will mark his second time since April facing a judge on criminal charges. But unlike a New York case some legal analysts derided as relatively trivial, the Justice Department's first prosecution of a former president concerns conduct that prosecutors say jeopardized national security, with Espionage Act charges carrying the prospect of a significant prison sentence. SENT: 1,000 words, photos, video, audio.

PANDEMIC AID-GREAT GRIFT — An Associated Press analysis found that fraudsters potentially stole more than \$280 billion in COVID-19 relief funding; another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. Combined, the loss represents 10% of the \$4.2 trillion the U.S. government has disbursed in COVID relief aid. Fraudsters used Social Security numbers of dead people to get unemployment checks. Cheaters collected benefits in multiple states. And federal loan applicants weren't cross-checked against a Treasury Department database that would have raised red flags about sketchy borrowers. All of it led to the greatest grift in U.S. history. SENT: 2,200 words, photos, video, audio.

CIVIL RIGHTS-MEDGAR EVERS — It's been 60 years since civil rights leader Medgar Evers was murdered outside his Mississippi home. His widow, Myrlie Evers-Williams, is 90 years old. She says he misses him terribly and is proud of his legacy. Several events have been held in Mississippi this month to commemorate the work of the Evers family. Evers was leader of the Mississippi NAACP from 1954 until his death in 1963. He pushed for voting rights and racial equality. Evers-Williams was national chairperson of the NAACP from 1995 to 1998. She says she remains committed to trying to eliminate racism and prejudice. SENT: 930 words, photos, video.

NEW TO STORYSHARE: SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM NETWORK

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Florida News Digest

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---- Index References ----

Company: JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.; JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS LTD; DENVER NUGGETS INC; Vegas Golden Knights; United States of America

News Subject: (Accidents & Injuries (1AC02); Fires (1FI90); Government Litigation (1GO18); Health & Family (1HE30); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Florida (1FL79); Gulf States (1GU47); Middle East (1MI23); Mississippi (1MI74); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); Saudi Arabia (1SA38); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Heat; U.S. Supreme Court; Treasury Department; JPMorgan Chase; Jacksonville Jaguars; Denver Nuggets; Vegas Golden Knights; U.S. government)

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June 12, 2023

United States: Report: Even as Militias Disbanded, Anti-Government Groups Surged in US

Section: General News - The number of anti-government extremist organizations in the U.S. surged last year, even as some militias disbanded and hate groups declined, according to a new report released Tuesday by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The SPLC counted 702 anti-government groups in 2022, a 44% increase from 488 in 2021. This was the highest number since 2015.

The spike was mainly fueled by SPLC's designation of the conservative parents' rights group Moms for Liberty and 11 other anti-student inclusion groups, according to Travis McAdam, senior research analyst with SPLC's Intelligence Project. SPLC says these groups use extremist tactics to oppose diversity and inclusion in schools.

"Their number of chapters grew quickly as they targeted local schools with campaigns of malice and misinformation that degrade the LGBTQ+ community and try to erase the teaching of accurate history," McAdam said via email.

He added that the SPLC also listed a number of new "sovereign citizen groups in its tally of anti-government extremist organizations. Sovereign citizens consider themselves exempt from U.S. law.

The growth in these two sectors of the anti-government movement offset the decrease in militias, he said.

On its website, Moms for Liberty says it is "dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

Asked about the SPLC designation, Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich said in a statement emailed to VOA, "Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees? We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door, and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that."

The surge in the number of anti-government groups came even as militias - the "paramilitary wing of the anti-government movement" as the SPLC refers to them - shrank in number in the wake of the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The SPLC identified 61 active militia groups in 2022, down from 92 in 2021.

One of the most prominent anti-government militias, the Oath Keepers, lost many of its local chapters after its leaders were arrested in connection with the January 6 assault.

Last month, Stewart Rhodes, the group's founder, and a former top lieutenant received 18- and 12-year prison terms respectively for their roles in the attack. Several other Oath Keepers have also been given lengthy prison terms.

United States: Report: Even as Militias Disbanded, Anti-Government Groups Surged in US

The SPLC said the number of Oath Keepers chapters dropped to five in 2022, down from 70 in 2020.

Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research, reporting and analysis at SPLC's Intelligence Project, noted that anti-government groups, which view the federal government as tyrannical and illegitimate, tend to grow under Democratic administrations as they rally against their policies.

"This is a trend we've seen over time during the Obama years," Rivas said, referring to former President Barack Obama's presidency from 2009 to 2017.

The number of hard-right anti-government groups reached a record 1,360 under Obama, then dwindled during Donald Trump's presidency.

Now, with American's trust in public institutions near historic lows, experts say anti-government groups are seizing on issues like woke indoctrination in workplaces and schools to fuel their agenda.

Brian Levin, executive director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, said the SPLC report's most "disturbing finding" was the "continued vibrancy of antigovernment groups."

"In a highly charged and politically divided atmosphere, anti-government vitriol and conspiracies are an easier initial 'gateway' sell than the more blatant xenophobic and racist propaganda of adjacent extremists," Levin said.

The number of hate groups, which attack entire classes of people such as immigrants and LGBTQ people, dropped to 523 last year from 733 in 2021. The number has fallen significantly since peaking at more than 1,000 in 2018.

But SPLC officials said this does not mean there was a decrease in hate and extremism.

The line between hard-right extremism and mainstream politics has become increasingly blurred, they said, as hate groups have gone mainstream in a post-January 6 shift in strategy.

"Main Street America is now seeing organizing locally to pursue a hateful agenda in public view, including the targeting of community safe havens like schools and houses of worship," Margaret Huang, president and CEO of SPLC, said during a press call.

The SPLC has been publishing its annual hate report since 1990.

In recent years, some conservative groups have criticized the SPLC, saying it unfairly labeled them as extremist groups.

Huang defended SPLC's "rigorous" research methodology, saying the group "carefully labels an organization or a group of individuals, as either a hate group or an anti-government extremist group, based on specific criteria and clear evidence of action during the calendar year of 2022." - VOA

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; The California State University

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Global Politics (1GL73); Hate Crimes (1HA65); International Terrorism (1IN37); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62); World Conflicts (1WO07))

Language: EN

United States: Report: Even as Militias Disbanded, Anti-Government Groups Surged in US

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism; Southern Poverty Law Center; California State University)

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NewsRoom

Monday News: Trump’s AG: “If Even Half of it Is True,..., 2023 WLNR 20321159

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Blue Va. (Blog) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 20321159

Blue Virginia (Blog)
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June 12, 2023

Monday News: Trump’s AG: “If Even Half of it Is True, He’s Toast”; “How to Force Judge Aileen Cannon Off the Trump Case”; “The dysfunction among H...

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Jun 12, 2023

Monday News: Trump’s AG: “If Even Half of it Is True, He’s Toast”; “How to Force Judge Aileen Cannon Off the Trump Case”; “The dysfunction among House Republicans is getting worse”; WaPo Works to Whitewash Another Virginia Right-Wing Republican

by Lowell

Here are a few international, national and Virginia news headlines, political and otherwise, for Monday, June 12.

Number of nuclear weapons held by major powers rising, says thinktank (“There are now an estimated 12,512 warheads across the globe, with most of the new ones in military stockpiles said to be China’s”)Ukraine claims recapture of 4th village in eastern Donetsk as counteroffensive operations roll onPutin wanted Kherson. Now, residents say Russia is trying to destroy it. (Pure evil.)Ukraine loses 16 US-made armored vehicles, group says, but Kyiv’s forces still gain territoryUS citizen detained on drug charges in Moscow identified as rock band manager Travis LeakeUkraine war: Russia moves to take direct control of Wagner GroupDmitry Mishov, Russian airman who defected, gives BBC interviewSaudi Arabia is seeking collaboration not competition with China, energy minister saysSaudi Arabia bought golf with its Ukraine war profitsIsraeli opposition leader says Netanyahu tried to get him to back tax breaks for Hollywood mogulNicola Sturgeon calls arrest a ‘shock and deeply distressing’ after release without chargeSilvio Berlusconi’s death leaves ‘huge void’, allies say (“Throughout his political career, he faced a string of legal troubles, including charges of bribery, tax fraud, and sex with an underage prostitute. He was convicted on several occasions, but managed to avoid jail time due to his age and the expiration of the statute of limitations.”)Silvio Berlusconi, Italy’s Most Enduring, Shameless and Permatanned Man, Dead at 86 (“He partied with Putin and Gaddafi when it was almost cool, and left a sordid trail of women problems, tax probes, and a whole lot of photos of naked pols at his Sardinian lair.”)U.S. Moves to Rejoin Unesco to Counter China’s Growing SwayU.S. tells UNESCO it has decided to rejoin agency Trump quitHow the Canadian wildfire smoke could shift Americans’ views on climate (“The ‘power of direct experience’ can change attitudes on climate change, researchers say. But whether it spurs people to action is less clear.”)Why the U.S. Electric Grid Isn’t Ready for the Energy Transition (“To start with, there is no single U.S. electric grid.”)America Has a Chance to Make Farming More Climate FriendlyThe Great Grift: How billions in COVID-19 relief aid was stolen or wasted (That money needs to be recovered and people committing fraud need to be arrested.)If the Supreme Court Won’t Fix Its Ethics Mess, Congress ShouldTrump Indictment Shows Critical Evidence Came From One of His Own LawyersFears that Republicans’ rhetoric after Trump indictment could spark violence (“An eye for

Monday News: Trump's AG: "If Even Half of it Is True,...., 2023 WLNR 20321159

an eye', said Arizona congressman, while another representative from Louisiana gave militaristic instructions") Trump, allies escalate attacks on criminal case as history-making court appearance approaches (Republicans are against the rule of law.) The Three Biggest Obstacles to Convicting Trump Barr: GOP spouting 'big lies' comparing Trump handling of classified documents to previous presidents Trump's AG: "If Even Half of it Is True, He's Toast" ("Yet Barr maintains that he'd vote for Trump in a Trump-Biden rematch." Insanity.) Republicans should listen to Bill Barr Notes by M. Evan Corcoran, a Trump Lawyer, Gave Prosecutors a Road Map Trump's Miami court date brings fears of violence, rally plans Trump to host first major fundraiser the day of his arraignment How the Florida judge overseeing Trump's trial could hobble the Justice Department's case (She needs to recuse, immediately.) Trump and Special Counsel Signal Early Strategies ("The government wants a speedy, focused trial, while Trump's team will seek to delay and undercut the criminal case outside the courtroom") Will the Judge in Trump's Case Recuse Herself—or Be Forced To? ("Federal law requires a judge to step away from a case in which her impartiality 'might reasonably be questioned.'") Trump's Miami court date brings fears of violence, rally plans How to Force Judge Aileen Cannon Off the Trump Case Judge Cannon beat the odds to draw new Trump case; She also got free trip to posh Yellowstone resort from right-wing law school (EXTREMELY suspicious and slimy.) CBS News Poll: After Trump indictment, most see security risk, but Republicans see politics In testy exchange, Lindsey Graham argues Trump is 'stronger' after 2nd indictment (Lindsey Graham is seriously f'ed up.) 'Saddest case' Lindsey Graham buried by authoritarian expert for clinging to Trump Lindsey Graham's ABC News Interview About Donald Trump Goes South In Just Seconds Republicans, take note: Walt Nauta's tragic tale shows how loyalty to Trump ends in sorrow ("Trump's valet is now learning the lesson of countless others before him: To serve Trump is to court personal ruin") Jordan defends Trump: A president can control access to classified material 'however he wants' (First of all, Trump isn't president anymore. Second, "Gym" Jordan is scum.) The Ultimate Deal — Trump's hoarding of official secrets is both breathtakingly careless and utterly calculated. Conservative revolt in House alarms Senate GOP McCarthy, Scalise tensions bubble into public over GOP rebellion The dysfunction among House Republicans is getting worse McCarthy faces power test in conservative revolt Trump's federal indictment will loom large as Congress returns to session Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender, race ("The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate and extremism around the country, designated Moms for Liberty as an 'anti-government extremist' group in its annual report released last week, along with 11 other groups it said use parents' rights as a vehicle to attack public education and make schools less welcoming for minority and LGBTQ+ students.") Right-Wing Culture Warriors Are Oblivious to the Coming Backlash ("Republicans are merrily immersed in a storm of anti-LGBTQ, anti-drag lawmaking and book-banning. As their extremism grows uglier, the public may rebel—via the ballot box.") Harris gets her cavalry: Top group plans to spend \$10 million-plus to boost her The surprising corner of the Senate that's sinking Biden nominees ("Three presidential picks so far this year withdrew because they lacked enough support in the Commerce Committee, where there's four Democrats up for reelection in swing states next fall.") George Soros Hands Control to His 37-Year-Old Son: 'I'm More Political' ("In his first interview as successor, Alex Soros says the family's \$25 billion philanthropic enterprise will boost its support for voting and abortion rights") How Trans Organizers Are Fighting Back Against Ron DeSantis ("Ron DeSantis accidentally created the most powerful resistance that he could ever imagine because we're angry and we're connecting and we're caring for each other.") Ron DeSantis Finds a New Set of Laws to Ignore Traffic Expected to 'Back up Significantly' on I-95 Detours as Clean-Up from Philadelphia Bridge Collapse Continues The Crop That's Sucking the Colorado River Dry ("Hay swallows triple the water used by everyone in the region to shower, water lawns, and do laundry.") California Legislation Would Force Corporate Polluters to Come Clean 'Unabomber' Ted Kaczynski died by suicide in Prison Medical Center, AP sources say After FBI document shows preference for HQ relocation in Virginia, Md. officials blast off As smoke from Canada enters Virginia, research links climate change with more frequent wildfires Now in the Final Week of Early, In-Person Voting for 6/20 VA Primaries, Here Are the Latest Numbers (The top two State Senate races in terms of early voting are SD11 (Sen. Creigh Deeds vs. Del. Sally Hudson) and SD13 (Sen. Joe Morrissey vs. former Del. Lashrecse Aird).) Youngkin gets it right in stripping degree preferences from most state job postings (That's assuming Youngkin's acting in good faith, doesn't have any ulterior motives, etc.) Post Roe, Va. doctor-state senator stakes out nuanced abortion stance (Another whitewash of a Virginia right winger by the WaPo? In fact, Dunnivant has been anti-choice, with a miserable 17% rating by Repro Rising Virginia in 2022, and needs to be replaced in the VA Senate this November.) Trash, traffic and constant noise: Residents describe living in the shadows of Newport News Shipbuilding Early voting trends show Charlottesville and Carroll County will wield outsized clout in key primary races Albemarle schools float reforms to close achievement gap between races D.C.-area forecast: Storms probable today, then seasonal mid-June warmth

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Previous article Now in the Final Week of Early, In-Person Voting for 6/20 VA Primaries, Here Are the Latest Numbers

Monday News: Trump's AG: "If Even Half of it Is True,...., 2023 WLNR 20321159

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---- **Index References** ----

Company: PT Wahana Pronatural Tbk

News Subject: (Conventions, Conferences & Trade Shows (1CO42))

Industry: (Chemicals (1CH04); Industrial Detergents (1IN51); Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92); Specialty Chemicals (1SP72); Transportation (1TR48); Transportation New Technology (1TR05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (House Republicans; WaPo) (Trump; Aileen Cannon)

Keywords: (2024 Elections); (Climate change); (Daily Feature); (Daily News Clips); (Donald Trump); (Economic Issues); (Energy and Environment); (Glenn Youngkin); (GOP); (International); (Joe Biden); (National Politics); (Virginia Politics); (#convention); (China); (climate); (Kevin McCarthy); (Russia); (Ukraine)

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NewsRoom

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Boston Globe A
2023 WLNR 20301655

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June 12, 2023

Section: News

Book restrictions magnify pain of LGBTQ+ writers Outlet that once liberated now targeted and silenced

Jorja Siemons; Globe correspondent

WASHINGTON - Growing up in the early 2000s, Sarah Prager could find only one or two books about LGBTQ+ history in her school library in Connecticut.

So, she says, she taught herself this history, in part to understand her own identity.

"I was able to get a sense that I wasn't alone," Prager, a Massachusetts-based writer, said of her research. "That was really empowering and validating for me."

The paucity of resources was why Prager decided to become an author and speaker on LGBTQ+ history. Her books for younger readers talk about the lives of LGBTQ+ people who made history, including Billie Jean King and Marsha P. Johnson.

But her young-adult book "Queer, There, and Everywhere" about those historical figures' lives was placed under restricted circulation for "mature content" along with other books in April 2022 in a Mississippi school district. Students need parental permission to check them out.

This school year, hundreds of books like Prager's, spanning from kindergarten-age titles to young-adult novels, have been restricted, challenged, and outright banned in libraries and classrooms across the country. The book challenges have come amid a nationwide campaign by conservatives to reshape public education to give parents more control over what their kids – and others' kids – can access in schools. Much of the focus has been on content with LGBTQ+ themes or efforts to promote diversity that conservatives assert are biased against white people.

This has left Prager, and authors like her, facing a particularly painful reality. The books that they wrote about their identities in the hopes of supporting people like them and educating others have become lightning rods in a culture war built on limiting mention of their very existence. And contrary to popular notions, they say, the heartbreak hasn't come with increased sales – for some, only the opposite.

"I grew up feeling unsafe," said Abdi Nazemian, an Iranian-American author who identifies as queer and whose book has faced a ban. "I think over time, I've let go of that feeling. And I think what's really hard about the book ban on a personal level is it puts me back in that state of fear."

Nazemian's book "Like a Love Story," which draws from his own experience moving to New York and finding LGBTQ+

Book restrictions magnify pain of LGBTQ+ writers, 2023 WLNR 20301655

community as a young immigrant, was among the titles removed from public school libraries in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, in March for “sexually explicit material.” He said about two months ago, he started to notice hateful messages directed his way on social media. People were calling him a “groomer” and a “pedophile” – common language of conservative anti-LGBTQ+ activists. He said he’s also encountered anti-Iranian messages.

His book touches on the AIDS epidemic in the late 1980s. Nazemian said a conservative advocate once told him they wouldn’t have a problem with a book about HIV and AIDS – if there was no sex mentioned.

”I’m like, but this is what you don’t understand, is that the stigma of growing up at that time was around sex and sexuality,” he said. “You have to read the whole book to understand.”

Spotsylvania County Public Schools Superintendent Mark Taylor confirmed in a written statement the books were deemed sexually explicit and removed, saying the district is “following state law and standing up for parental rights.” He said teachers may still assign the books with parental notification, and they are available in public libraries.

Book challenges have left some authors, including author and editor Sandra Mitchell, struggling to write.

Mitchell, who identifies as queer and uses she and they pronouns, said she first learned on Twitter that her young-adult book “All the Things We Do in the Dark” was among others pulled from shelves in Texas’ Granbury Independent School District for alleged inappropriate content. The fictional thriller discusses the impacts of sexual assault on survivors. Mitchell said she wrote the book for her 16-year-old self, as a sexual assault survivor from childhood.

”It was such a personal book,” Mitchell said. “For people to say that it was ‘dirty’ and ‘sexual’ when it’s a book about someone who was sexually assaulted as a child and who continues as a survivor - we don’t have a lot of books like that.”

The school district did not respond to the Globe’s request for comment, though most of the books under review there have reportedly been returned to shelves. Another of Mitchell’s books, an anthology of LGBTQ+ authors’ short stories, was pulled last August for review in Tennessee.

In recent years, the very concept of calling these book restrictions “bans” has emerged as contentious territory.

Tiffany Justice, co-founder of the conservative nonprofit Moms for Liberty, which opposes LGBTQ+-inclusive content and school policies, said her group and its chapters are made of parents seeking “transparency” and access “to the materials that are in school.”

Justice readily recognized the unpopularity of the concept of book banning and called the idea that schools are banning books a “lie” and a “political weapon” for Democrats. She said when a book isn’t on a school shelf anymore it’s the result of library content being “curated.”

”There’s only so much space in any given school library,” Justice said. “Of course, the majority of Americans don’t want to see books banned.”

Book advocates, however, argue that any efforts to restrict content from schools or allow parents to block material from other kids amounts to a ban. PEN America, a nonprofit that advocates free expression, defines a school book ban as “any action taken against a book based on its content” that leads to it being either restricted or completely removed, even if temporarily.

The authors say their experiences fly against the narrative that being banned or challenged is good for their careers.

Prager, the writer on LGBTQ+ history, remembers being congratulated when her books made a list of titles declared objectionable by a Republican Texas lawmaker.

”But on a list of 850 books, no one’s going out and buying [all of them and] paying thousands of dollars,” Prager said.

The old saying “any publicity is good publicity” is false, according to Lin Oliver, co-founder of the Society of Children’s

Book restrictions magnify pain of LGBTQ+ writers, 2023 WLNR 20301655

Book Writers and Illustrators. While some of the most-banned books have seen sales grow or ended up as best sellers, many more do not.

"I think that group is largely outweighed by the negative sales and the negative publicity and the personal toll that comes with the accusations that you're doing something bad for kids," Oliver said.

The authors aren't sure where book restrictions will go from here. Some have concern that the industry could be intimidated into not publishing books that could be controversial. Others are heartened by the pushback they see, including lawsuits against school districts. A Texas federal judge recently found that a library board's book bans were unconstitutional.

The question remains if book banning is a new permanent reality for the book industry and classrooms across the country, or if it's just a passing trend for conservative-led efforts.

Prager called book banning a "very old tactic" used against marginalized communities, like the very histories she recounts in her books. Those same examples, though, give her hope.

"We're all dedicated to telling these stories," Prager said of banned authors. "These stories tell a history of resilience against attacks like these."

Jorja Siemons can be reached at jorja.siemons@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter @JorjaSiemons.

---- Index References ----

Company: THE SOCIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOK WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS, INC.; Pen Co of America; The Granbury Independent School District; Spotsylvania County Public Schools

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Education (1ED85); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Texas (1TE14); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Democrats; Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators; PEN America; Granbury Independent School District; Spotsylvania County Public Schools)

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NewsRoom

EDITORIAL: A valuable program offers kids more reasons to read, 2023 WLNR 20350837

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Buff. News (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 20350837

Buffalo News, The (NY)
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June 12, 2023

EDITORIAL: A valuable program offers kids more reasons to read

The Buffalo News, N.Y.

Jun. 12—It’s all about getting them to turn the pages. The content of children’s books matters — but not for the reasons so many conservative groups want to block access to certain kids’ books.

The content matters because it should meet these young people where they are and present them with relatable situations and characters. This is backed up with research. According to Angelica Tennant, librarian at Martin Luther King Jr. Multicultural Institute, data shows that when students read about characters who look like them, their interest in books increases.

It’s a truth that bears repeating: Kids and, for that matter, adults, will read stories that relate to them, especially if reading isn’t something that comes naturally.

Kids get excited when they see themselves in the characters and stories. This is the way to start them on the reading track.

There is a problem with such an obviously ideal scenario though. In urban school districts like Buffalo’s, whose students are 80% Black, brown and Asian, such reading material might be difficult to come by — only 9% of children’s books published in 2021 were by Black authors.

A collaboration between Buffalo State University and Buffalo Public Schools middle school teachers is making those connections easier.

For a May 1 sold-out event, 400 BPS middle school students visited Buff State to see Jason Reynolds, the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature and winner of a Newbery, an NAACP Image Award and several Coretta Scott King honors.

Reynolds, who is Black and grew up not seeing himself in most assigned books, spoke to their hearts. By all accounts, the students, after reading parts of Reynolds’ “Long Way Down” each week and discussing it in school, were hungry for his words. They were enthusiastic about meeting the man who made their lives richer through writing, showing them its power.

Enthusiasm for literature and learning isn’t something that can be imposed. It takes inspirational encounters like this to start kids on the path to assigning value to their educations and importance to the act of reading.

The event came out of Buffalo State’s Professional Development Consortium. The consortium engages with city schools and provides resources for current and future teachers throughout the year, with an annual conference in September.

It’s likely that the Buff State event is not something right-wing watchdog groups like “Moms for Liberty” would necessarily

EDITORIAL: A valuable program offers kids more reasons to read, 2023 WLNR 20350837

support. This is the conservative “parents rights group” that the Southern Poverty Law Center listed as an anti-government extremist organization in its latest Year in Hate & Extremism report.

Moms for Liberty wants to limit access to books that may show kids a reflection that doesn’t fit their vision of what America should be. That’s their idea of “liberty.”

But kids should not be discouraged from reading a vast array of material, even the uncomfortable variety. All topics should be available, including race, ethnicity, and gender.

Most importantly, kids should be able — as these Buffalo middle-schoolers were — to find versions of themselves in what they read.

...

What’s your opinion? Send it to us at lettertoeditor@buffnews.com. Letters should be a maximum of 300 words and must convey an opinion. The column does not print poetry, announcements of community events or thank you letters. A writer or household may appear only once every 30 days. All letters are subject to fact-checking and editing.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Buffalo State University; Buffalo Public Schools; Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

AP News Digest 6:05 p.m.

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Broad. News 22:06:02

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June 12, 2023

Section: Advisory

AP News Digest 6:05 p.m.

The Associated Press

Here are the AP's latest coverage plans, top stories and promotable content. All times EDT. For up-to-the minute information on AP's coverage, visit Coverage Plan.

NEW/DEVELOPING:

Adds: MEDIA-WASHINGTON POST, NBA FINALS, NEIGHBOR-SHOOTING-FLORIDA, MEXICO-BORDER-ASYLUM APP, MEDICAID-STATES, BIDEN-PEREZ, SENATE-MILITARY, NAVY CHIEF-NOMINATION, TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS-MIAMI; OREGON WILDFIRES-UTILITY LAWSUIT; SEXUAL ASSAULT-JIMMY ALLEN; ILLINOIS-CHALLENGED BOOKS-LIBRARIES; ECUADOR-FUNERAL SURPRISE; BRITAIN-MOTHER-JAILED FOR ABORTION

ONLY ON AP

PANDEMIC AID-GREAT GRIFT — An Associated Press analysis found that fraudsters potentially stole more than \$280 billion in COVID-19 relief funding; another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. Combined, the loss represents 10% of the \$4.2 trillion the U.S. government has disbursed in COVID relief aid. All of it led to the greatest gift in U.S. history. SENT: 2,200 words, photos, video. With PANDEMIC AID-GREAT GRIFT-TAKEAWAYS.

TOP STORIES

TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS — Donald Trump arrives in Florida ahead of a history-making federal court appearance Tuesday on dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents and thwarting the Justice Department's efforts to get the records back. By Eric Tucker and Jill Colvin. SENT: 1,060 words, photos, videos. With TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS-BIDEN — President Joe Biden is determined to say as little as possible about

AP News Digest 6:05 p.m.

the federal indictment of his predecessor, Donald Trump. SENT: 720 words, photo.

TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS-MIAMI — The federal charges against former President Donald Trump over classified documents have propelled the city of Miami to the center of a storyline that had been thought to be unfolding in Washington. By Adriana Gomez Licon and Joshua Goodman. SENT: 1,080 words,

ELECTION 2024-MOMS FOR LIBERTY — At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based nonprofit that didn't exist in 2020 but that has become a power player in conservative politics ahead of the 2024 elections. SENT: 1,220 words, photos.

1-95 COLLAPSE — The driver of a tractor-trailer hauling gasoline lost control on an off-ramp and flipped the tanker truck on its side in a wreck that set it afire and collapsed a section of the East Coast's main north-south highway. Pennsylvania State Police said a body recovered from the wreckage has been turned over to the Philadelphia medical examiner and coroner. By Ron Todt, Mike Catalini and Mark Levy. SENT: 830 words, photo, video, audio.

YOUTH-CLIMATE-LAWSUIT-MONTANA — Youth plaintiffs say warming temperatures are harming their health and threatening their futures as a closely-watched climate trial kicks in Montana. But a lawyer for the fossil fuel-friendly state said in opening arguments on Monday that Montana's emissions were "minuscule" on a global scale and eliminating them would have little impact. By Amy Beth Hansen and Matthew Brown. SENT: 930 words, photos, audio.

EUROPE-HIGH FOOD PRICES — High food prices are pinching households across Europe, where food inflation is outpacing other major economies like the U.S., Japan and Canada. Some governments have responded with price controls or loose agreements with supermarkets to keep costs down. In Italy, a consumer group is taking matters into its own hands, calling for a pasta strike to force down prices by bottoming out demand. SENT: 960 words, photos. This is the Tuesday Spotlight.

SPOTLIGHTING VOICES

ARGENTINA-TRANSGENDER — A bill under discussion in Argentina's congressional committee would provide a lifetime pension for transgender people over 40 as a form of "historic reparations." SENT: 930 words, photos.

CIVIL RIGHTS-MEDGAR EVERS — At 90, Myrlie Evers-Williams still speaks in a clear, strong voice as she says she terribly misses her first love, civil rights icon Medgar Evers, as she reflects on his work to push the U.S. toward a promise of equality and justice for all. SENT: 930 words, photos.

MORE ON RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

RUSSIA-AMENDING TACTICS — Russia has built heavily fortified defenses along the 600-mile front line, honed its electronic weapons to reduce Ukraine's edge in combat drones, and turned heavy bombs from its massive Cold-War-era arsenal into precision-guided gliding munitions capable of striking targets without putting its warplanes at risk. SENT: 1,310 words, photos.

NEW ZEALAND-UKRAINE REPORTING — The head of New Zealand's public radio station apologized for publishing "pro-Kremlin garbage" on its website after more than a dozen wire stories on the Ukraine war were found to have been altered. SENT: 430 words, photo.

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RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR — Ukrainian military officials said their troops have retaken another southeastern village from Russian forces, among the first — small — successes in stepped-up counteroffensive operations as the war drags on into its 16th month. By Jamey Keaten. SENT: 460 words, photos.

MORE NEWS

ILLINOIS-CHALLENGED BOOKS-LIBRARIES — A new law signed in Illinois on Monday will require the state’s libraries to uphold a pledge not to ban material because of partisan disapproval, starting on Jan. 1, 2024. SENT: 450 words, photo.

ECUADOR-FUNERAL SURPRISE — A 76-year-old woman who was declared dead at a hospital in Ecuador astonished her relatives by knocking on her coffin during her wake. SENT: 310 words, photo.

SEXUAL ASSAULT-JIMMY ALLEN — Country singer Jimmie Allen’s has come to a halt after two woman accused the Grammy nominee in lawsuits of sexually assaulting them. SENT: 660 words, photos.

SOUTH KOREA-BTS-ANNIVERSARY — Seoul landmarks to be lit up in purple to celebrate BTS’ anniversary. SENT: 370 words, photos.

BOOKS-ELIZABETH GILBERT NOVEL-RUSSIA — Author Elizabeth Gilbert is delaying publication of a novel set in Russia after what she said was an outpouring of “anger, sorrow, disappointment and pain” from Ukrainian readers. SENT: 510 words, photos.

ORLANDO-NIGHTCLUB-MASSACRE — Across central Florida, the 49 victims killed and dozens more survivors of the massacre at a gay-friendly nightclub were remembered with the unveiling of a 44-foot -wide mural and an overnight vigil at the site of the Pulse club on the seventh anniversary of the tragedy. SENT: 320 words, photos.

WASHINGTON/POLITICS

ELECTION 2024-JILL BIDEN — Though the 2024 election in which President Joe Biden is seeking reelection is more than a year away, helping him win a second term is a top priority for first lady Jill Biden. SENT: 980 words, photos.

ELECTION-2024-SCOTT — Sen. Tim Scott is rolling out endorsements from more than 140 current and former elected officials from his home state of South Carolina. SENT: 485 words, photos.

BIDEN-ROOT-CANAL — President Joe Biden is undergoing a root canal after experiencing some dental pain. The procedure took him out of commission for public events on Monday. Biden’s personal physician, Kevin O’Connor, said in a memo released by the White House that Biden reported the pain in his lower right premolar on Sunday and had an initial root canal that day. SENT: 190 words, photos.

BIDEN-NATO — President Joe Biden will welcome outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to the White House for talks on Tuesday as the competition to find his successor to lead the military alliance heats up. SENT: 520 words, photos.

BIDEN-JUNETEENTH — President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden will host a Juneteenth concert in a “celebration of community, culture and music.” SENT: 235 words, photos.

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NAVY CHIEF-NOMINATION — Adm. Samuel Paparo, current commander of the Navy’s Pacific Fleet, is recommended by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to be nominated as the service’s next top leader. SENT: 340 words.

SENATE-MILITARY — Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., dashes hopes for an imminent end to a Senate standoff that has delayed the promotions of more than 200 military officers and could delay the confirmation of President Joe Biden’s pick for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. SENT: 390 words, photo.

BIDEN-PEREZ — President Biden names Tom Perez, the former labor secretary and Democratic National Committee chairman, as a senior adviser and his liaison to state and local governments. SENT: 510 words, photos.

NATIONAL

CAVE TOUR-BOAT-CAPSIZE — Officials in Lockport, New York, say one person died and multiple people are in the hospital after a boat capsized during a tour of an underground cavern system built to carry water from the Erie Canal. SENT: 420 words. Developing.

MEXICO-BORDER-ASYLUM APP — U.S. authorities have halted mobile app appointments to admit asylum-seekers at a Texas border crossing after advocates warned U.S. authorities that migrants are being extorted there. SENT: 1,040 words, photos.

OREGON-EDUCATION-GOP WALKOUT — Funding for schools, literacy programs and special education teachers in Oregon — a state where 60% of third graders can’t read at grade level — could be jeopardized by a Republican walkout that has stalled hundreds of bills and derailed the Legislature for nearly six weeks. SENT: 800 words, photos.

NEIGHBOR-SHOOTING-FLORIDA — Civil rights leaders and ministers are demanding justice for a Black mother who was fatally shot in front of her son by a white neighbor firing through the door of her central Florida home. SENT: 630 words, photo.

JPMORGAN-SETTLEMENT — JPMorgan Chase announced a tentative settlement with the sex victims of financier Jeffrey Epstein, the bank said Monday, which had accused the bank of being the financial conduit that Epstein used to pay off his victims for several years. SENT: 565 words, photos.

OREGON WILDFIRES-UTILITY LAWSUIT — A jury in Oregon has found the electric utility PacifiCorp responsible for causing devastating fires during Labor Day weekend in 2020, ordering the company to pay tens of millions of dollars to 17 homeowners who sued and finding it liable for broader damages that could push the total award well into the billions. SENT: 720 words, photos.

WIFE CHARGED-CHILDREN’S GRIEF BOOK — A Utah mother of three who authorities say fatally poisoned her husband, then wrote a children’s book about grieving, will remain in jail for the duration of her trial. SENT: 850 words, photo.

SCHOOL SHOOTING-NEWPORT NEWS — The mother of a 6-year-old Virginia boy who shot and wounded his teacher in Virginia has pleaded guilty to a federal charge of using marijuana while possessing a firearm. SENT: 870 words, photos.

INTERNATIONAL

AP News Digest 6:05 p.m.

ITALY-OBIT-BERLUSCONI — Silvio Berlusconi, the boastful billionaire media mogul who was Italy's longest-serving premier despite scandals over his sex-fueled parties and allegations of corruption, has died. He was 86. SENT: 1,900 words, photos, video. With BERLUSCONI-SOCCER — Berlusconi was also successful in soccer as owner at AC Milan and Monza. An abridged version of 1,200 words has also been sent; ITALY-OBIT-BERLUSCONI-REACTION — Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi drew tributes in death even from his critics. SENT: 940 words, photos.

BRITAIN-MOTHER-JAILED FOR ABORTION — A 44-year-old mother of three has been sentenced to more than two years in an English prison for medically inducing an abortion about eight months into her pregnancy. SENT: 520 words.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS — The nine nuclear-armed states continue to modernize their arsenals and several deployed new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2022, a Swedish think tank said. SENT: 340 words.

ISRAEL-NETANYAHU'S TRIAL — Israel's opposition leader testified that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apparently tried to persuade him — twice — to back legislation that would have given a Hollywood mogul millions in tax breaks. SENT: 490 words, photos.

UNESCO-US — U.N. cultural and scientific agency UNESCO announced Monday that the United States plans to rejoin — and pay more than \$600 million in back dues — after a decade-long dispute. SENT: 710 words, photos.

AUSTRALIA-BUS CRASH — The driver of a bus was charged after the vehicle carrying wedding guests rolled over on a foggy night in Australia's wine country, killing 10 people and injuring 25 in the nation's most deadly road accident in almost 30 years, police said. SENT: 580 words, photos, video.

PHILIPPINES-VOLCANO — The Philippines' most active volcano was spewing lava down its slopes, prompting officials to warn tens of thousands of villagers to be prepared to flee from their homes if the gentle eruption turns into a violent and life-threatening explosion, officials said. SENT: 710 words, photos.

SOUTH ASIA-CYCLONE — India and Pakistan braced for the first severe cyclone this year expected to hit their coastal regions later this week, as authorities halted fishing activities and deployed rescue personnel. SENT: 510 words, photos.

EGYPT — A U.K.-based tour operator says three British nationals who went missing after a scuba diving boat they were cruising in caught fire in the Red Sea off the Egyptian coast have died. SENT: 375 words, photos.

BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FINANCIAL MARKETS — Wall Street closed higher ahead of a big week for central banks, carrying the S&P 500 to its highest level in more than a year. SENT: 740 words, photos.

MICROSOFT-XBOX-STARFIELD — The Federal Trade Commission has sued to block Microsoft from completing its deal to buy video game company Activision Blizzard, the latest antitrust challenge to the proposed merger but one that could hasten its conclusion. SENT: 590 words, photos.

SPORTS

NBA FINALS — The Denver Nuggets are on the verge of capturing their first NBA title in 47 years in the league. The goal

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now for Denver is to avoid a letdown against the Miami Heat in Game 5, the first title-clinching opportunity in franchise history. UPCOMING: 800 words, photos, sidebars on merit. Game starts at 8:30 p.m.

ON TENNIS-DJOKOVIC'S 23 — Novak Djokovic's 23 Grand Slam titles put him atop the list for the most in history by a man, breaking a tie with rival Rafael Nadal and now three ahead of the retired Roger Federer. SENT: 770 words, photos. With TENNIS RANKINGS — Djokovic returns to ATP No. 1; Iga Swiatek stays at WTA No. 1.

GLF-SAUDI-GOLF-CONGRESS — The leader of a Senate subcommittee wants the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's LIV Golf to present records about negotiations that led to their new agreement and plans for what golf will look like under the arrangement. SENT: 380 words, photos.

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

TONY AWARDS-MOMENTS — There was plenty of uncertainty in the run-up to this year's Tony Awards, which at one point seemed unlikely to happen at all due to the Hollywood writer's strike. But the ceremony went off without a hitch. SENT: 1,180 words, photos, videos. With TONY AWARDS — Tonys makes inclusive history; TONY AWARDS-LIST (sent).

MEDIA-MSNBC-MADDOW — Rachel Maddow has something special for fans who appreciate the occasional digressions into history on her weekly MSNBC show. It's "Deja News," a podcast she's made with longtime producer Isaac-Davy Aronson that looks at historical incidents that can teach us lessons about current events. SENT: 740 words, photos.

MEDIA-WASHINGTON POST — Washington Post publisher and chief executive Fred Ryan is leaving the newspaper after nine years in charge. Newspaper owner Jeff Bezos announced Ryan's departure in a memo to staff. SENT: 660 words, photo.

THE STREAM — This week's new entertainment releases include albums from John Mellencamp and Killer Mike, season two of "Star Trek: Strange New Worlds" arrives on Paramount+ and there's a documentary that explores Marvel comic creator Stan Lee's life and cultural impact. SENT: 1,275 words, photos.

HOW TO REACH US

The Nerve Center can be reached at 800-845-8450 (ext. 1600). For photos, Paul Kazdan (ext. 1900). For graphics and interactives, ext. 7636. Expanded AP content can be obtained from AP Newsroom. For access to AP Newsroom and other technical issues, contact apcustomersupport@ap.org or call 844-777-2006.

---- Index References ----

Company: JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.; FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION; ASSOCIAZIONE CALCIO MILAN S.P.A.; The Associated Press; WP COMPANY LLC; MIAMI HEAT LIMITED PARTNERSHIP; Democratic National Committee; ACTIVISION BLIZZARD, INC.; United States of America

News Subject: (Assault & Battery (1AS33); Crime (1CR87); Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); Health & Family (1HE30); Health & Wellness (1HE60); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05); United Nations (1UN54); Violent Crime (1VI27); World Organizations (1IN77))

Industry: (Contraception (1CO66); Entertainment (1EN08); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49);

AP News Digest 6:05 p.m.

Media Moguls (1ME64); Women's Health (1WO30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Argentina (1AR53); Asia (1AS61); Australasia (1AU56); Colorado (1CO26); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Ecuador (1EC67); Europe (1EU83); Far East (1FA27); Florida (1FL79); Gulf States (1GU47); Illinois (1IL01); Latin America (1LA15); Mediterranean (1ME20); Middle East (1MI23); Montana (1MO88); North America (1NO39); Oceania (1OC40); Oregon (1OR01); Pennsylvania (1PE71); Saudi Arabia (1SA38); South America (1SO03); South Korea (1SO65); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Justice Department; Pennsylvania State Police; BTS; White House; United States; JPMorgan Chase; Federal Trade Commission; AC Milan; Associated Press; WASHINGTON POST; Miami Heat; Democratic National Committee; Activision Blizzard; U.S. government)

Word Count: 2559

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools...

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Broad. News 18:23:55

Canadian Press - Broadcast wire, The
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June 12, 2023

Section: International

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender, race

The Associated Press

NEW YORK - At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based nonprofit that didn't exist in 2020 but that has become a power player in conservative politics ahead of the 2024 elections. Former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy will speak at the event. The group has been at the forefront of the conservative movement targeting books that reference race and gender identity, and electing right-wing candidates to local school boards nationwide.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Public Affairs (1PU31); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; GOP) (New York; New York; United States)

Education; Politics; Politics; International

Word Count: 102

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NewsRoom

DeSantis, Trump to speak at summit, 2023 WLNR 20315662

NewsRoom

6/12/23 Daytona Beach News-J. (Daytona, Fla.) D2
2023 WLNR 20315662

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June 12, 2023

Section: News

DeSantis, Trump to speak at summit Moms for Liberty to host candidates later in June

Finch Walker

”With presidential candidates agreeing to come and speak to us, it absolutely says that this is going to be an issue for the 2024 election. We’re excited to be bringing our issues to the forefront and that elected officials are listening, and we’re looking forward to (hearing) what they have to say about them.”

Tina Descovich

Co-founder of Moms for Liberty

Add one more battleground to the contest between Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump, the two current favorites to be the GOP presidential nominee: winning the support of the conservative parent group, Moms for Liberty.

DeSantis had already locked in a speaking role at the Moms for Liberty National Summit in Philadelphia at the end of June, and on Monday, the group announced Trump would be there, too, as a keynote speaker.

The addition of Trump to the lineup could raise the question: How will that play with the Florida governor who has aligned himself so closely with Moms for Liberty priorities?

Any kind of political dissension is not what Moms for Liberty had in mind, said Tina Descovich, co-founder of Moms for Liberty.

The group, who has voiced support for both Trump and DeSantis in the past, invited a number of both conservative and liberal politicians to the summit, she said, including South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. and President Joe Biden, though DeSantis, Trump, Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy were the only four presidential candidates to confirm their attendance as of Monday.

Having those candidates agree to speak at the second National “Joyful Warriors” Summit is exciting, said Descovich.

”With presidential candidates agreeing to come and speak to us, it absolutely says that this is going to be an issue for the 2024 election,” she said. “We’re excited to be bringing our issues to the forefront and that elected officials are listening, and we’re looking forward to (hearing) what they have to say about them.”

DeSantis, Trump to speak at summit, 2023 WLNR 20315662

Those issues cover a variety of topics that fall under the umbrella of “parental rights.” Moms for Liberty, founded by former Brevard school board member Descovich and former Indian River school board member Tiffany Justice in 2021, has been outspoken about topics such as COVID-19 restrictions, critical race theory and LGBTQ issues, with the group garnering national attention for its members’ protests at school board meetings. The organization now has 280 chapters in 45 states with more than 115,000 members.

Moms for Liberty has supported both DeSantis and Trump since 2021. Though the two are leading candidates in the presidential race, Descovich said she doesn’t think it will create a tense political situation at the summit.

”It’s not a debate; they’re not going to be on the stage together,” she said, adding that they will be at separate events over the course of three days. “We’ve asked them to speak to us about the issues that our moms are concerned about.”

This will be Trump’s first time speaking at the National “Joyful Warriors” Summit. DeSantis spoke at the inaugural summit in July 2022 in Tampa, where he encouraged attendees to be “leading the way when it comes to their school boards.”

DeSantis and Moms

for Liberty in 2022

DeSantis and Moms for Liberty often partnered in endorsing conservative school board candidates during the 2022 election, despite those races being nonpartisan.

However, that doesn’t mean they’ve always agreed.

In February, DeSantis released a list of school board members who he said did not protect parental rights and/or shield students from “woke” ideologies, with the goal of “targeting” these members during the 2024 election.

At the July 2022 summit, DeSantis told attendees to stand strong against their detractors.

”You need some courage,” he said. “You just gotta be willing to stand by your convictions ...

”Now’s not the time to let them grind you down. You gotta stand up, and you gotta fight.”

Finch Walker is the education reporter at FLORIDA TODAY. Contact Walker at 321-290-4744 or fwalker@floridatoday.com. Twitter: [@_finchwalker](https://twitter.com/_finchwalker).

”With presidential candidates agreeing to come and speak to us, it absolutely says that this is going to be an issue for the 2024 election. We’re excited to be bringing our issues to the forefront and that elected officials are listening, and we’re looking forward to (hearing) what they have to say about them.”

Tina Descovich

Co-founder of Moms for Liberty

---- Index References ----

Company: Florida Today

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. President (1US75); U.S. Presidential Campaigns (1US04); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

DeSantis, Trump to speak at summit, 2023 WLNR 20315662

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; GOP; Brevard school; FLORIDA TODAY) (Ron DeSantis; Donald Trump)

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2023 WLNR 20307585

Independent Online (UK)
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June 12, 2023

AP News Digest 3 am

Via AP news wire

Here are the AP's latest coverage plans, top stories and promotable content. All times EDT. For up-to-the minute information on AP's coverage, visit Coverage Plan.

ONLY ON AP

PANDEMIC AID-GREAT GRIFT — An Associated Press analysis found that fraudsters potentially stole more than \$280 billion in COVID-19 relief funding; another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. Combined, the loss represents 10% of the \$4.2 trillion the U.S. government has disbursed in COVID relief aid. All of it led to the greatest gift in U.S. history. By Richard Lardner, Jennifer McDermott and Aaron Kessler. SENT: 2,200 words, photos. With PANDEMIC AID-GREAT GRIFT-TAKEAWAYS.

TOP STORIES

TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS — Donald Trump and his allies are escalating efforts to undermine the criminal case against him and drum up protests as the former president braces for a history-making federal court appearance this week on dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding classified information. Trump's Tuesday afternoon appearance in Miami will mark his second time in as many months facing a judge on criminal charges. By Eric Tucker and Jill Colvin. SENT: 960 words, photos, videos. With TRUMP-CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS — Big differences between Trump charges and Clinton email probe.

RUSSIA-AMENDING TACTICS — Analysts say Moscow has learned from earlier blunders in its war with Ukraine and improved its weapons and skills. Russia has built heavily fortified defenses along the 600-mile front line, honed its electronic weapons to reduce Ukraine's edge in combat drones, and turned heavy bombs from its massive Cold-War-era arsenal into precision-guided gliding munitions capable of striking targets without putting its warplanes at risk. SENT: 1,310 words, photos.

AP News Digest 3 am, 2023 WLNR 20307585

EUROPE-HIGH FOOD PRICES — High food prices are pinching households across Europe, where food inflation is outpacing other major economies like the U.S., Japan and Canada. Some governments have responded with price controls or loose agreements with supermarkets to keep costs down. In Italy, a consumer group is taking matters into its own hands, calling for a pasta strike to force down prices by bottoming out demand. By Business Writer Colleen Barry. SENT: 960 words, photos. This is the Tuesday Spotlight.

TED-KACZYNSKI-SUICIDE — Ted Kaczynski, known as the “Unabomber,” who carried out a 17-year bombing campaign that killed three people and injured 23 others, died by suicide, four people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. Kaczynski, who was 81 and suffering from late-stage cancer, was found unresponsive in his North Carolina cell. By Michael R. Sisak, Mike Balsamo and Jake Offenhartz. SENT: 640 words, photos.

I-95-COLLAPSE — An elevated section of Interstate 95 collapsed in Philadelphia after a tanker truck carrying flammable cargo caught fire, closing a heavily traveled segment of the East Coast’s main north-south highway indefinitely, authorities said. Transportation officials warned of extensive delays and street closures and urged drivers to avoid the area in the city’s northeast corner. By Ron Todt. SENT: 990 words, photos, video.

TONY AWARDS — The intimate, funny-sad musical “Kimberly Akimbo” nudged aside splashier rivals to win the musical crown at the Tony Awards on a night when Broadway flexed its creative muscle amid the Hollywood writers’ strike and made history with laurels for nonbinary actors J. Harrison Ghee and Alex Newell. By Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy. SENT: 1,250 words, photos, videos. With TONY AWARDS-LIST.

SPOTLIGHTING VOICES

ARGENTINA-TRANSGENDER — A bill under discussion in Argentina’s congressional committee would provide a lifetime pension for transgender people over 40 as a form of “historic reparations.” SENT: 930 words, photos.

MORE ON RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-WAR — Ukraine’s military on Sunday reported recapturing a southeastern village as Russian forces claimed to repel multiple attacks in the area, while a regional official said three people were killed when Moscow’s troops opened fire at a boat evacuating people from Russian-occupied areas to Ukrainian-held territory along a flooded front line far to the south. SENT: 880 words, photos, video.

EUROPE-AIR DEFENSE EXERCISE — An air deployment exercise billed as the biggest in NATO’s history and hosted by Germany is getting underway. SENT: 350 words.

NEW ZEALAND-UKRAINE REPORTING — The head of New Zealand’s public radio station apologized for publishing “pro-Kremlin garbage” on its website after more than a dozen wire stories on the Ukraine war were found to have been altered. SENT: 430 words, photo.

MORE NEWS

AP News Digest 3 am, 2023 WLNR 20307585

HEAT MASCOT-MCGREGOR — Conor McGregor knocks out Heat mascot in bizarre promotion at NBA Finals. SENT: 200 words, photos.

GEORGE SOROS SUCCESSOR — Report: Billionaire investor, philanthropist George Soros cedes control of empire. SENT: 410 words, photo.

HUNGARY-POLICE-DOG — German shepherd wounded in Ukraine gets new start as police dog. SENT: 520 words, photos.

MARYLAND-FATAL SHOOTING — Police: Three dead, three wounded in shooting at Maryland home. SENT: 210 words, photos.

FIREFIGHTER DROWNS — Firefighter drowns while trying to rescue daughter at Jersey Shore beach. SENT: 150 words.

WASHINGTON/POLITICS

ELECTION 2024-MOMS FOR LIBERTY — At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based nonprofit that didn't exist in 2020 but that has become a power player in conservative politics ahead of the 2024 elections. SENT: 1,220 words, photos.

ELECTION 2024-JILL BIDEN — Though the 2024 election in which President Joe Biden is seeking reelection is more than a year away, helping him win a second term is a top priority for first lady Jill Biden now that school's out for the summer. SENT: 980 words, photos.

BIDEN-NATO — President Joe Biden is welcoming outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to the White House for talks as the competition to find his successor to lead the military alliance heats up. SENT: 470 words, photos.

NATIONAL

WIFE CHARGED-CHILDREN'S GRIEF BOOK — A Utah woman who wrote a children's book about coping with grief after her husband's death, and was later accused of fatally poisoning him, is scheduled to appear in court to determine whether she should remain detained or have an opportunity to post bail. SENT: 680 words, photo.

CIVIL RIGHTS-MEDGAR EVERS — At 90, Myrlie Evers-Williams still speaks in a clear, strong voice as she says she terribly misses her first love, civil rights icon Medgar Evers, as she reflects on his work to push the U.S. toward a promise of equality and justice for all. SENT: 930 words, photos.

OREGON-EDUCATION-GOP WALKOUT — Funding for schools, literacy programs and special education teachers in Oregon — a state where 60% of third graders can't read at grade level — could be jeopardized by a Republican walkout that has stalled hundreds of bills and derailed the Legislature for nearly six weeks. SENT: 800 words, photos.

YOUTH CLIMATE LAWSUIT-MONTANA — A group of Montana youth who say their lives are already being affected by climate change and that state government is failing to protect them are the first of dozens of such efforts to get their lawsuit to trial. SENT: 450 words, photo.

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INTERNATIONAL

COLOMBIA-PLANE-CRASH-CHILDREN — The four Indigenous children who survived 40 days in the Amazon jungle after their plane crashed have shared limited but harrowing details of their ordeal with their family, including that their mother survived the crash for days before she died. SENT: 980 words, photos.

AUSTRALIA-BUS CRASH — A bus carrying wedding guests rolled over on a foggy night in Australia's wine country, killing 10 people and injuring 25, police said. By Rod McGuirk and Nick Perry. SENT: 550 words, photos.

PHILIPPINES-VOLCANO — The Philippines' most active volcano was gently spewing lava down its slopes, alerting tens of thousands of people they may have to quickly flee a violent and life-threatening explosion. SENT: 620 words, photos.

IRAQ-BUDGET — Iraq's parliament belatedly approved a record \$152 billion budget for 2023, after months of wrangling over the sharing of oil revenue between the central government in Baghdad and the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region in the north. SENT: 760 words, photo.

HEALTH/SCIENCE

CLIMATE-UGANDA CHARCOAL — The burning of charcoal, an age-old practice in many African societies, is now restricted business across northern Uganda amid a wave of resentment by locals who have warned of the threat of climate change stemming from the uncontrolled felling of trees by outsiders. SENT: 1,190 words, photos.

CLIMATE-NET ZERO CLAIMS — A growing number of companies are pledging to cut their greenhouse gas emissions to "net zero" as part of global efforts to tackle climate change, but that goal is rarely supported by a credible plan, according to a report. SENT: 640 words, photos.

BUSINESS/ECONOMY

CHINA-FEEBLE RECOVERY — China's manufacturing and consumer spending are weakening after a strong start to 2023 after anti-virus controls ended. SENT: 550 words, photos.

FINANCIAL MARKETS — Shares were mixed in Asia after the S&P 500 logged its fourth winning week in a row, while investors await another decision by the Federal Reserve on interest rates. By Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach. SENT: 500 words, photos.

SPORTS

FRENCH OPEN — Novak Djokovic has won his men's-record 23rd Grand Slam title with a 7-6 (1), 6-3, 7-5 victory over Casper Ruud in the French Open final, breaking a tie with Rafael Nadal for the most major singles trophies in the history of

AP News Digest 3 am, 2023 WLNR 20307585

men's tennis. By Tennis Writer Howard Fendrich. SENT: 1,510 words, photos.

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

CYNTHIA WEIL-MEMORIAL SONGWRITER — Cynthia Weil was honored during a music-filled memorial service in Beverly Hills. SENT: 780 words, photos.

HOW TO REACH US

At the Nerve Center, Jerome Minerva can be reached at 800-845-8450 (ext. 1600). For photos, Shuji Kajiyama (ext. 1900). For graphics and interactives, ext. 7636. Expanded AP content can be obtained from AP Newsroom. For access to AP Newsroom and other technical issues, contact apcustomersupport@ap.org or call 844-777-2006.

---- Index References ----

Company: North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Federal Reserve Board; The Associated Press; United States of America

News Subject: (Emerging Market Countries (1EM65); Global Politics (1GL73); International Terrorism (1IN37); Top World News (1WO62); World Conflicts (1WO07))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Environmental Activism (1EN19); Sports (1SP75); Tennis (1TE77))

Region: (Africa (1AF90); Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Argentina (1AR53); Asia (1AS61); Australasia (1AU56); CIS Countries (1CI64); East Africa (1EA80); Eastern Asia (1EA61); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Florida (1FL79); Gulf States (1GU47); Iraq (1IR87); Latin America (1LA15); Maryland (1MA47); Middle East (1MI23); Montana (1MO88); North America (1NO39); Oceania (1OC40); Oregon (1OR01); Pennsylvania (1PE71); South America (1SO03); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Uganda (1UG45); Ukraine (1UK09))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Russia; NATO; Federal Reserve; Associated Press; U.S. government)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20283028

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2023 WLNR 20283028

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June 12, 2023

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender,
race

At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later
this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms ...

Ali Swenson

At least four Republican presidential candidates are scheduled to travel to Philadelphia later this month to speak at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based nonprofit that didn't exist in 2020 but that has become a power player in conservative politics ahead of the 2024 elections

To its members, it's a grassroots army of "joyful warriors" who "don't co-parent with the government."

To anti-hate researchers, it's a well-connected extremist group that attacks inclusion in schools.

And to Republicans vying for the presidency, it has become a potential key partner in the fight for the 2024 nomination.

Moms for Liberty didn't exist during the last presidential campaign, but the Florida-based nonprofit that champions "parental rights" in education has rapidly become a major player for 2024, boosted in part by GOP operatives, politicians and donors.

The group that has been at the forefront of the conservative movement targeting books that reference race and gender identity and electing right-wing candidates to local school boards nationwide is hosting one of the next major gatherings for Republican presidential primary contenders. At least four are listed as speakers at the Moms for Liberty annual summit in Philadelphia later this month.

Former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy have announced they will speak at the meeting at the end of June.

The group said it is in talks to bring others to the conference, including Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a fringe Democrat known for pushing anti-vaccine conspiracy theories.

The high interest in the event underscores how fights surrounding gender and race have become core issues for Republican voters. It also spotlights Republicans' eagerness to embrace a group that has drawn backlash for spreading anti-LGBTQ+ ideas and stripping libraries and classrooms of diverse material.

The group was founded in 2021 by Tiffany Justice, Tina Descovich and Bridget Ziegler, all current and former school board members in Florida who were unhappy with student mask and quarantine policies during the pandemic.

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20283028

In two years, the organization has ballooned to 285 chapters across 44 states, Justice said. The group claims 120,000 active members.

It has expanded its activism in local school districts to target books it says are inappropriate or “anti-American,” ban instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity, require teachers to disclose students’ pronouns to parents, and remove diversity, equity and inclusion programs from schools.

The group also has sought to elect like-minded candidates to school boards. In 2022, just over half the 500 candidates it endorsed for school boards nationwide won their races, Justice said.

Moms for Liberty pitches itself as a nonpartisan, grassroots effort started by passionate parents who call themselves “joyful warriors.” Yet the group’s close ties to Republican organizations, donors and politicians raise questions about partisanship and doubts over how grassroots it really is.

Co-founder Ziegler, who stepped down from the board in late 2021 but remains supportive of the group, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. Still a school board member in Sarasota County, she also is a director at the Leadership Institute, a conservative organization that regularly trains Moms for Liberty members.

Marie Rogerson, who took Ziegler’s place on the Moms for Liberty board, is an experienced political strategist who had previously managed the 2018 campaign of Florida state Rep. Randy Fine, a Republican.

The group also has quickly gained a close ally in DeSantis. In 2021, he signed Florida’s “Parents Bill of Rights,” which identified parents’ rights to direct their kids’ education and health care and was used to fight local student mask mandates. In 2022, he signed a law barring instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through the third grade, a ban opponents had labeled the “Don’t Say Gay” bill and which has since been extended through 12th grade. Moms for Liberty had loudly advocated both pieces of legislation.

Ziegler appeared behind DeSantis in photographs of the latter bill’s signing ceremony. When the group held its inaugural summit in Tampa last year, it hosted speeches by DeSantis and his wife, Casey, presenting the governor with a “liberty sword.”

And though the group is a 501(c)4 nonprofit that doesn’t have to disclose its donors, there are other glimpses of how powerful Republicans have helped fuel its rise.

Its summit sponsors, which paid tens of thousands of dollars for those slots, include the Leadership Institute, the conservative Heritage Foundation and Patriot Mobile, a far-right Christian cellphone company whose PAC has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in an effort to take over Texas school boards.

Maurice Cunningham, a former political science professor at the University of Massachusetts-Boston who has tracked Moms for Liberty’s growth and relationships, said its ability to draw so many top Republican candidates to its second annual summit is a testament to its establishment support.

”Yes, there are certainly moms that live in their communities and so forth who are active,” Cunningham said. “But this is a top down, centrally controlled operation with big-money people at the top and political professionals working for them.”

Justice said the group’s work with conservative organizations and DeSantis shows they take interest in the group’s cause, but doesn’t mean it isn’t grassroots.

Even as Moms for Liberty has aligned with establishment Republicans, researchers say its activism is part of a new wave of far-right anti-student inclusion efforts around the country.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate and extremism around the country, designated Moms for Liberty as an “anti-government extremist” group in its annual report released last week, along with 11 other groups it said use parents’

Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20283028

rights as a vehicle to attack public education and make schools less welcoming for minority and LGBTQ+ students.

The label comes after some of the group's leaders and chapter chairs have been accused of harassing community members and amplifying false claims related to gender controversies.

Justice said calling Moms for Liberty's activities extremist is "alarming" and that the group's efforts to fund and endorse school board races show it is not anti-government.

She said the group removes chapter chairs who break its code of conduct and that it has members and leaders who are gay, including one member of its national leadership team.

A growing coalition of local organizations that promote inclusivity in education has begun to mobilize against Moms for Liberty and are petitioning Marriott to stop the upcoming conference. Defense of Democracy, a New York organization founded in direct opposition to Moms for Liberty, plans to bring members to Philadelphia to protest in person.

"They're so loud and so aggressive that people are kind of scared into silence," Defense of Democracy founder Karen Svoboda said of Moms for Liberty. "You know, if you see bigotry and homophobia, there is a civic responsibility to speak out against it."

Moms for Liberty, in turn, said it will increase security for its meeting. Marriott hasn't responded to the petition, and the Southern Poverty Law Center's "extremist" designation hasn't deterred any Republican candidate who plans to speak.

Haley responded by tweeting, "If @Moms4Liberty is a 'hate group,' add me to the list." Ramaswamy went onstage for a Thursday town hall with Justice and tweeted that SPLC stands for "Selling Political Lies to Corporations."

Those responses are unsurprising to Cunningham, who said in today's climate, the "extremist" label is "almost a badge of honor" within the GOP.

Moms for Liberty, for its part, is fundraising off it. After the SPLC report was public, Justice said the group quickly raised \$45,000, an amount a larger donor has agreed to match.

The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HERITAGE FOUNDATION (THE); The University of Massachusetts

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. President (1US75); U.S. Presidential Campaigns (1US04); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); Massachusetts (1MA15); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; GOP; Leadership Institute; Patriot Mobile; PAC; Defense of Democracy; Southern Poverty Law Center; Heritage Foundation; University of Massachusetts)

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Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics..., 2023 WLNR 20283028

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NewsRoom

Civil rights group links extremists, hardline laws, 2023 WLNR 20302446

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 20302446

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June 12, 2023

Section: News

Civil rights group links extremists, hardline laws SPLC report also cites tactics used by hate groups

Antonio Fins

June 12, 2023

”What is happening in a locality, in a rural place, in Alabama, may not be the same situation that’s happening in Florida...The important thing to note is that actually communities have the ability to engage. In some ways, in our ways, in our rural places and states, they actually have the ability to make big waves because they can really have an impact.”

Rachel Carroll Rivas

SPLC research analyst

A prominent watchdog group this week cited a common denominator between Florida as a home for Jan. 6 insurrectionists, laws targeting LGBTQ+ residents and constraints on academic freedom in schools — the state’s political tilt toward hard-right politics.

”Indeed, it is no coincidence that Florida has been subject to the targeting of LGBTQ+ people with laws that remove their rights, has a history of hard-right organizing as exemplified by leading the nation in defendants related to the Jan. 6 insurrection and is home to extensive organizing by groups like Moms for Liberty to ban books and roll back equal access to public education,” said Maya Henson Carey, research analyst with the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project.

Carey commented on the Sunshine State’s status after the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit civil rights and advocacy group, released its annual report on the status of hate and extremist groups in America. In its “The Year in Hate and Extremism,” SPLC researchers and analysts said they documented the status of 1,225 hate and antigovernment extremist groups.

Southern Poverty Law’s report is a national survey, but Florida got its share of mentions

The SPLC has been issuing the survey every year since 1990. It’s a nationwide assessment, but this year Florida got numerous mentions as a number of trends the organization highlighted as disturbing have been politically prominent in the state.

However, the SPLC’s work in the past has been dismissed, if not derided, by political conservatives who say it is a liberal entity.

Bridget Ziegler, a co-founder of the Moms for Liberty right-wing group, told the Sarasota Herald-Tribune that the SPLC’s

Civil rights group links extremists, hardline laws, 2023 WLNR 20302446

report on hate and extremism was meritless and its criticism of the parents' organization was "laughable."

"The Southern Poverty Law Group is not a legitimate organization with any merit," Ziegler said. "Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there's no credibility behind it. It's truly laughable."

Among the concerns in this year's SPLC report is the rising influence of groups purporting to promote parental rights in education but are "simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they oppose" in classrooms.

"A consistent tactic has been the attempt to ban books from classrooms and libraries based on what these groups deem inappropriate because the content addresses race, LGBTQ issues and gender," the report stated.

PEN America, a New York-based nonprofit devoted to the free expression of ideas, has cited Florida for banning, removing or inappropriately reviewing hundreds of books in school libraries and on classroom shelves, including biographies of Hank Aaron and Roberto Clemente.

In numerous cases, other books, including ones about Anne Frank and Billie Jean King, came under review because fewer than a handful of parents in a school district complained.

The SPLC report cited other tactics used by extremist and hate groups, from distributing flyers to public "spectacles" that have been prevalent in Florida in the past year. Incidents involving anti-Semitic leaflets have been reported in the state, as have public spectacles, from neo-Nazis waving flags to hate messages being flashed onto facades of buildings and sporting venues.

Florida lawmakers did approve legislation sponsored by state Rep. Mike Caruso, a Delray Beach Republican, to crack down on anti-Semitic acts, which Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law in April.

But the GOP supermajority approved other pieces of legislation that civil and human rights groups have decried. And DeSantis, emboldened by a nearly 20-point landslide re-election in November, has been unabashed in his pursuit of policies he said are aimed at stopping "woke" indoctrination.

DeSantis, now running for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, recently said, "The woke mind virus represents a war on the truth, so we will wage a war on the woke."

This week, the DeSantis administration acknowledged its role in shipping people seeking legal immigration status in the United States from Texas to California, a move critics have called cruel in its use of human beings as political pawns.

FAU poll: Floridians say racism, bigotry on the rise

Late last month, Florida Atlantic University and Mainstreet Research released a poll in which a "significant number of Florida voters" cited the increase in racism and bigotry as a concern. The number of respondents who said they were seeing a discernible increase in hate, 56%, far outpaced those who said the trend is in decline, 18%.

The poll and SPLC report come after a Florida legislative session that saw lawmakers embrace more hard-right policies. The 2022 Parental Rights in Education measure, dubbed the "Don't say gay" law by critics, was expanded.

This past Saturday, an outspoken leader in the national transgender community spoke at the Pride on the Block annual festival in West Palm Beach and said the legislation in Florida is specifically aimed at erasing the LGBTQ+ community from the state.

"We're going to say we know exactly what these bills are trying to do. They're trying to exterminate us, and we're not going to stand for it," Montana state Rep. Zoey Zephyr told the crowd.

Lawmakers also enacted a restrictive law they said targeted undocumented immigrants but that faith and aid organizations who assist immigrants feel puts their efforts in jeopardy. This week, state Rep. Rick Roth, R-West Palm Beach, told Insider he still believes the legislation was a good idea but worries it also has "a lot of negative consequences" that he and others are seeking to address.

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Also last month, a jury in Washington, D.C., convicted leaders of the Proud Boys extremist group, including Enrique Tarrío of Miami-Dade County, of seditious conspiracy for their roles in the plot to attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 to thwart the results of the 2020 presidential election.

There have been flashpoints of pushback. On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle blocked enforcement of a relatively new Florida ban on transgender affirming care, calling the regulation “an exercise in politics, not in good medicine.”

Is Florida a bellwether for the rest of the country? What are wider political ramifications of state’s tilt to hard right? While state leaders tout Florida as an “anti-woke” model for the rest of the country, SPLC researchers caution that local political factors and impulses are more determinant in how communities across the United States will act.

Rachel Carroll Rivas, SPLC research analyst, said that while Florida “can act as an indicator” of what’s happening across the country, it isn’t necessary the whole story for what is occurring elsewhere.

”What is happening in a locality, in a rural place, in Alabama, may not be the same situation that’s happening in Florida or that’s happening in the Pacific Northwest,” she said.

”The important thing to note is that actually communities have the ability to engage. In some ways, in our ways, in our rural places and states, they actually have the ability to make big waves because they can really have an impact.”

FAU and Mainstreet pollsters said in a statement that their poll showed women, Black and Hispanic respondents seemed more fearful of the rise in hate speech and actions. And, they said, it could lead to more political mobilization going into the 2024 election year.

”If there is a perceived rise in prejudice, group consciousness may drive more people to the polls believing that collective action will help the group’s interest along with an individual’s outcomes,” said Luzmarina Garcia, an assistant professor of political science at FAU who helped conduct the poll.

Part of the problem, said Margaret –Huang, SPLC president and CEO, is that many political leaders across the country are embracing the rhetoric and spirit of extremist groups and their leaders in pursuing public policy.

”We are seeing an increasing number of politicians embracing far right ideology, far more than in the past,” said Huang. “In the past, you would see politicians seeking to distance themselves from far-right ideology and far-right extremism. Today, they are all aligned – they are using the same talking points.”

Antonio Fins is a politics and business editor at the

”What is happening in a locality, in a rural place, in Alabama, may not be the same situation that’s happening in Florida...The important thing to note is that actually communities have the ability to engage. In some ways, in our ways, in our rural places and states, they actually have the ability to make big waves because they can really have an impact.”

Rachel Carroll Rivas

SPLC research analyst

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Pen Co of America; Mainstreet Research; FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); Immigration & Naturalization (1IM88); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

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June 12, 2023

Section: Opinion

Letters to the Editor

Fighting the darkness of Alzheimer's

On the summer solstice - June 21 - the day with the most light, thousands of people across the world participate in The Longest Day, to fight the darkness of Alzheimer's.

I am standing up to the darkness in honor of my mother - my light - by raising critical funds for the care, support, and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association through a charity bike ride.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, in Pennsylvania alone, there are more than 280,000 people with Alzheimer's disease, and more than 404,000 people serving as their caregivers.

With June being Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, now is the time to join me in raising awareness and taking action. Visit alz.org/thelongestday to get involved.

Jenny Davis, Media

Simplify reapplication process

An article on June 4 noted that 32% of Pennsylvanians who completed the Medicaid reapplication process in April were slated to lose coverage - that is a disconcerting development.

The article elucidates that half of the individuals expected to lose Medicaid are still eligible, suggesting systemic issues with the reapplication process. The state should take proactive measures to simplify the process and provide more support.

Health care is a fundamental human right and should never become a maze. Over the years, a labyrinthine system has been formed, and because of its complexity, individuals could likely lose coverage. Seeking care should not be strenuous for patients. Instead, it should be inherently facile.

Pragat Patel, Ellicott City, Md.

Moms for suppression

Moms for Liberty? What a deceptive name for a group that actually wants to suppress freedoms, take away your freedom of choice, and dictate what people can read and how they can learn. Doesn't sound like liberty to me.

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The Inquirer's June 2 article points out that the national group's sponsor is a prominent Republican with close ties to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and the former director of Moms for Liberty, Bridget Ziegler, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party.

Moms for Liberty is not a local group of concerned parents, it is a national organization of 275 chapters that is trying to influence local school boards, change school curricula, and control what's in school libraries and how teachers teach.

Liberty is defined in Merriam-Webster as "freedom" and "actions going beyond normal limits." Moms for Liberty is not about liberty and freedom, it's about limiting choice and suppressing the freedom of choice.

Susan Thompson, Media

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Geriatrics (1GE28); Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Economics (1HE56); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Healthcare Regulatory (1HE04); U.S. National Healthcare Reform (1US09))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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June 12, 2023

Section: A

Fits and starts: How the CCSD superintendent search ended with just one option

Sara Gregory and Maura Turcotte sgregory@postandcourier.com mturcotte@postandcourier.com

To read more in-depth stories from The Post and Courier's Education Lab, go to postandcourier.com/education-lab.

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Charleston's school superintendent search fell apart in the eleventh hour.

One finalist pulled out, then a second. After 18 months of speculation and uncertainty, the search ended with the board offering the job to the only finalist who hadn't withdrawn. For a community that had been promised a chance to meet with three finalists, it was an unexpected decision.

"This one felt a little bit like 'Survivor,' like you had one person left and that's kind of the person crowned as the winner," said Jody Stallings, a veteran educator who has witnessed a number of superintendent searches in Charleston.

Stallings is among those who thought the search would start anew. He's not sure why the board didn't do that. In the days since they offered Eric Gallien the job, most board members haven't spoken publicly about why they feel confident in his ability to lead South Carolina's second-largest district, one that's much larger than his own in Racine, Wis.

He will soon be tasked with leading a school district entrusted with more than \$640 million in taxpayer dollars annually and nearly 50,000 students. It's a district grappling with divisions over its direction and wide disparities among its schools. It is home to some of South Carolina's best performing schools, as well as some of its worst.

Gallien might truly be the best person for the job, community members said. But the secrecy in the search's final days has left few able to say that with confidence.

The board's decision has also renewed questions into its ability to lead the district. Even before the superintendent decision, trustees had faced criticism over the controversial policies they prioritized during their first few months in office. Some now say members let their political agenda take precedence over the superintendent search.

Community members worry the board has set up its new leader for failure: The job is already hard. Will it be even harder for someone hired out of a process that has created so much doubt?

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Fits and starts

Charleston's top job has been shrouded in uncertainty ever since Gerrita Postlewait's resignation in late December 2021 .

The search to fill the job proceeded in fits and starts.

Postlewait's departure, announced during the district's winter break, was sudden. A special-called meeting to accept her resignation was held with so little notice one board member couldn't attend. No explanation has ever been given for why she left.

"I felt like some things were not entirely transparent in that process," said former board member Cindy Bohn Coats.

The board named Don Kennedy, at the time the district's chief financial officer, to be interim superintendent. After that, the board didn't discuss the search again until March 2022. Three months later, the board voted to remove the interim title and make Kennedy superintendent - but just until they found a permanent replacement.

Over the summer, the board interviewed five search firms to guide the process. They ultimately didn't hire one. With the November 2022 election looming and with all board member seats up for grabs, the outgoing trustees decided it wasn't their place to choose the district's next leader. Most of them weren't running to keep their seats.

Charleston County voters ended up electing an almost-entirely new board .

New board chairwoman Pam McKinney said in December that she and the other members were reviewing the previous board's work on the superintendent search. McKinney vowed the board would be transparent and criticized the previous board for holding its discussions about the search in executive sessions not open to the public.

"We've got to be more open," she said.

McKinney and other members said hiring a new superintendent was key to the district's stability.

But new board members took office with other goals, too.

Those initiatives, which took board members' attention away from the superintendent search, frustrated some community members. They are bothered by the amount of time the board has spent on controversial cultural debates pushed by five new trustees whose election bids were backed by Moms for Liberty, a conservative group that has claimed public schools indoctrinate children and has fought for increased parental control over books and curriculum.

"There's been some political distractions that have kept them from focusing on the task at hand, which was getting a new superintendent," said Joy Brown, a District 10 constituent board member.

New board members always have a big learning curve. Their first few meetings were rocky, full of hiccups, as members struggled to grasp all the board's policies and procedures.

The board didn't discuss the superintendent search as a group until January. At the same time they began discussions about the search, members also began to talk about adding prayer to their meetings. Then, some took aim at the district's literacy curriculum, calling lessons biased and inappropriate. Then, they took up a policy proposal that would have banned educators from talking with students about sexual orientation or gender .

The Moms for Liberty faction pushed the prayer and curricula debates. Their proposals all prompted immediate outcry. Person after person signed up to speak during the board's public comment, most of them imploring the board to drop the controversial initiatives. Several meetings stretched until the late night hours.

The board didn't hire a search firm until the middle of March.

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"We spent an awful lot of time on prayer and some policies that were not critical needs things for our school district," said Sarah Shad Johnson, who ran for the board in 2022 and lost to trustee Ed Kelley. "Why did it take so long to get around to hiring the search firm?"

Board member Keith Grybowski said the new members were hit with a lot when they took office. They had to tackle the superintendent search while figuring out their own roles and how to work with each other. He said it's been the most challenging job he's ever had.

"It's like trying to jump on a fast freight train," Grybowski said. "Then you get on board and you're told that there's a bomb and you've got to stop it from exploding."

Johnson said she felt good about the search at first, even as she worried about the new board's learning curve. She liked all the community input the search firm gathered at the start of the process, which led to the candidate profile the board adopted. But she thought the board's inexperience contributed to the confusion at the end.

"They had their whole process fall apart," she said. "I felt like they decided they had to wrap it up quickly because it was just getting worse and worse."

The search breaks down

A crowd of people gathered in a circle of seats around Gallien on May 25. The community members, part of a focus group, came to Burke High School ready with questions to find out more about Gallien's record working in Wisconsin and how he intended to translate that experience to Charleston.

He was the first of three candidates the group was supposed to interview over the course of a few days.

As participants arrived for Gallien's interview they were still in the dark about who else they'd meet. Just one other finalist had been publicly named at that point- Charles McNulty, a superintendent in Little Rock, Ark.

What board members knew, but hadn't shared yet with the focus group or the public, was that McNulty and the other finalist - eventually identified as Kenneth Bradshaw of Augusta, Ga. - had already withdrawn from consideration.

Behind the scenes, the board's process had been breaking down for days .

Trustees had picked finalists three days prior on May 22. They voted on six people identified only by letters to keep semifinalists' names confidential. While state law says that a government agency must make the three finalists' names public, the district said they couldn't release the names yet when The Post and Courier asked a day later.

A Facebook group ended up sharing the names on May 23. The anonymous online post was the first to publicly name all three finalists. The following day, the district sent out a press release that named Gallien and McNulty, but not the third candidate.

Board member Leah Whatley said she caught wind on May 24 that one candidate had withdrawn. But she picked up Gallien from his hotel room the next day and drove him to his final interview with the board as planned.

After they finished, trustees learned that a second candidate had withdrawn, Whatley said. Neither former candidate has spoken publicly or responded to requests to talk about why they pulled out.

By then, Gallien had continued on to the next part of his visit. He toured three schools, took questions from the focus group for nearly two hours and then attended a meet-and-greet with community members at Burke High School.

When he met with the focus group, none of them had any indication anything had gone awry.

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Brown, the District 10 constituent board member who was asked to participate in the focus group, said she felt good when she saw who was included on the panel. There was a lot of diversity of ideas and every focus group member got to ask a question, something Brown appreciated.

"It was a very divided crowd," she said. "But CCSD is very divided. I felt like it was an indicator of how he would be able to handle what's to come if he became superintendent."

She wished the board had given the public more information about the candidates beforehand. Brown said she ended up doing a lot of research on her own so she could ask a good question. Aaron White, a social worker who served on the task force, also said more details would have been helpful.

Gallien didn't wow them. Brown described him as "middle." But nothing he said alarmed them, either. Stallings, the head of the Charleston Teacher Alliance and another focus group member, agreed.

"I wouldn't say I heard anything necessarily remarkable," he said.

Several shared concerns about Gallien's ability to take on a larger district. The school system he oversees in Wisconsin has about 16,000 students, making it about one-third the size of CCSD. The academic record in Racine is mixed: The graduation rate has grown since he became superintendent but the district remains one of the lowest performing overall, according to Wisconsin's district report cards.

They were all looking forward to the next candidate interviews when the district announced those meetings wouldn't be happening: The other two finalists had pulled out.

Crowning a winner

Stallings said every superintendent search he's seen in Charleston unfolds differently. But when he learned the board had offered the superintendent position to Gallien after the other two candidates dropped out, he was shocked.

Others were similarly surprised. White felt the community was robbed of the chance to meet multiple finalists as promised. It made it hard to evaluate whether he was the best candidate.

"If I was able to match him up against the other candidates, I would have had a different impression of him," White said.

The decision to take a vote May 30 and offer Gallien the position was also unexpected by at least one board member.

Whatley said she assumed the board would figure out how to regroup after the Memorial Day holiday. A fellow trustee - Whatley wouldn't say who - had called her over the weekend and told her that was the plan.

She liked Gallien but thought it'd be in both his and the community's best interest for the board to review more candidates as originally planned. When they met on May 30, she thought they'd be talking about how to reopen the search and what the process would look like.

"The concern that I highlighted was the optics of the last man standing," she said. "It's not fair because we're supposed to be comparing these different candidates, and we can't now. The process has completely fallen apart."

She said it was clear early on in the board's closed-session discussion that the majority of members were ready to vote. Whatley decided to leave the meeting in protest after the executive session concluded. Her vote wouldn't have changed the outcome - six in favor, two opposed.

Most board members have not spoken publicly or responded to requests for interviews to explain their votes. The only statement some have made was a June 8 press release defending their process.

"His selection was based on the quality of his application, his interviews and his record of success in showing academic

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improvement in multiple settings,” read the release. The statement was signed by every board member except Whatley, who declined, and Charlotte Bailey, who was dealing with a family emergency.

McKinney and Grybowski, who are the only two to give individual interviews explaining their decision besides Whatley, said they feel confident Gallien was the best candidate and that’s why they voted yes. He seems like someone the board can work with and trust, Grybowski said.

”We’re not going to find somebody that’s going to make everybody happy,” he said. “We’re too divided of a society at the moment. I hope what happens is he’s a man of his word in his representations of how he wants to work with the board.”

The limited public comments and statements have done little to resolve community members’ concerns, though. The new board has effectively ended up in the same situation as their predecessors were after Postlewait’s departure, facing criticism over their secrecy.

The board missed an opportunity to restore the community’s trust, Brown said. She wanted the transparent process that was promised.

But she, like White and others, said she will respect the board’s decision and is open to working with Gallien. The focus now has to be on students’ needs, she said.

The board’s vote actually gives her hope that Gallien can bring people together. The 6-2 vote didn’t split along the political lines that have often defined this board. Instead of voting as a bloc, the Moms for Liberty faction was divided, with two trustees endorsed by the group voting for him, two voting against and Whatley not present. Those who voted for Gallien found themselves allied with the board’s more liberal members.

”One of the qualifications they wanted was somebody who could bring everybody together,” Brown said. “That kind of spoke highly to that.”

The board’s contract with Gallien is being negotiated and no signing has been announced.

Hillary Flynn contributed to this report.

---- Index References ----

Company: Coastal Community Foundation of SC Inc

News Subject: (Board of Directors (1BO47); Business Management (1BU42); Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Corporate Events (1CR05); Corporate Groups & Ownership (1XO09); Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Public Affairs (1PU31); World Elections (1WO93))

Industry: (Press Releases (1PR19))

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DeSantis is wrong. Book bans in Florida schools and in..., 2023 WLNR 20314604

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June 12, 2023

DeSantis is wrong. Book bans in Florida schools and in other states aren't a 'hoax.'
It is not only the most blatant prohibitions on books that are of concern to those who believe
in protecting the freedom to read.

Jonathan Friedman

It turns out nobody wants to be known as a book banner.

So when news broke last month that Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," was being restricted to middle school shelves in a Miami-Dade County school, the Florida district was quick to insist that the book had not been banned. Some conservative voices rallied to the school's defense, as did Florida's commissioner of education and Gov. Ron DeSantis. He has dismissed reporting on book bans by the news media as a "hoax."

Was the media mistaken?

The Gorman affair is the latest in a string of stories about book bans, in which the use of the term "ban" is being contested. To avoid charges of censorship, school administrators, government officials and groups like Moms for Liberty have taken to calling the results of their efforts "quarantine" or "curation" – anything but "ban."

This debate is not new. Advocates for free speech and intellectual freedom have long used the term "book ban" to refer to efforts by authorities to remove access to books based on objections to their content, ideas or themes. As such, they have recognized that efforts to ban books are not always totally successful, nor are they always permanent or absolute.

Writing about book banning for The First Amendment Encyclopedia in 2009, Susan Webb explained, "Opponents of publications sometimes use the tactic of restricting access rather than calling for the physical removal of books."

Controlling access to information should be of concern

In this sense, it is not only the most blatant prohibitions on books that are of concern to those who believe in protecting the freedom to read, but also the full range of ways in which authorities may exert control over access to information.

This was the crux of Supreme Court Justice William Brennan's 1982 opinion in *Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico*, when he emphasized that school libraries were owed constitutional protection from efforts by school boards to impose political or ideological constraints on books available to young people.

And that was affirmed by a U.S. federal district court in a 2003 case, *Counts v. Cedarville School District*, which held that requiring parental permission for students to access "Harry Potter" books in the school library was an infringement on their rights.

We need not face something as absolute as an eight-year prohibition – as happened recently to three books by Rupri Kaur in

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Brevard (Florida) Public Schools – to be alarmed about the growing efforts to vilify, mischaracterize and constrain access to books about racism or with LGBTQ content in other ways.

What happened with “The Hill We Climb” is no small thing. A parent filed an objection with the district noting that the book “is not educational and have indirectly hate messages,” [sic] and saying that she believed the function of the material was to “cause confusion and indoctrinate” students.

Another view: Are book bans in schools real? Heated rhetoric doesn’t match reality.

Despite the absence of further substance, school leaders took this challenge seriously and decided to move the book from general availability for elementary school students to the middle school shelves.

While district officials later told parents that the book was still accessible to all students, they also clarified that to access the book, elementary students will have to ask a media specialist for permission to see it and prove that they read at a fifth grade level.

Gorman’s book was not shifted from one shelf to another only to better guide student readers (something that librarians do routinely), but rather to impose a new restriction on it. Given that this began with this one parent’s objection, it can hardly be argued that it was solely a pedagogical decision or separate from efforts to suppress books and censor teaching in Florida and nationwide.

School restricts students’ access to books written for their age group

The distinction between guiding students to books and restricting students from books is instructive. Consider that “The Hill We Climb” was not the only book challenged or moved off the elementary school shelves. Three other titles were relocated and restricted to middle school students at the same time: “The ABCs of Black History” by Rio Cortez , “Love to Langston”by Tony Medina and “Cuban Kids”by George Ancona.

The idea that students would need to demonstrate reading proficiency at a fifth grade level before accessing these books, which are written for elementary level readers, is alarming. Not to mention the subsequent mismatch, given that middle school students are not likely to be interested in an A-to-Z picture book.

America’s kids are at risk. Here’s what we must do to prepare them for uncertain future

Ultimately, what’s at stake when we talk about book bans is student learning and well-being. Semantic gymnastics about what is or isn’t a ban is an effort to deny and distract from the problem. When school districts reduce or prohibit access to books in response to the bogus demands of a single individual, they put the needs and interests of all on a back burner. When they determine that books representing historically marginalized identities are inappropriate, they send students and families a disturbing message about whose stories matter. When state legislators enable and support these actions, they are complicit.

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Some may not like the potency of the phrase “book ban” and its negative connotations with authoritarian tactics – particularly if books end up only temporarily restricted and are then returned to shelves. But the force of new laws and political pressure from the state is clearly creating a chilled climate for public education.

And alarm over threats to free speech is, rightly, sounded not only at the most severe prohibitions, but also at infringements that might have a broader chilling effect on open inquiry and democratic culture: such as the cancellation of a campus speaker or the circulation of a list of prohibited words.

The point is not whether one can get a book that has been prohibited in a school at the local library or purchase it on Amazon; it’s about whether someone’s ready access to ideas has been denied or diminished in a public institution and why. As the court noted in *Counts v. Cedarville* , “The loss of First Amendment rights, even minimally, is injurious.”

In a democracy, liberty and free speech require robust protection in the face of cultural and political censors. Protecting

DeSantis is wrong. Book bans in Florida schools and in..., 2023 WLNR 20314604

students' freedom to read must be no different. In the face of a growing movement to censor public education, it's essential that we sound the alarm over book banning in its most insidious forms, especially those propelled by hate and ignorance.

If people don't want to be known as book banners, there's a simple solution: Stop trying to ban books.

Jonathan Friedman is director of free expression and education programs at PEN America.

You can read diverse opinions from our Board of Contributors and other writers on the Opinion front page, on Twitter @usatodayopinion and in our daily Opinion newsletter. To respond to a column, submit a comment to letters@usatoday.com.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: DeSantis is wrong. Book bans in Florida schools and in other states aren't a 'hoax.'

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Company: Pen Co of America

News Subject: (Censorship (1CE48); Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Education (1ED85); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Supreme Court; Board of Contributors; PEN America) (Ron DeSantis)

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NewsRoom

The ruling elites just don't care -- yet, 2023 WLNR 20303824

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2023 WLNR 20303824

Washington Times (DC)
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June 12, 2023

Section: Commentary

The ruling elites just don't care -- yet They can keep wrecking our country and corrupting children without consequences

Robert Knight

The growing revolt in America against cultural madness is annoying the ruling elites, but not enough to keep them from continuing to foist their evil agenda brazenly on the rest of us.

The criminalization of political opposition continues apace. The Justice Department actually indicted former President Donald Trump on Thursday over documents stored at his house. But not President Biden for essentially the same offense. Meanwhile, as evidence pours out of congressional investigations about millions of dollars from China, Ukraine and other nations flowing into the Biden family's 20 different accounts, the elite media yawn.

Parents are fed up with schools that indoctrinate their children. So the Southern Poverty Law Center, an elitist group that smears conservatives, has just added a dozen parental rights groups, including Moms for Liberty, to its "hate" list under "antigovernment extremist groups."

A solid majority of Americans want the border secured. Tough beans, the elites say. Five million illegals in the last two years? Keep 'em coming.

By a large margin, Americans of all races and ethnicities favor voter ID laws to enhance election integrity. The elites say this is racist and "voter suppression."

Speaking of racism, some Democrats are pushing hard for reparations to Blacks from White, Hispanic and Asian Americans over slavery and Jim Crow. Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri has proposed a national plan that would cost taxpayers \$14 trillion. Really. In San Francisco, they are talking about payments of up to \$5 million per slave descendant. The elites think this may be a bit much, but on the bright side, it should keep inflaming racial animosity.

The ruling elites not only don't care what average Americans think but seem determined to stick it to them in every way possible. They see any resistance as a bump in the road.

Amid a ruinous boycott costing it billions over the company's embrace of transgenderism, Bud Light is doubling down. The beer brand just announced that it will donate \$200,000 to the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce for the second straight year.

Target, which is losing billions celebrating Pride month by selling LGBTQ-themed clothing for adults and children designed by a satanist, pulled back some displays but is still kowtowing to the alphabet mafia, as is nearly all of corporate America.

The ruling elites just don't care -- yet, 2023 WLNR 20303824

It's hard to get away from the nonsense, even in Dear Abby columns. "Mortified in Texas" asked Abby for advice because "My husband started wearing girls' frilly socks and pink nail polish - the pinker the better. When we go out in public, he has to show off his nails to everyone."

Abby offers this observation: "Could this be your husband's bid for attention or a way of announcing that he has a proclivity for cross-dressing? If it's the latter, please understand that it doesn't make him any different than the person you have known for the last 33 years."

Back in Nancy Pelosi's congressional district, a man identifying as a woman won the Miss San Francisco beauty contest and will compete for the title of Miss California.

CBS affiliate KPIX noted that it was the first time in 99 years that a "transgender woman" won the title.

The pageant winner likes to read "Sparkle Boy" to elementary school children. "Later this summer," KPIX reports, "she will represent San Francisco and compete for the title of Miss California. But in the eyes [of] 4th grader Camila Soberanis, she's already won.

"It was beautiful, 'cause I didn't care if she was a boy or a girl. It was just like ... normal," said Soberanis."

Precisely. No grooming here, right? By the way, journalists traditionally identify a child by the first name on the second reference. This respects innocence.

Lately, however, children are being identified by their last names, just like adults. Important age-based distinctions are being eroded. We might want to ask why.

Elite, professional guilds went "woke" years ago and are getting worse. The American Academy of Pediatrics, which should consider changing its name to the American Academy Against Health and Normalcy, has come out "strongly" opposed to state laws protecting children from being given puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and other "gender-affirming care."

A Washington Post-KFF survey shows most Americans oppose such "care." At least 18 states so far have banned these forms of child abuse, the latest and biggest being Texas on June 2.

In Florida, U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle blocked a similar recent law, saying the plaintiffs' minor children would "suffer irreparable harm" if they were denied treatments - the polar opposite of reality. Drugs and hormones can cause permanent damage, as do castration and breast removal.

The ruling elites' aggressive designs on children are adding up to a full-blown parents revolt all over the country, even in North Hollywood, California. Protesting a "Pride day" celebration on June 2 at an elementary school, dozens of parents in "Leave Our Kids Alone" shirts carried signs saying, "Stop Sexualizing Our Kids."

The elites assume they can keep wrecking the country and corrupting children without lasting consequences to their hegemony.

"Any resistance will blow over, like it always does," they scoff.

Maybe they're right. Or maybe we're witnessing the birth of a cultural and political earthquake that will rock the marketplace and the ballot box.

They shouldn't have indicted Mr. Trump.

And they really shouldn't have gone after the children.

• Robert Knight is a columnist for The Washington Times. His website is roberthknight.com.

The ruling elites just don't care -- yet, 2023 WLNR 20303824

---- **Index References** ----

Company: American Academy of Pediatrics.; National LGBT Chamber of Commerce; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Bud Light

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Pediatrics (1PE85))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); North America (1NO39); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Justice Department; Moms for Liberty; American Academy Against Health and Normalcy; American Academy of Pediatrics; National LGBT Chamber of Commerce; Southern Poverty Law Center; Bud Light)

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June 12, 2023

Section: National

Trump surpasses DeSantis in post-indictment Western Conservative Summit straw poll

Valerie Richardson, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DENVER - The federal indictment on Friday against Donald Trump did not diminish his popularity this weekend at the 14th Annual Western Conservative Summit.

The former president captured the weekend straw poll of presidential candidates with 40.3% support, compared to 35.8% for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, the winner of the conservative confab's 2021 and 2022 straw polls.

Taking third with 7.7% was radio host Larry Elder, who spoke at the event, followed by Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina with 5.8%, according to results released Sunday by the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University, which hosted the summit.

"It's a two-horse race for the Republican nomination for president," said Jeff Hunt, director of the Centennial Institute in Lakewood, Colorado. "The results are clear - Western grassroots conservatives want a fighter who will take on the radical Left and the institutions that are destroying America's founding principles."

Mr. Trump won the straw poll, but Mr. DeSantis edged him by 66.9% to 63.4% on the approval-vote question, which allows participants to check the names of all the candidates whom they approve for a particular office.

"Approval voting minimizes the dilemma of choosing between the candidate you really like and the candidate you think is most electable," approval-voting advocate Frank Atwood said in a statement.

Mr. Elder received 44.9% approval, followed by Mr. Scott at 35.3% and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy at 24.2%.

President Biden received less than 1% approval, which was no surprise at the conservative gathering. But Democratic presidential primary candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. did unexpectedly well, with 14.4% approval.

Asked to identify their top policy concerns, participants led with election integrity and religious freedom, which both received 73%, followed by education/parental rights at 72%, immigration/border security at 71% and gun rights at 71%.

This year's summit drew 1,500 attendees to the Colorado Convention Center for a two-day fest of speeches and workshops featuring Republican lawmakers, conservative activists and religious leaders.

They included biblical scholar Yoram Hazony, former Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, NCAA All-American swimmer Riley Gaines, author and radio host Eric Metaxas, radio host Erick Erickson, Babylon Bee CEO Seth Dillon, PragerU personality CJ Pearson, and Cheryl Chumley, online opinion editor for The Washington Times.

Trump surpasses DeSantis in post-indictment Western..., 2023 WLNR 20303832

.@ckchumley is live on the main stage at #wcs23! Watch here: <https://t.co/qnKYO63cWE> pic.twitter.com/m97xZmiOVg

- Washington Times Opinion (@WashTimesOpEd) June 9, 2023

Tina Descovich, co-founder of Moms for Liberty, noted that her organization was added last week to the Southern Poverty Law Center's "hate map," along with other parental-rights groups like Parents Defending Education.

Why? "Moms for Liberty and the parents' rights movement as a whole are upsetting the balance of power in education across America, but also we're upsetting the balance of power in America," Ms. Descovich said. "It's wild to think about, I know, it's a bold statement to say, but we're watching it happen every day.

Republican speakers included Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley; Colorado Reps. Lauren Boebert, Ken Buck and Doug Lamborn; Wyoming Rep. Harriet Hageman; and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a GOP candidate for president.

Ms. Boebert offered a spirited defense of Mr. Trump, who faces 31 counts of violating the Espionage Act for "willful retention" of classified documents as well as conspiring to obstruct justice with aide Walt Nauta.

"Biden has classified documents, Hillary Clinton has classified documents, good old Mike Pence has classified documents," Ms. Boebert told the crowd. "But when they find President Trump has classified documents, who was a president, had the authority to declassify, they say, 'Espionage Act! Indict him!'"

Kyle Rittenhouse, who was acquitted of two deadly shootings during 2020 rioting in Kenosha, Wisconsin, turned up at the Rocky Mountain Gun Owners booth.

The summit, whose theme was "Western Strong," also featured representatives from a host of Western states, including California, Nevada, Montana, Texas and Wyoming.

"New to the summit this year are state-based delegations," Mr. Hunt said. "We have recognized that the Western Conservative Summit has been for many years just kind of a Colorado conservative summit, and we need to address the Western issues that we're facing."

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Company: COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; THE WASHINGTON TIMES LLC

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. Legislation (1US12); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Colorado (1CO26); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Wisconsin (1WI54); Wyoming (1WY84))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Centennial Institute; Babylon Bee; Moms for Liberty; Parents Defending Education; Moms for Liberty; GOP; Colorado Christian University; Southern Poverty Law Center; The Washington Times) (Donald Trump; Ron DeSantis)

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NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 20218116

Beaver County Times (Beaver, PA)
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June 11, 2023

Section: News

Letters to the editor Too many soaking in ignorance

Any old heads out there remember Madge the manicurist from those 1970s and '80s TV commercials? She had a fetish for sneakily dunking ladies' fingers into bowls of green dish soap while delivering her trademark catchphrase: "You're soaking in it!" Madge was onto something; we have definitely been "soaking in it."

By now we are a culture completely drenched-to-the-bone and saturated in advertising, commercialism, consumerism, marketing, branding, hype, spin, propaganda and jingoism.

Can we tell the difference between the truth and the lie; between the claim and the fact; between real life and showbiz? Do we know when we're being "Truman Showed," when our reality is being scripted to get a rise out of us for someone else's ends?

Consider "astroturf" (meaning fake grassroots) organizations like "Moms for Liberty." This group's founding mythology (i.e. lie) is that it sprang into existence wholly from the fervent hearts of a few humble "liberty-loving" (read: book banning) moms who have kept the fledgling operation afloat by selling "a lot of T-shirts." You can only buy into this manufactured fable, however, if you PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE MOMS BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

Behind the curtain, you will find that the "founders" include not only a marketing and communications specialist (paid spinmeister) but the wife of the owner of a political marketing firm (propagandist) who, from his position as vice chairman of the Florida Republican Party, bragged that "Moms for Liberty" would act as political foot soldiers for Florida Gov. and now GOP presidential hopeful Ron Desantis.

The group's politically savvy leaders (oh, pardon me, I mean just a couple of everyday moms who became radicalized for "liberty" while baking brownies) have registered their organization to specifically allow for partisan political activity while creating multiple political action committees including a super pac that allows them to raise and spend unlimited political donations.

Upon forming, they got immediate and ongoing air time on Fox "News" including with the since jettisoned Tucker Carlson (Putin puppet and exposed serial liar.) Former Fox personality Megyn Kelly held a big-ticket fundraiser for them. The CEO of the group's press firm was the former campaign manager and chief of staff for Republican senator and former Fla. governor Rick Scott. They have been sponsored by groups affiliated with an influential, longstanding alliance of right-wing billionaires called "The Council for National Policy." And so on, etc., and so forth.

In the same way that Fox "News" helped incite the Jan. 6th terrorist attack on the Capitol by spreading Trump's Big Lie, this phony cadre of well-connected con artists exists to whip up and indoctrinate gullible hordes with incendiary culture war

Letters to the editor, 2023 WLNR 20218116

garbage and then turn them loose on teachers, librarians, and school boards who are forced to confront hateful mobs, death threats, and a highly concentrated form of ignorance (YOU'RE SOAKING IN IT) so intense that it becomes a nihilistic force, a black hole sucking in and annihilating all light, truth and hope.

Melissa "Missy" Bosch of an Arkansas "Moms for Liberty" chapter did not know she was being recorded at a group meeting when, in regards to librarians, she said: "I'm telling you, if I had any mental issues, they would all be plowed down by a freaking gun right now." "If," Missy? Ms. Bosch is apparently not for banning assault rifles to address mass shootings but for banning books by any means necessary. Meanwhile, in Michigan, Jennifer Smith, a "mom" and local Republican Party chair who loves to spread Qanon disinformation and conspiracy theories on social media, screamed this at a school board meeting: "We're coming for you. Take it as a threat. Call the FBI. I don't care. You're all either going to be recalled or we're all coming for you. That's what's happening." Pretty much a copy and paste of J6 rhetoric, no?

The Daily Beast has reported that the parent who filed a complaint against Amanda Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb" has both attended Proud Boy (whose leaders were recently convicted of seditious conspiracy for J6) events and taken action with "Moms For Liberty." This parent who wants to ban Gorman, among others, recently posted to Facebook a meme amplifying The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an over 100-year-old hateful anti-Semitic propaganda text - Qanon long before Qanon - which is responsible for vast, untold suffering of Jewish people through the generations. Consider, though, that this parent is originally from Cuba with limited literacy in English; she has been depending on demagogues like "Moms for Liberty" and the Proud Boys to tell her what the books mean and what should be banned. When her "Protocols" posting was criticized alongside her censorship crusade, she apologized to the Jewish community and said, "I didn't read the words ... I'm not a reader, I'm not a book person. I'm a mom involved in my children's education." In effect, she said: I am a vulnerable, fearful person being manipulated inside a manufactured reality for someone else's political ends. Included in her complaint for containing "indirectly hate messages" were specifically these words of Amanda Gorman's work: "Somehow we've weathered and witnessed/A nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished."

A crucial part of the unfinished work we need to do as a nation is to get ourselves unsoaked by the kind of insidious brainwashing - epitomized by charlatans like "Moms for Liberty" - that has enthralled millions of our citizens to an evil ignorance that they swear is righteousness.

David Ninehouser, Ambridge

Solar power could be the answer

The article in the June 1 edition of The Times indicated there would be a problem replacing the electric power generated by the Homer City coal-fired power plant because it would require 13,500 acres of solar panels. If an average home roof could provide up to 1,000 square feet for solar panel installation, approximately 600,000 home roofs could provide the necessary 600 million square feet required.

The power company could create hubs that collect solar power and convert it to 120-volt power. The homes that allow the power company to install and maintain solar panels could be offered a lower electric rate. There would be no necessity for battery storage since all the solar-generated power would be fed to the grid and used by everyone connected to the grid. If excess power, it would be added to the grid. If insufficient power is collected, the grid would make up for the deficiency.

Extra costs would include the creation of crews to install and maintain the solar cells, along with work to design and build the small hubs needed, Savings would come from not having to buy the land and develop the sites necessary to accommodate large solar farms for the 13,500 acres of solar panels.

This program would need to select an appropriate area to create a pilot solar hub to see if this distributed collection system would work as intended. If it proves out it could be deployed on a greater scale.

Larry Busack, Monaca

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Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Industry: (Alternative Energy Sources (1AL05); Electric Utilities (1EL82); Electric Utilities Generation (1EL37); Energy & Fuel (1EN13); Energy Industry Environmental Issues (1EN22); Environmental Solutions (1EN90); Renewable Energy Sources (1RE65); Solar Power (1SO70); Utilities (1UT12); Utilities Environmental Issues (1UT10))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Florida Republican Party; Fox "News; FBI)

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June 11, 2023

Section: Features

Parents' rights :SPLC labels Moms for Liberty a hate group

By Michael Graham

When Republican presidential candidates like Ron DeSantis and Donald Trump appear at the Moms for Liberty Summit in Philadelphia at the end of June, their hosts will be a "hate group."

At least that's the claim of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a far-left political organization that is drawing scorn for labeling Moms for Liberty and other parental rights organizations as "extremist organizations." The SPLC even includes them on the same "hate map" as neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

Another GOP candidate, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, just held a town hall in New Hampshire with Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice. Like many SPLC critics, he dismissed the attack as "a farce."

"The SPLC is a tentacle of the woke-industrial complex," Ramaswamy said. "I'm proud to be the first candidate to sign the Moms for Liberty Parent Pledge."

While often presented in media reports as a neutral authority on hate crimes, the SPLC makes no secret of its left-of-center politics. In its report lumping parents protesting school board policies with the White supremacist militia movement, the SPLC made repeated partisan attacks against Republicans. It also claimed "backlash is a political strategy," not a natural response from concerned parents.

Among their indicators that Moms for Liberty is an "extremist group" is its support for shutting down the federal Department of Education, a policy embraced by millions of Americans and multiple presidential candidates every four years.

The SPLC report included 523 "hate groups" in its latest map, which includes 230 chapters of Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education and other parental rights organizations. It also includes the Family Research Council and the Alliance Defending Freedom, both organizations promoting religious liberty and Christian beliefs, on the "hate groups" list.

In response, Moms for Liberty tweeted, "Last year, the Biden White House worked with the (National School Boards Association) to label Parents Domestic Terrorists. Today, the SPLC labels our organization - an org full of moms who care about their kids - a Hate Group. This is a coordinated attempt to silence and suppress us."

Justice called the SPLC's actions "absurd."

"They put our picture next to the KKK? How ridiculous is that?"

Parents' rights :SPLC labels Moms for Liberty a hate group, 2023 WLNR 20214590

Asked why the parents' rights movement is facing so much backlash, Justice said it starts at the White House. "Look at what Joe Biden said. 'There is no such thing as someone else's child. Our nation's children are all our children.' Parents are saying, 'No! They are my children.' We have a right to oversee their upbringing. The culture war is in the classroom, parents are getting involved in protecting our kids, and now they're fighting back."

That's not the only Biden connection. The Washington Free Beacon reports the author of the new SPLC report met with Biden's National Security Council counterterrorism director John Picarelli at the White House earlier this year.

Jeremy Tedesco, Alliance Defending Freedom's senior vice president of corporate engagement, said, "The Southern Poverty Law Center is a thoroughly discredited, blatantly partisan activist outfit known for sexism, racism and condoning domestic terrorism. No one should be listening to the SPLC. It is preposterous to now see the SPLC target moms and dads who simply want to have a voice at school board meetings - this is an organization that has lost its way entirely."

Hugh Brown, vice president of the American Life League, called the SPLC "a joke."

"It's something that began with genuine intent when there was a need to combat racism in the '50s, '60s, perhaps the '70s during the Civil Rights movement. And now, what you see is the perpetual hunt for the next created civil right. Because they have to justify their existence, they are very much just a left-wing, nonsensical group that takes its orders, more than likely, from Washington."

"We saw the FBI, the Department of Justice target parents here in Virginia and other places, parents attending school board meetings," Brown said. "So, they're just following suit. Parents advocating for children is our God-given responsibility."

Ramaswamy will be one of several GOP presidential hopefuls appearing at the Moms for Liberty national summit in Philadelphia. The schedule also includes Trump, DeSantis and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley. Justice says her organization has reached out to Biden but received no response.

In a statement, Justice and fellow Moms for Liberty co-founder Tina Descovich noted, "Two-thirds of Americans think the public education system is on the wrong track today. Calling parents, who want to be a part of their child's education, 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees?"

"We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door, and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that."

Michael Graham is the managing editor of InsideSources.com.

---- Index References ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; National Security Council; ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; AMERICAN LIFE LEAGUE; National School Boards Association

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Ku Klux Klan; White House; Family Research Council; Washington Free Beacon; Department of Justice; FBI; National Security Council; Alliance Defending Freedom; Southern Poverty Law Center; American Life League; National School Boards Association)

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June 11, 2023

Section: News

Civil rights group links far-right extremists, hardline laws in Florida

Antonio Fins

A prominent watchdog group this week cited a common denominator between Florida as a home for Jan. 6 insurrectionists, laws targeting LGBTQ+ residents and constraints on academic freedom in schools - the state's political tilt toward hard-right politics.

"Indeed, it is no coincidence that Florida has been subject to the targeting of LGBTQ+ people with laws that remove their rights, has a history of hard-right organizing as exemplified by leading the nation in defendants related to the Jan. 6 insurrection and is home to extensive organizing by groups like Moms for Liberty to ban books and roll back equal access to public education," said Maya Henson Carey, research analyst with the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project.

Carey commented on the Sunshine State's status after the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit civil rights and advocacy group, released its annual report on the status of hate and extremist groups in America. In its "The Year in Hate and Extremism," SPLC researchers and analysts said they documented the status of 1,225 hate and antigovernment extremist groups.

Southern Poverty Law's report is a national survey, but Florida got its share of mentions

The SPLC has been issuing the survey every year since 1990. It's a nationwide assessment, but this year Florida got numerous mentions as a number of trends the organization highlighted as disturbing have been politically prominent in the state.

However, the SPLC's work in the past has been dismissed, if not derided, by political conservatives who say it is a liberal entity.

Bridget Ziegler, a co-founder of the Moms for Liberty right-wing group, told the Sarasota Herald-Tribune that the SPLC's report on hate and extremism was meritless and its criticism of the parents' organization was "laughable."

"The Southern Poverty Law Group is not a legitimate organization with any merit," Ziegler said. "Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there's no credibility behind it. It's truly laughable."

Among the concerns in this year's SPLC report is the rising influence of groups purporting to promote parental rights in education but are "simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they oppose" in classrooms.

"A consistent tactic has been the attempt to ban books from classrooms and libraries based on what these groups deem inappropriate because the content addresses race, LGBTQ issues and gender," the report stated.

Civil rights group links far-right extremists, hardline laws in Florida, 2023 WLNR 20224322

PEN America, a New York-based nonprofit devoted to the free expression of ideas, has cited Florida for banning, removing or inappropriately reviewing hundreds of books in school libraries and on classroom shelves, including biographies of Hank Aaron and Roberto Clemente.

In numerous cases, other books, including ones about Anne Frank and Billie Jean King, came under review because fewer than a handful of parents in a school district complained.

The SPLC report cited other tactics used by extremist and hate groups, from distributing flyers to public “spectacles” that have been prevalent in Florida in the past year. Incidents involving anti-Semitic leaflets have been reported in the state, as have public spectacles, from neo-Nazis waving flags to hate messages being flashed onto facades of buildings and sporting venues.

Florida lawmakers did approve legislation sponsored by state Rep. Mike Caruso, a Delray Beach Republican, to crack down on anti-Semitic acts, which Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law in April.

But the GOP supermajority approved other pieces of legislation that civil and human rights groups have decried. And DeSantis, emboldened by a nearly 20-point landslide re-election in November, has been unabashed in his pursuit of policies he said are aimed at stopping “woke” indoctrination.

DeSantis, now running for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, recently said, “The woke mind virus represents a war on the truth, so we will wage a war on the woke.”

This week, the DeSantis administration acknowledged its role in shipping people seeking legal immigration status in the United States from Texas to California, a move critics have called cruel in its use of human beings as political pawns.

FAU poll: Floridians say racism, bigotry on the rise

Late last month, Florida Atlantic University and Mainstreet Research released a poll in which a “significant number of Florida voters” cited the increase in racism and bigotry as a concern. The number of respondents who said they were seeing a discernible increase in hate, 56%, far outpaced those who said the trend is in decline, 18%.

The poll and SPLC report come after a Florida legislative session that saw lawmakers embrace more hard-right policies. The 2022 Parental Rights in Education measure, dubbed the “Don’t say gay” law by critics, was expanded.

This past Saturday, an outspoken leader in the national transgender community spoke at the Pride on the Block annual festival in West Palm Beach and said the legislation in Florida is specifically aimed at erasing the LGBTQ+ community from the state.

”We’re going to say we know exactly what these bills are trying to do. They’re trying to exterminate us, and we’re not going to stand for it,” Montana state Rep. Zoey Zephyr told the crowd.

Lawmakers also enacted a restrictive law they said targeted undocumented immigrants but that faith and aid organizations who assist immigrants feel puts their efforts in jeopardy. This week, state Rep. Rick Roth, R-West Palm Beach, told Insider he still believes the legislation was a good idea but worries it also has “a lot of negative consequences” that he and others are seeking to address.

Also last month, a jury in Washington, D.C., convicted leaders of the Proud Boys extremist group, including Enrique Tarrío of Miami-Dade County, of seditious conspiracy for their roles in the plot to attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 to thwart the results of the 2020 presidential election.

There have been flashpoints of pushback. On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle blocked enforcement of a relatively new Florida ban on transgender affirming care, calling the regulation “an exercise in politics, not in good medicine.”

Civil rights group links far-right extremists, hardline laws in Florida, 2023 WLNR 20224322

Is Florida a bellwether for the rest of the country? What are wider political ramifications of state's tilt to hard right?

While state leaders tout Florida as an "anti-woke" model for the rest of the country, SPLC researchers caution that local political factors and impulses are more determinant in how communities across the United States will act.

Rachel Carroll Rivas, SPLC research analyst, said that while Florida "can act as an indicator" of what's happening across the country, it isn't necessary the whole story for what is occurring elsewhere.

"What is happening in a locality, in a rural place, in Alabama, may not be the same situation that's happening in Florida or that's happening in the Pacific Northwest," she said.

"The important thing to note is that actually communities have the ability to engage. In some ways, in our ways, in our rural places and states, they actually have the ability to make big waves because they can really have an impact."

FAU and Mainstreet pollsters said in a statement that their poll showed women, Black and Hispanic respondents seemed more fearful of the rise in hate speech and actions. And, they said, it could lead to more political mobilization going into the 2024 election year.

"If there is a perceived rise in prejudice, group consciousness may drive more people to the polls believing that collective action will help the group's interest along with an individual's outcomes," said Luzmarina Garcia, an assistant professor of political science at FAU who helped conduct the poll.

Part of the problem, said Margaret -Huang, SPLC president and CEO, is that many political leaders across the country are embracing the rhetoric and spirit of extremist groups and their leaders in pursuing public policy.

"We are seeing an increasing number of politicians embracing far right ideology, far more than in the past," said Huang. "In the past, you would see politicians seeking to distance themselves from far-right ideology and far-right extremism. Today, they are all aligned - they are using the same talking points."

Antonio Fins is a politics and business editor at the Palm Beach Post, part of the USA TODAY Florida Network. You can reach him at afins@pbpost.com. Help support our journalism. Subscribe today.

---- Index References ----

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June 11, 2023

Section: News

Group keeps our kids ignorant

June 11, 2023

This is about Nazis, book bans and Moms for Liberty.

When Hitler was appointed chancellor in January of 1933, the Nazis did not immediately begin the mass extermination of Jews. But four months later, Nazi university students did stage a burning of 25,000 books that were found lacking in “Germanic spirit.” Soon after, teachers were fired, curricula were revised to conform to the new “Germanic culture” and all publishing was under strict Nazi control.

Moms for Liberty also believes in book banning. The Moms would like to have the liberty of telling their neighbors which books are unacceptable for their children to read. The Moms already have the liberty of telling their own children what not to read — but any self-respecting kid told not to read a certain book will rush right out to find it. Since the Moms can’t control what their own kids may choose to read, they take the liberty to choose what every kid can read.

No, the Moms for Liberty are not the Nazi Party, and I’m not predicting genocide. But there is a direct path from the conservative battle to keep our kids ignorant of the history of slavery to laws that oppress gays, immigrants, and other minorities. You don’t have to be clairvoyant to see where the Republicans are heading.

Jim Price

Montclair

One hook in the debt deal

Regarding “Biden-McCarthy debt deal package goes to Senate” (June 2):

It is nice that the hysterics of the House did not prevail. The Senate passed it with deliberate haste. Now, President Joe Biden gets to sign it and our government will carry on.

There is one hook in this deal. In January of 2025 this suspension ends, and we will have to endure politicians’ rhetoric all over again. Sen. Kevin McCarthy may have to fight to keep his leadership position, but with luck the Republican middle will win out.

The rules he initiated to become speaker are coming back to haunt him.

Peter J. Peirano

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Ridgewood

Encouraging signs from our government

Two important rays of hope for our nation:

The debt ceiling deal negotiated between President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy did not satisfy everyone but prevented a default. The fact that progressives and right-wing Republicans excoriated Biden and McCarthy confirm that a true give-and-take took place. Divided government combined with compromise has always served our nation well!

The Senate voting to repeal Biden's unilateral \$400 billion student loan "forgiveness plan" is also encouraging. Congress holds the purse strings. There are already more than 50 existing student loan repayment and forgiveness programs aimed at attracting individuals to vital service jobs, such as teachers, health care workers and public servants. We should be focusing on bipartisan student debt reforms that reduce the cost of higher education and help all Americans.

Each branch of our federal government should stick to the responsibilities given to it by our Constitution and not infringe on those of another branch.

Dan Kuzma

Oakland

Creating affordable housing

Regarding state Assemblyman Robert Auth's opinion piece, "Legislators should control housing policy — not courts" (May 25):

This was an elaborate version of NIMBYism, and it was disappointing to hear a member of the theoretically pro-growth Republican Party complain about overdevelopment.

Granted that New Jersey's existing court-imposed affordable housing regime is Alice-in-Wonderland stuff. If Auth wants the Legislature to take back that power, he also should be advocating statewide zoning reform encouraging the private market to create much more housing, especially:

high-density near transit hubs;

in commercial/industrial areas, creating the possibility for people to live near their work; and

allowing owners of single-family homes to create accessory dwelling units, as California has done.

In our county and state, only lots more housing of all types will solve the affordability crises.

Doran Howitt

Fair Lawn

'The opposite of bullying'

Regarding "Wayne parents report bullying (June 1):

In the local section of The Record, along with that depressing article, was a quote two pages later from George Washington Carver that said:

"How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday you will have been all of these."

When my younger was in middle school, she played on a softball team. One of the players on her team had Down syndrome (I'll call her Lizzie) and struggled with the mechanics of the game. When my daughter's team became one of the top two teams to vie for the championship, Lizzie's mom told the coaches that the family would be keeping her home the day of that game so the team would have a better chance of winning. The coaches advised against that, but her mom was adamant, and as

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she left with Lizzie, the coaches called the remaining girls on the team together and told them what Lizzie's mom planned to do. Without prodding from the coaches, all of them chased after Lizzie and her mom and, catching up to them, insisted they would not play without her. I could see her mom's eyes welling up with tears. She nodded that Lizzie would be there.

The day of the game, the score was tied and my daughter's team had last ups. There was one out and one girl on second, and Lizzie came up to bat. Now, I can't say how it happened, but Lizzie, who had never gotten a hit in the season, hit one into shallow center field and the girl on second scored and we won. The whole team immediately ran to Lizzie and carried her off, cheering. It is a moment I will never forget.

This is the opposite of bullying, and it comes from parents teaching the above words of George Washington Carver to their children.

Arlene Murphy

Ridgewood

Allow Paterson eighth graders caps and gowns

Regarding "Paterson NJ 8th grade graduations drop caps, gowns" (NorthJersey.com, May 23):

I read that Paterson's Board of Education has decreed eighth grade students are not allowed to wear caps and gowns at graduation because the board now requires them to finish high school first. The decision affects hundreds of children in 25 public schools across the city who have met all requirements for graduation.

May I say, without fear of rational contradiction, that this is the most counterproductive policy imposed by clueless Paterson bureaucrats and amateur politicians in recent memory?

Is this how the Paterson Board of Education motivates children to pursue education past the eighth grade level? What possible reason would anyone have for continuing to attempt to learn under conditions fairly described as "hostile to learning," after the message that celebrating academic achievement is not permitted by the school board?

Paterson's Board of Education has no more pressing task than to correct its blunder in time for all 2023 graduates to enjoy the recognition they have earned.

Lawrence Wilson

North Haledon

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News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Legislation (1LE97); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); U.S. Legislation (1US12))

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NewsRoom

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Section: Main

Civil rights group reports spike in state extremist groups Cites Moms for Liberty's rise

Desiree Stennett Orlando Sentinel

More extremist groups were active across the state in 2022 than in any other year in more than two decades, data published this week by the Southern Poverty Law Center found - a spike fueled by the rise in groups like Florida-based Moms for Liberty, which SPLC for the first time categorized as an extremist anti-government group.

In its annual Year in Hate review, the Alabama-based civil rights group found that, not only did Florida see climbing activity from hate and anti-government groups, but, after four years of decline in the number of organized extremist groups nationwide, the United States saw the largest year-over-year spike since 2000, the oldest year of data available from the SPLC.

In 2021, the SPLC found 773 active hate or anti-government groups around the country. That was down from 838 the previous year in a decline attributed in part to the arrests and prosecutions that followed the Jan. 6, 2021 attempted insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

But in 2022, that number spiked dramatically to 1,225 active groups, the highest ever recorded by SPLC.

In Florida, which has long been represented as one of the most popular states for extremist activity, SPLC data found 89 active groups, up from 53 in 2021. Only California had more active groups last year.

The jump is due in large part to the inclusion of Moms for Liberty, which SPLC deemed a fringe organization that has outsized influence though it does not represent the beliefs of the average parent. The group is headquartered in Melbourne but has hundreds of chapters all over the country.

"Not only do they fit the definition (of an anti-government group), but we think it's important for the community... to really understand it's not just something they may feel at a local level but that it really is a phenomenon at a national level and that it's a problem holistically," said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director for research, reporting and analysis for the SPLC.

Nationwide, the group has supported book bans, criticized instructional materials they believe teach critical race theory, opposed allowing transgender student-athletes to play on the sports teams that match their gender identity, championed controversial school voucher programs and fought classroom mask mandates.

Carroll Rivas acknowledged that it may seem jarring to some to see Moms for Liberty included alongside extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and Neo Nazi organizations.

But she said Moms for Liberty's attacks on public education spreads extremist, anti-government ideas and policies that don't

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represent the views of most parents as told in public opinion surveys, school board meetings and in informal conversations between caregivers taking their children to and from school.

"The public does not support book bans and they do support the teaching of inclusive history and the accurate teaching about race in this country," Carroll Rivas said. "The ideas and the agenda of these groups is extreme. It is not in the mainstream, even if their power and influence is seeking to make it appear that way."

After the Year in Hate report was made public Tuesday afternoon, Moms for Liberty responded online by using the new designation as a fundraising tactic and telling its more than 66,000 Twitter followers to donate in order to "Show the Southern Poverty Law Center that you STAND WITH MOMS."

The group also retweeted several conservative figures, including Texas U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, who called the designation "absurd" and accused SPLC of "silencing parents," and attorney Jenna Ellis, who tweeted congratulations to the group for "reaching conservative influencer status to be noticed by the SPLC!"

Ellis, who once served on former President Donald Trump's legal team, was recently censured by Colorado legal officials after she admitted to making 10 false statements about the 2020 presidential election online and on television, the Associated Press reported in March.

The group also retweeted Christina Pushaw, campaign aide and former press secretary for Gov. Ron DeSantis, who tweeted a screenshot of the governor posing with a group of women with Moms for Liberty T-shirts in front of an American flag with the caption: "Everyone needs to see this picture of Ron DeSantis posing with a hate group (a/k/a Moms for Liberty)."

Pushaw's tweet added "Moms who care about their kids' education are not a 'hate group.' @RonDeSantis stands with @Moms4Liberty and will never back down!"

The organization has been broadly embraced by right-wing leaders across the country, with four current GOP presidential contenders - including frontrunners Donald Trump and DeSantis - confirmed as speakers for this month's Moms for Liberty National Summit in Philadelphia, Florida Today reported this week.

In an email statement, cofounders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich did not explicitly dispute the description of their organization as an anti-government group. Instead, they said their organization represents parents who are unsatisfied with the public educational system and Moms for Liberty is "devoted to empowering parents to be a part of their child's public school education."

"Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees?" the co-founders' statement said. "We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that."

Though the growth of Moms of Liberty and other groups like it fueled the spike, Carroll Rivas pointed out that both general hate groups and anti-government militias, like the Oath Keepers, are still declining.

"That's pretty notable because Florida has actually been a place where we've had a militia group activity in the past," Carroll Rivas said. "We attribute that to what we see in the whole country, that there was intense public, media, congressional and legal accountability of the perpetrators, organizers, participants of January 6 insurrection. And that included, of course, Florida leading the country in the number of defendants related to January 6."

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*****CORRECTION OR CLARIFICATION PUBLISHED JUNE 14, 2023*****

An article on Sunday's front page about an annual report on extremist groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center misstated the number of hate groups that were documented in 2021. SPLC that year identified 773 active hate or anti-government

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groups in the United States.

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Are books being banned in schools? Heated rhetoric doesn't..., 2023 WLNR 20229298

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June 11, 2023

Section: News

Are books being banned in schools? Heated rhetoric doesn't match reality

As an English major, I love books. I always have. And I'm continually adding to my collection, which becomes obvious (and daunting) whenever we have to move.

So when I hear about book bans, I pay attention. Such rhetoric has dominated the headlines lately.

Yet, that is what's at the heart of many of these heated discussions: rhetoric – not reality.

What books should be on the shelves of school libraries has become the epicenter of the country's culture wars. With that, rationality has gone out the window.

If you oppose graphic sexual content on classroom shelves, you're not just a concerned parent: You're a "fascist." And if you advocate for any book addressing LGBTQ themes? You're a "groomer."

Surely, there's more nuance to be had in these debates.

Moms for Liberty labeled 'extremists'

Maybe not.

Last week, the nonprofit group Moms for Liberty – composed of moms who are concerned about what's going on in their children's classrooms – was ridiculously slapped with the "extremist" label by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

It's beyond a stretch to say that these parents are all "haters."

"I get a little bit irritated with those who are trying to conflate legitimate concerns about age appropriateness with an anti-LGBTQ stance," Robert Pondiscio, a senior fellow in K-12 education at the American Enterprise Institute, told me. "I think it's really important to be kind of clear that those are not the same thing."

Moms for Liberty, which gained national prominence during school lockdowns for COVID-19, is an effective advocate at the local level in calling attention to books and curriculum that might not be suitable for children.

What started as a grassroots campaign among parents has caught the attention of leading 2024 Republican presidential contenders, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump.

DeSantis has risen in prominence in large part because of the stances he has taken against "woke" ideology being taught in

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schools.

Given the political implications, don't expect the rhetoric to calm down anytime soon.

These aren't 'book bans'

I realize it's a lot to ask, but it would be nice if accurate language were applied to these "book banning" disputes. Because let's be clear: What's happening at school libraries are not book bans. All the books up for debate are all very much available to anyone who wants them. No one is saying stop publishing them altogether.

Rather, the questions revolve around what's appropriate for elementary or middle school children and whether a book deserves a place on a classroom or school library shelf.

If the definition of a book ban were that a library didn't have the book in its catalog, then 99.9% of all books would effectively be banned.

Libraries and bookstores curate what they want to highlight, so it only makes sense that parents would be involved in making selections that reflect their school communities' values.

Reduce the hyperbole

Unfortunately, the word "ban" is thrown around to elicit outrage when it's not justified. That's what happened recently when a Florida school allegedly "banned" poet Amanda Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb," which has been published as a short book.

When the facts came out, however, the story was much less sensational. The book was always still available to middle school students, just with some limits to elementary students. The school has stated that the book remains widely accessible.

In other words, much ado about nothing.

Similarly, PEN America, which advocates for writers, including poets and novelists, has raised the alarm that "banning" is at an all-time high. A report from last year claims that more than 2,500 books were banned in public schools in the 2021-22 school year.

It sounds alarming, if true.

But it's not, according to an investigation from The Heritage Foundation, which looked at the online card catalogs of the school districts in question. It found that 74% of the books identified by PEN America are in fact available to students.

The books the Heritage scholars most often couldn't find include "Gender Queer," "Flamer," "Lawn Boy," "Fun Home" and "It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health," which are among the most frequently challenged because of their sexual and graphic content.

"Determining what books are age-appropriate and educationally valuable enough to be purchased and kept in school libraries is inherently contentious even among well-intentioned people," Heritage's researchers wrote. "But having a productive process for adjudicating these disputes is rendered impossible by false and hysterical claims from organizations like PEN America that there is 'widespread censorship in America.'"

Therein lies the problem.

This kind of inflated rhetoric ironically does a disservice to the ones this debate is supposed to be about: your kids.

Ingrid Jacques is a columnist at USA TODAY. Contact her at ijacques@usatoday.com or on Twitter: [@Ingrid_Jacques](https://twitter.com/Ingrid_Jacques)

Are books being banned in schools? Heated rhetoric doesn't..., 2023 WLNR 20229298

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June 11, 2023

SPLC Hates Moms Who Hate Woke

SHG

Jun 11, 2023

What if I compiled a list of groups with whom I disagree? What if I labeled them “hate groups”? No one would care, because nobody in media turns to SJ for the “official” list of hate groups, as if that ends the discussion about whether a group is good, bad or otherwise. Instead, they turn to the Southern Poverty Law Center which, for many years under the guidance of now-ousted founder Morris Dees, put together a legitimate and circumspect list of groups promoting hate, at least to the extent hate fit their definition.

The SPLC, like the once-respected ACLU, has used its legacy credibility to burn not only hate groups, but any group whose purpose conflicts with what the current crop of SPLC savants deem correct. They’ve now included “Moms for Liberty” within that ambit.

Yesterday, the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “Year in Hate and Extremism 2022” report added parental-rights groups to its “Hate and Anti-Government groups Map,” including multiple chapters of Moms for Liberty, alongside neo-Nazis.

Few would take issue with neo-Nazis being characterized as a hate group. But Mothers?

The report further details how “hate groups were on the ground to intimidate people at school board and city council meetings” when the GOP “attacked inclusive education,” “LGBTQ people,” and “women and people who can get pregnant.” This is ridiculous. Parents protesting overtly sexual content in their young children’s schools may be controversial, but it is far from hate. To conflate preserving children’s innocence and influencing what sexualized material they are exposed to at a young age with bigotry symbolizes a twisted, hypersexual culture. This comes just weeks after the Department of Education accused a local Georgia school district of creating a hostile environment for its students after screening middle- and elementary-school library books for sexually explicit material.

Much as I strongly disagree with, and condemn, certain tactics being employed in furtherance of this cause, such as the removal of books from libraries banning of books and criminalizing curricula with which are claimed to be inappropriate, it is hardly wrong for parents to be concerned about the morphing of education from substantive educational content into woke ideology.

SPLC describes Moms for Liberty as one of the leading “reactionary anti-student inclusion groups”; the group protesting a drag show is SPLC’s example of its hatred, implying quite heavily that drag is an immutable characteristic. Yet a glance at the nonprofit’s website shows that its women leaders (or, as SPLC would call them, “women and people who can get pregnant”) run the gamut of truly immutable characteristics. Their director of Hispanic Outreach is described as a

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“Colombian American businesswoman, journalist, philanthropist, strategy adviser, contributor and commentator, and humble servant to the Lord.” Tia Bess, director of National Engagement, left Philadelphia as a child due to gang violence and is now “a mom of three with a blended family” who hopes to spread the message that “her zip code didn’t define her.” Much of these moms’ mission is against having their children be defined by their immutable characteristics.

Such actions as protesting drag shows runs counter to free speech, as a principle, and often as protected conduct under the First Amendment. Don’t like them? Don’t go. If some other parent wants to take their kids to a drag show, what business is that of yours? Yet, just because drag shows are protected speech doesn’t mean they reflect sound judgment. Just because you can doesn’t mean you should.

The point of drag shows is to “normalize” transgender people, although being transgender doesn’t necessarily mean you channel Divine on a bad day and twerk for the kiddies. Whether this serves the purpose of de-stigmatizing transgender people or making them more controversial is a matter for debate. And, indeed, that’s the point, that Moms for Liberty is antagonistic to many of the newly-introduced changes in public schools and similar arenas designed to influence the views of young children. Disagreeing with woke isn’t hate, unless there is no tolerance for disagreement.

But if they’re engaged in bad conduct, even if their putative purpose is to challenge ideology with which they can fairly disagree, isn’t that good enough to label them a hate group? Consider that BLM blocks highways, unlawful conduct that disrupts the lives of many who are entitled to enjoy public roads. Or that some protesters break windows, deface property, burn windows. That conduct is condemnable too, and yet most people wouldn’t consider BLM a hate group, even if they have doubts about their fiscal integrity.

It’s bad enough that so many have lost tolerance for disagreement, the ability to agree to disagree about what is appropriate to teach children. It’s worse that parents who believe they, not teachers or school administrators, are charged with teaching their children values and morality, are being told they have no choice as to what ideology is taught in the classroom. But for the SPLC to reduce mothers who disagree with their children being indoctrinated into an ideology with which they disagree as being tantamount to neo-Nazis is outrageous.

Not that the SPLC had much cred before, but listing mothers who don’t want their children trained to be woke as a hate group reduces it to a joke. Stop using the SPLC as a legitimate source of “hate groups” unless the point is that media content is no more credible than its trusted legacy source.

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June 10, 2023

Section: News

Our governor, the travel agent

June 10, 2023

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday defended his state's decision to fly migrants from the U.S.-Mexico border to California.

This is the second and third time our governor has used state tax revenue to charter a private jet, fly to another state, pick up immigrants and dump them in a third state. On September 22, 2022, we might remember he orchestrated the recruitment of 49 people, men, women and children, who were in the asylum process, and flew them to Martha's Vineyard.

In June, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a budget that set aside \$12 million to create a program for transporting unauthorized migrants out of Florida. He touted it as the highlight of the state's new spending when it came to immigration. But just three months later, the money was being used in a place far from Florida, in a very different way: rounding up Venezuelan asylum seekers on the streets of San Antonio and shipping them on private planes to Massachusetts.

The latest chartered flights flying across state lines took place last Friday and Monday from Texas, delivering people to Sacramento, California.

Officials in Sacramento said the 36 migrants flown there and dropped off at the diocese are asylum seekers in the United States legally and were transported to California after they were misled about the trips. Sixteen migrants came on a flight Friday and 20 arrived on a second plane Monday.

Our governor's justification?

"I think the border should be closed. I don't think we should have any of this. But if there's a policy to have an open border, then I think the sanctuary jurisdictions should be the ones that have to bear that."

But wait, is he already the president? What is he doing policing in other states and "releasing" those he sees as illegal in yet a third state?

Isn't he still the governor of Florida? Wasn't the \$12 million (interest on the federal funds given for COVID relief) supposed to be used in the state of Florida?

DeSantis said Florida taxpayers are on board with his use of state funds to move migrants from Texas to California, saying it was an issue in the campaign in which he was overwhelmingly reelected last year.

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DeSantis in May signed a law allocating \$12 million that can be used for migrant flights.

Are you on board?

Susan Kaercher Meyers, Naples

Poetic justice

The words “poetic justice” are no doubt lost on Mr. Trump and those who support him even as he is indicted by the Justice Department for the very crimes, and more, he projected onto Hillary Clinton. My dear departed mother cautioned me often that if a person lies, they will cheat and if they cheat, they will steal. Mr. Trump has dabbled in the dubious trifecta of lying, cheating and stealing all of his adult life and now the moral arc of the Justice Department, if not the universe, is bending toward his long overdue justice.

There is a lesson for all of us in what has befallen Mr. Trump.

Those who value truth must keep pressing that truth against those who engage in self-serving lies, misinformation and distortions to advance their own ambitions at the expense of anyone and anything that stands in their way. Even as a poor Black kid growing up in Jim Crow South, I recognized at an early age that there always seemed to be just enough good people around, willing to do the right thing, that I just might have a shot at the life, liberty and happiness promised to everyone, even on the worst days of folks going out of their way to marginalize me.

So, to all of the various marginalized communities, people of color and even organizations in Florida currently being unfairly targeted by the vengeful Mr. DeSantis and his Republican enablers in the Legislature, they should take heart from what is happening to Mr. Trump.

With a governor and Legislature bent on indiscriminately spending zillions of Florida taxpayer money (without my own permission I might add) to convince everyone the windmills the governor tilts at on a daily basis are real and with a governor who treats human beings as pawns on a chess board to prove a juvenile point about immigration, maybe, just maybe, enough “woke” Floridians will decide they have had enough and help to bend that moral arc of the universe in the right direction here in this state.

There is also a lesson in what has befallen Mr. Trump for all our Florida politicians who are now desperately trying to “out-trump Trump,” although recent history does not give hope they are paying attention.

Thomas Minor, Bonita Springs

Investigate Obama

Why aren't we looking for the obvious? President Barack Obama!

For eight years Obama was the CEO of the USA while his sidekick and second in command Joseph Biden was running the equivalent of a mafia organization shaking down countries for payoffs. Where was his boss?

Why doesn't Congress investigate CEO Obama? How can mob boss Joe invite his cronies to the White House over 80 times without the CEO knowing? If this was happening at Apple, Microsoft or any other fortune 500 company the board of directors would fire these criminals. The indictment of former President Trump is just like a mafia hit to cover up their crimes.

Wake up America, we are being played.

Arthur Maranian, Naples

Immoral Trump

Deny, Deflect and Delay is a much more accurate title than Trump's inaccurate Truth Social.

Lies, pomposity and misinformation are staples of the egomaniac, crooked, immoral Trump.

Tom Beck, Naples

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Advocating for clean energy

From June 10th through 13th, I will proudly be among the 30 volunteers from the Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) representing Florida as we journey to Washington D.C.

Our diverse delegation, hailing from 14 districts including two volunteers from Collier and Lee counties, is part of a robust assembly of over 800 volunteers nationwide. Our mission is to promote clean energy legislation, a pursuit that is both pragmatic and necessary for Florida's environment-dependent economy.

We will meet with members of Congress and their staffs, aiming to educate them about environment-conscious solutions that stimulate job growth. Our advocacy is grounded in reality: the urgency to diminish energy costs and pollution while also enhancing our local ecosystems and water quality.

Post-Hurricane Ian, Floridians are aware of the escalating costs of extreme weather events.

If we fail to adapt and mitigate, these expenses will only continue to inflate if we don't act now. Not acting is a cost we can't afford.

As a resident of Naples, I am deeply committed to the welfare of my community. Our collective responsibility to protect our environment transcends political affiliations. It is about preserving the quality of our air, water, and overall environment for the present and future generations.

Each member of our community plays a pivotal role. We all desire clean air and water, and a flourishing environment. This expedition to Washington symbolizes our dedication to these aspirations as we stand as the voice of a community dedicated to fostering vibrant, livable cities for all our SWFL residents.

Solemi Hernandez, Naples

Religious hypocrisy

Thank you Pastor Tom Ascol of the Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral for reaffirming the absurdity and hypocrisy of all religions with his support of the death penalty for gay persons in the name of God.

Perhaps Pastor Ascol can now quote us another passage about his loving God for us to laugh at?

David Liebenguth, Fort Myers

Not a democratic majority

Why doesn't your paper print some facts. For 3 percent of the population, the LGBTQ Alphabet has changed the country. Boys can use girls' restrooms and locker rooms, boys can play on girl teams, one can declare their gender from the 42 designated genders, men, allegedly, can give birth, children can change their biological sex without parental permission, drag shows are shown to children, and if one doesn't agree with this 3 percent they are shut down on social networks, or shouted down. That is not a democratic majority world.

John Piccolo, Estero

Florida group makes hate list

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has issued its report that designates certain organizations as hate groups. The SPLC has added two prominent parental rights in education groups, one based in Florida, to its 2022 hate and extremists list, which now amounts to 1,225 organizations. The SPLC states its purpose is "dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry."

The Florida based group is Moms for Liberty.

The organization has chapters across the U.S. that are fighting for transparency in children's education. Their mission statement says "Moms for Liberty is dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government." This is hate and bigotry? Where is antifa on this list?

The SPLC says in part about Moms for Liberty "they have grown into an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any

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inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.”

The SPLC has no room for differing opinions. It is interesting to note that the SPLC recently had one of its attorneys charged with domestic terrorism for rioting against the new Atlanta police facility. The terrorists threw Molotov cocktails, rocks, bricks, and fireworks at police but that kind of action is free speech not hate, I guess. I tried to find out if the Moms for Liberty may have engaged in this kind of hate and I came up empty.

By the way, antifa did not make the SPLC hate list.

Nick Blauwickel, Naples

Vote for Donald Trump

Where are you going America?

Are you putting America on her path to greatness beyond 2024, or are you capitulating and surrendering to the socialists, the Woke crowd, the globalist, the Davos crowd, the people that want to see your great country cut back its knees.

I hope I don't have to tell you the dire straits that we are in; economically, financially, militarily, at a most dangerous time when the world is transitioning from a uni-polar world to a multi-polar world.

This will require strong, transformational leadership. There is only one candidate that has demonstrated that he possesses these qualities.

The American presidency requires a world leader! Not managers no matter how good.

My advice to the Republican Party is to quit acting like the women of the Billingsgate Fish Market and start uniting and rallying behind the strongest leader of your party, a leader with proven accomplishments and all achieved in the most adverse conditions.

A man that has demonstrated intellectual capacity, leadership skills, and the vision and energy to reverse course and make America win again.

That leader is Donald Trump! Judge a man by his strength, not his weaknesses.

My advice to the American people is to rise above the small-minded and inconsequential thinking. Now is the time to put pettiness aside. The stakes are too high for that.

We are fighting for the survival of our nation.

If you have to, hold your nose, and do as I will, vote for Donald Trump. Your children, grandchildren, and the next generation of Americans will thank you for it.

Henry Pfenndt, Naples

Egad, I've turned woke!

Obviously, living in the woke-free state of Florida is exhilarating. The gov. claims hordes of people are packing their bags and exiting woke states to move to Florida faster than it takes a drag queen to apply makeup!

Apparently, our lovely weather, beaches, and Disney World have nothing to do with these moves!

As satisfying as it has been to be anti-woke, I feel something has recently changed within me.

Last Monday my wife woke me at 7 a.m. I didn't think it was possible for another person to turn someone else woke, but since she woke me I have had unnatural thoughts and feelings that I can't get out of my head. I now think that all people are equals, even people whose epidermal hue is darker than mine! Holy mackerel! I also have started to think that women should have total control over their own bodies! What the....?! Also, I now think some book authors are trying to corrupt young

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innocent minds with perversion and pornography! Steady on! And, now I'm totally baffled about history. Has it happened again?

Another scary thought invading my mind is that all people should be able to express their sexual and gender preferences without interference from a nosy little man in a suit! As unimaginable as this sounds, I now think transgendered people deserve health care! I'm scared to think where this is going. Good heavens, what will I do next -- vote Democrat and attend a drag show accompanied by a Boy Scout troop?!

I consulted my family physician who did numerous tests and sure enough, I've turned woke!

The prognosis isn't good. She claims once you go woke you never go back! Consequently, she referred me to the 29 eminent woke specialists in Tallahassee for follow up. Upon further examination, I was issued a one-way airline ticket to Martha's Vineyard, joining what appeared to be a Mariachi touring band!

Jay Custa, Estero

Make Ian a qualified disaster

Congressman Byron Donalds: As a CPA and a tax preparer, I am disturbed that you and the balance of the Florida delegation have not pushed for the passage of the bill submitted early this year that would make Hurricane Ian a QUALIFIED disaster for income tax purposes. The harmful effect to voters/taxpayers is huge financially.

Congress' oversight last year and your poor timing so far this year has cost, probably, millions of potential tax savings help if and when this legislation gets approved.

I am sure that many of my fellow tax preparers are awaiting the passage so returns for last year can finally be filed or amended so returns can recoup some of the loss allowed to QUALIFIED losses verses what is now the law!

David Bradach, Naples

Large dose of hypocrisy

While nearly all of the Republican presidential candidates, including our Governor DeSantis, are tiptoeing around the 2,000 pound elephant in the GOP campaign room — the legally challenged former President Trump — at least two of them, Chris Christie and Mike Pence, have asserted that the ex-president is “unfit” to serve again. In going so, they have parroted the phrase used by Bill Barr.

They ought to know, as they all have served in his administration: Christie as short-lived head of the 2016-17 Trump transition team, Pence as vice president, and Barr as attorney general.

Setting aside their late-blossoming recognition of what seemed clear to many overseers for years while they wore blinders, their refusal to remain reticent about the emperor's lack of apparel is accompanied by expressions of support for him and that they will dutifully vote for him if he secures the GOP nomination.

The pledges by these heavyweights, literally and figuratively, to support and vote for a person they deem manifestly “unfit,” in their words, to occupy the Oval Office raises real concerns about their judgment and probity.

It could be that they consider the alternative choice(s), probably President Biden, or other third-party candidates like Cornell West or even anti-vaccination Democrat Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to be even less fit.

But that hardly justifies these anti-Trump Republicans exhorting their followers to support and vote for a person they deem “unfit” for that high office.

It's like a lawyer referring a client to a disbarred attorney or recommending a restaurant cited for multiple health code violations.

Their vacillations reflect dubious decision-making and bad judgment, along with a large dose of hypocrisy mixed with opportunism.

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Marshall H. Tanick, Naples

---- Index References ----

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Schmidt: 'No discrepancies' found in audit of Pa. primary..., 2023 WLNR 20127736

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June 10, 2023

Schmidt: 'No discrepancies' found in audit of Pa. primary election | Five for the Weekend

Cassie Miller

Jun 10, 2023

Happy weekend, all.

Pennsylvania's top election official announced this week that a statewide audit of the May 16 primary election found "no discrepancies between the original and audited unofficial results."

The risk-limiting audit (RLA), required election officials from 14 counties across Pennsylvania (Adams, Allegheny, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Franklin, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Union, Washington, and Westmoreland counties), to hand-tally randomly selected ballot batches before comparing those vote totals to the original machine counts for that race.

According to the department, the races to be audited were determined through a random selection process on May 22. The auditing process was live-streamed by the department on May 25.

"I want to thank county election officials for their participation in this RLA at a time when they were also busy conducting the 2% statutorily required review that they must perform after each primary and general election," Acting Secretary of State Al Schmidt said. "Because of their efforts and hard work, Pennsylvanians can feel confident in the accuracy and integrity of the commonwealth's electoral system."

The first statewide RLA was held in 2020 with the department issuing an order in November 2022, that directs counties to conduct pre-certification RLAs after every election.

As always, the top five stories from this week are below.

(Getty Images)

1. Dog Law Modernization bill unanimously passes Senate Agriculture Committee

A bill to modernize Pennsylvania's dog licensing system unanimously passed the Senate Agriculture Committee on Tuesday after years of discussion around the system's solvency.

The bill, SB 746, was sponsored by state Sen. Elder Vogel, R-Beaver, and would raise the cost of a dog license for the first time in more than two decades to a rate of \$8 for an annual license and \$80 for a lifetime license for male and female dogs.

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The rates for Pennsylvania residents 65 years of age or older and persons with disabilities would be \$6 for an annual license or \$50 for a lifetime license for male and female dogs.

(Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images/The Minnesota Reformer).

2.Through a visitor's eyes: What you say when you fly confederate colors in Pa. | Charles D. Allen

This year marks my twentieth as a member of the U.S. Army War College faculty and resident of the greater Carlisle community.

Each year we receive a new cohort of War College officer-students attending the resident education program. They come from diverse backgrounds and locations from across the nation.

In addition, we have about 80 International Fellows from more than 70 countries.

The Pennsylvania Seal in the state House majority caucus room. (Capital-Star photo by Peter Hall)

3.House Democrats propose \$903M in additional spending over Gov. Shapiro's proposal

Pennsylvania House Democrats proposed more than \$900 million in additional spending over Gov. Josh Shapiro's \$44.4 billion spending plan introduced in March.

The budget amendment approved in a 102-101 vote in the House on Monday significantly increases funding for K-12 funding, state universities, and financial aid for college students.

It adds up to a \$1.7 billion increase in education spending compared to the current budget, Appropriations Committee Chairperson Jordan Harris, D-Philadelphia, said.

(File)

4.Is Pennsylvania any closer to having legal weed?

Even with a Democratic majority in the state House and a governor who included legalized adult-use marijuana in his future budget projections, the commonwealth is no closer to creating a regulated recreational cannabis market.

Pennsylvania remains one of the only states in the region not to have established or be in the process of debating weed legalization. Neighboring states, including New York and New Jersey have fully established adult-use recreational markets. To the south, Delaware and Maryland's state legislatures recently passed measures to begin regulating, licensing and taxing for cannabis sales.

DeSantis receives a ceremonial 'Liberty Sword' at last year's Moms for Liberty national summit in Tampa, Florida (Photo via Florida Governor's Office/City & State Fla.).

5.Pa. LGBTQ groups mobilize against Moms For Liberty gathering in Philly

As LGBTQ+ organizations around the country celebrate the start of Pride Month, a coalition of trans- and queer-led groups are hosting a Pride event on Friday to protest the annual Moms For Liberty conference at the Philadelphia Downtown Marriott later this month and the event's keynote speaker, Republican presidential candidate Ron DeSantis.

The 6:15 p.m. event comes as the General Assembly returns to session next week to an agenda that includes final approval of a long-sought LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination bill.

And that's the week. We'll see you back here next week.

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June 10, 2023

Section: National

Teachers cautioned on 'controversial issues' Bedford County teachers can no longer initiate discussions on 'controversial issues'

RODNEY ROBINSON JR. The (Lynchburg) News & Advance

BEDFORD - Teachers in Bedford County can no longer initiate discussions with students about sexual orientation or gender identity, after a recent decision from the school board.

Additionally, according to adopted Policy INB, classroom discussions of political and other controversial issues "shall be facilitated by teachers without violating the provisions outlined in this policy and utilizing an impartial and objective perspective of the subject matter."

"This policy does not prohibit teachers from including in their instruction, as part of a course of study utilizing the textbooks and other instructional materials adopted in accordance with approved curriculum that includes the historical oppression of a particular group of people based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability status, or sex as well as based on class, nationality, geographic region and/or other differences," the policy states.

The board approved the policy Thursday in a 5-1 vote with District 5 board member Georgia Hairston not present. Susan Mele voted against the policy; Matthew Holbrook, Dwayne Nelms, Marcus Hill, Susan Kirby and Christopher Daniels voted in favor of it.

Policy INB was first presented at an April 6 meeting, and the board had a split vote on it at its last regular meeting May 11.

Similarly to the May 11 meeting, community members, students and parents spoke both in favor and against the policy Thursday evening.

Amy Snead, of Moms for Liberty, whose organizational motto is to "educate and empower parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government," spoke in favor of the policy.

Snead said if an "issue arises" such as gender identity or sexual orientation, the parents should always be involved in the first conversation "regardless of anything else."

"This policy, as written, serves to support parental rights and it ensures that a parent is the person who discusses controversial issues," Snead said.

Mary Katherine Bennett, who is also in favor of the policy, said it is "fantastic."

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"I hate that this has become almost a circus show, but the bottom line is, you have parents who are not going to stand down ... we want what's best for all the children, and you can be kind and loving without putting forth any sort of agenda on either side to these children," she said.

Cindy Younghouse, parent and pediatric nurse who spoke against the policy, said everyone in the schools deserves to feel safe and that it's "non-negotiable."

Younghouse said Virginia schools aren't currently safe for LGBTQ+ students.

"We all know one teacher can make a tremendously positive difference in a young person's life. Policy INB will take that support away, creating a school environment where both students and teachers will fear for their safety, possibly exacerbating staff vacancies," Younghouse said.

Cindy Gillespie, a Bedford County teacher and parent who spoke against the policy, said not every student lives in a "supportive, loving home environment."

She asked the board to take the paragraph out of the policy, which states that teachers "shall not engage in discussion with students about sexual orientation or gender identity," which the board amended to "not initiate."

"These students get this love and support from their school's mom or dad, known to you as teachers, secretaries, counselors, custodians, cafeteria staff, bus drivers and other adults at the school," Gillespie said.

During discussion amongst the board on policy INB, Daniels made a motion to adopt it but amend "engage" in the second to last paragraph to "initiate."

The policy will read as follows:

"In addition, teachers shall not initiate discussions with students about sexual orientation or gender identity. "Sexual orientation" is defined as an individual's physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same and/or different gender. "Gender identity" is defined as an individual's personal conception of their gender."

Kirby, who voted against the policy on May 11, said she did not vote in favor of it because for some students, the teacher is "the only one that a student feels safe going to talk to."

The changing of the word in the policy from "engage" to "initiate" was a factor in her change of voting.

"I did not want that line of communication cut off completely," Kirby said.

Mele, who voted against the policy, asked if the board could review this policy again with parents, students and the committee to see if the group can make it "less broad."

"If we don't have clear expectations about reasonableness or controversial even, then that leaves it open to interpretation by each individual," she said.

Hill responded by saying, "we are telling parents that we are putting this back on them to take care of the home."

"Not for our teachers, our administrators or anybody in this school system to handle any type of gender identity or sexual orientation in the classroom," he said.

Superintendent Marc Bergin ended the discussion by addressing concerns of the adopted policy - stating the discussions portion of the policy pertains to classroom instruction and it does not prohibit a student from initiating a conversation with a "trusted teacher or counselor" about personal concerns.

"In response to the concern that changes in this policy are going to create an environment of discrimination, I want to be very

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clear, we do not tolerate discrimination against any student or staff member with regards to characteristics. School is and must always remain a safe place for everyone," he added.

Rodney Robinson Jr., (434) 385-5554rrobinson@newsadvance.com

---- **Index References** ----

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This summer reading list fights fascism, 2023 WLNR 20029949

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June 9, 2023

This summer reading list fights fascism

Ali Noland

Jun 09, 2023

As the school year winds down, parents often start looking for good books for their kids to read over the summer. This year, your child's summer reading list can be about more than just screen-free entertainment and academic enrichment. It can also serve as a patriotic protest against censorship.

In March, the Arkansas General Assembly passed Senate Bill 81, signed by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and now a new law that makes it a crime for librarians to provide access to books that are deemed "harmful to minors." The law comes after a wave of book challenges by groups like Saline County Republican Women and Moms for Liberty (a member of which was caught on tape last year fantasizing about shooting an Arkansas school librarian for refusing to remove books that present LGBTQ+ characters in a positive light). Now, these groups are working to defund public libraries and have successfully pressured some library systems to remove diverse and inclusive books from the children's section.

What's all the fuss about? Are these books actually "X-Rated," as a huge new anti-library billboard in Saline County claims? Use our handy summer reading list to judge for yourself.

Picture Books for Young Readers

Worm Loves Worm, by J.J. Austrian, illustrated by Mike Curato

Two worms fall in love and decide to get married, but their insect friends have questions: How will the worms exchange wedding rings if they don't have fingers? How will the guests be able to tell the bride from the groom when the worms look identical? In the end, the worms teach us that love really isn't that complicated and traditions can be updated to fit our needs. Common Sense Media, a parent resource for evaluating books, movies, video games and other content aimed at children, gives this book five stars and says, "It's an excellent book to start a conversation about same-sex marriage, but it works just as well as an introduction to wedding celebrations or as an example of how creativity, individuality and unconventionality can make a big event even more special." Saline County Republican Women had this book removed from the children's section of the public library because "gay marriage books aimed at children are inappropriate" and because they view the book as "anti-Biblical."

The Talk by Alicia D. Williams, illustrated by Briana Mukodiri Uchendu

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This Coretta Scott King Author Honor-winning children’s book tells the story of Jay, a young Black boy who loves hanging out with his friends, spending time with his grandma, riding in his dad’s car and getting measured by his mom with pencil marks on the wall to mark his growth. As Jay grows, the adults in his family begin to warn him about how others will judge him based on the color of his skin. To protect him, his parents teach Jay how to behave in public and how to interact with police, but Jay just wants to be a kid. Publisher Simon & Schuster describes this book as “a gently honest and sensitive starting point for this far-too-necessary conversation, for Black children, Brown children, and for ALL children.” The extremists who had it pulled from library shelves in Saline County said the book is “not an appropriate topic for little children and PRODUCES racism,” and they claim it is part of a “Critical Race Theory agenda.”

Jack Not Jackie, by Erica Silverman, illustrated by Holly Hatam

Older sister Susan can’t wait for the day that her younger sister Jackie will be old enough to play Susan’s favorite games, but as Jackie grows up, Susan realizes that her younger sister prefers to play with mud and bugs, likes ties better than tutus, wants to cut off her long hair and wants to be called Jack instead of Jackie. This is a book about a family loving and accepting their child regardless of gender identity or personal expression, so right-wing activists in Saline County found it objectionable and had it removed from the children’s section.

Bathe The Cat, by Alice McGinty, illustrated by David Roberts

Why was this charming picture book deemed too salacious for kids? Well, it’s not due to the story. As a family rushes to prepare for a visit from grandma, a mischievous cat rearranges the chore list on the refrigerator to delay getting a bath and, in the process, sends the family on a wild ride full of zany mixed-up housework (“Sarah, scrub the lawn! Dad, you feed the mat! Bobby, sweep the baby! I’ll vacuum the cat!”). The problem, apparently, lies in the illustrations, which feature a family with two happy, loving gay dads. In Arkansas, showing same-sex parents in a positive light is enough to get a book pulled from library shelves.

Books for Middle Readers

Transphobia, Deal With It and Be a Gender Transcender, by J. Wallace Skelton, illustrated by Nick Johnson

This informative book aimed at students in middle school uses comics, lists and quizzes to teach kids about transphobia. In challenging this book, the Saline County Republican Women have claimed that it is “leading some kids to go even further and identify as dogs and cats.”

Flight of the Puffin, by Ann Braden

From award-winning author Ann Braden, this story about four middle schoolers who aren’t what their families want or expect them to be showcases the power of compassion, hope, kindness and courage. It includes a nonbinary character, and the author is an outspoken gun control advocate, so it’s no surprise that this book has also been targeted for censorship in Saline County.

Books for High School Students

All Boys Aren’t Blue, by George M. Johnson

The Farmington School Board recently slapped an NC-17 age restriction on Johnson’s powerful YA memoir about growing up Black and queer. Johnson tells readers to “Love who you want to love, and do it unapologetically, including that face you see every day in the mirror.” This book is one of the most critically acclaimed and most widely banned YA books on the market today.

This summer reading list fights fascism, 2023 WLNR 20029949

Books That Will Help Kids Understand Censorship

The following books haven't (yet) been removed from library shelves in Arkansas. We are including them on this list because they are a great way to help your child understand current political efforts to censor the content that kids can access.

Ban This Book, by Alan Gratz

When fourth-grader Amy Anne Ollinger tries to check out her favorite book, "From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler," from her school library, she learns that the book was banned because a classmate's mom thought it wasn't appropriate for kids to read. Amy Anne fights back by starting a secret banned-books library out of her locker, and she soon ends up in the center of a battle over who has the right to decide what students can read.

A Night Divided, by Jennifer A. Nielsen

My 9-year-old daughter loved the suspenseful and thrilling story of Gerta and her brother Fritz, who risk their lives to tunnel under the Berlin Wall in order to reunite their family and escape the censorship and oppression of the Stasi, the secret police who control all books, magazines, music and school lessons in communist East Germany. When Gerta's elderly neighbor is arrested and tortured for distributing pamphlets that say, "If I cannot speak what I think, then it's a crime just to be me," Gerta begins to understand the importance of free thought and expression.

The post This summer reading list fights fascism appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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Trump Indicted On Seven Counts In Mar-a-Lago Docs Case; Trump Summoned To Miami Federal Court Tuesday; 2024 GOP Candidate Signals Pardon For Trum...

Trump Indicted On Seven Counts In Mar-a-Lago Docs Case; Trump Summoned To Miami Federal Court Tuesday; 2024 GOP Candidate Signals Pardon For Trump; Legal Details Of Federal Case Against Former President; Trump To Appear In Miami Federal Court Tuesday; Newsom Proposes Constitutional Amendment On Gun Control

TRACE GALLAGHER, FOX NEWS HOST: Good evening, and welcome to America's late news, FOX NEWS @ NIGHT. I'm Trace Gallagher in Los Angeles. And breaking tonight, an unprecedented federal indictment against the former President Donald Trump, who leads the 2024 GOP presidential field by a significant margin has been indicted on federal charges related to conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and how he handled classified documents. We have team coverage tonight on the potential legal and political fallout.

Joining us on set here in Los Angeles: Republican Presidential Candidate Larry Elder, Criminal Defense Attorney Vik Bajaj, and covering the breaking details Marianne Rafferty, and Matt Finn. We begin with Matt Finn on precisely what we are learning about this indictment. Matt, good evening.

MATT FINN, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Trace. Tonight, former President Trump is calling this a dark day for America and is responding to the reported indictments on Truth Social.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I'm an innocent man. I'm an innocent person. They come after Donald Trump weaponizing the Justice Department, weaponizing the FBI. We can't let this continue to go on because it's ripping our country to shreds. We have such big problems, and this shouldn't be one of them.

FINN (voice-over): It's not clear exactly what the former president will be charged with but sources tell Fox News, he faces at least seven federal counts of obstruction of justice, conspiracy, and illegal retention of classified documents. It's all in relation to Trump allegedly storing classified documents at his Florida, Mar-a-Lago home. You may recall last August the FBI made the unprecedented move of raiding that property. The National Archives alleges Trump took 15 boxes of presidential records with classified information to Mar-a-Lago.

Attorney General Merrick Garland later appointed Jack Smith as Special Counsel to investigate. This is the first time a president is indicted on federal charges. And it's the second time this year Trump was indicted. Back in April, President Trump was also indicted in New York on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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FINN: Trump says, he's scheduled to appear in court in Miami on Tuesday, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Matt, thank you. Let's bring in former Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo. John, it's great to have you on. The former president said this to Byron York, let's put this on the screen, quoting here: "The Presidential Record act is 100 percent clear, there was no crime committed. This is a civil thing. They could sue me civilly to get things back. But every president took things when they left the White House, and then they go after me criminally. I don't think that people are going to stand for it." Could they have handled this, John, civilly?

JOHN YOO, CAL BERKELEY LAW PROFESSOR: I actually think the real threat to President Trump is not for actually taking the documents. It's not something that's going to be cured civilly. The real dagger to the heart here is the claims of obstruction of justice; is the claims, we think, the charge of lying to Federal officers. What's going to be the real heart of the case is that President Trump allegedly got his lawyers to essentially lie to the grand jury, lie to the Justice Department about the claim that they had found all the classified documents and turn them over.

Otherwise, if it's not those claims, then President Trump's argument that he's being selectively prosecuted when you compare him to how Vice President Pence has been treated, how President Biden's been treated, and especially how Hillary Clinton was treated by the Justice Department in 2016, when she set up her own server, and cycled lots of classified information through it, and then just apparently destroyed records about it. I think he has a good claim there, but that's not going to apply to the obstruction of justice. That's not going to apply to lying to the federal agents' charges.

GALLAGHER: Well, Jim Trusty came out. He said, look, the obstruction thing goes away, because his thing is the Presidential Records Act makes the obstruction thing go away. I mean, quote and saying, "You can throw these papers in a fireplace if you want to," during a party, and there's no obstruction because the Presidential Records Act allows you to have those documents with impunity.

YOO: I think, I think the claim of selective prosecution is really one that President Trump and his lawyer, Jim, are going to have to be making in the public forum. It's not a good argument to make in a courtroom. You can't say I'm innocent, because you should have charged her. But I think the other problem here in Jim's argument is going to be look, it doesn't matter whether you committed the underlying crime or not. You still committed a crime when you lied to the government. When you said, I didn't have these documents, or I didn't have any classified documents. You could still commit obstruction of justice by trying to prevent the government from investigating.

Now, this is not going to be an easy case for the government to make. They've got to use the testimony of Trump's own lawyer against them. And they have to overcome one of the deepest, most traditional privileges in American law, which is the privilege of communication between an attorney and his client. Even if they go to trial, Trump could appeal maybe all the way to the Supreme Court just on the fact that the Justice Department put the screws on Trump's attorney.

GALLAGHER: Or he can run on you know, pardoning himself. I want to put this up Chuck Grassley said, quoting here: "DOJ indicted former president/candidate Trump same day DOJ/FBI restricts access to unnecessary redacted Biden allegations. And they wonder why people think there are two standards for justice." The timing, is it coincidental to you?

YOO: I think that Jack Smith, the Special Counsel here is running on his own schedule. But look, the problem is that the Justice Department is under attack by members of Congress, by Republicans, because it's deeply embroiled in politics, because it is trying to resist investigations from the hill. If Jack Smith release the charges tomorrow or next week, it probably would have been coincidental with lots of other things that the FBI is fighting about. And look, this is all bringing the integrity of the Justice Department into question.

For by, my druthers, I would have said, if you want to raise doubts about President Trump, don't charge him with a crime. Let the people decide in the next elections. That's how we've done everything for the last 230 years. And this is the first time that Justice Department has ever indicted a former president, ever indicted a major party's candidate for the presidency during the campaign season.

GALLAGHER: Yes, John Yoo, thank you. Well, now, for political impact. Let's bring in one of the former president's rivals for the 2024 GOP Presidential Nomination, Larry Elder. Larry, your thoughts on what happened today, first and foremost?

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LARRY ELDER (R), 2024 GOP PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION: It certainly smacks, Trace, of a double standard. I mean, as has been pointed out, Hillary had an unsecured server in her basement, on which she sent and receive classified information, lied about sending and receiving classified information, destroyed documents that were under subpoena, or you've got Joe Biden having documents in four or five different places. He was not president, he did not have the ability to declassify stuff and had stuff in his garage, unsecured. And then, you've got all these allegations against Hunter Biden -- I think he's been under investigation now for five years.

GALLAGHER: At least, yes.

ELDER: I think, I think OJ Simpson, Trace, is going to find the killer or killers of Ron and Nicole, before we conclude the Hunter Biden investigation.

GALLAGHER: Yes, it's a fair assessment. The Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy, tweeted the following here: "Today is, indeed, a dark day for the U.S. It is unconscionable for a president to indict the leading candidate opposing him. Joe Biden kept classified documents for decades. I and every American who believes in the rule of law stand with President Trump against this grave injustice. House Republicans will hold the brazen weaponization of power accountable." And that's the whole thing is, is you're not just indicting a former president, you're indicting the leader of the opposition party, Larry, I mean, this is one of those things where they, they talk about banana Republicans.

ELDER: That's right. This is the kind of stuff that you'd see in a third world country. It is absolutely completely, totally outrageous. It won't pass the smell test. All that's going to do is energize the base and make Donald Trump even more likely to be nominated. Maybe that's even what they want. If I believed, Trace, that Donald Trump could both be nominated and win, I thought it was a slam dunk, dunk, I wouldn't be running. I think that a substantial percentage of people have Trump derangement syndrome, for which maybe though someday there'll be a vaccine. It's not fair to him. But a substantial number of people in the swing districts in the suburbs would not vote for the man if he walked on water. And if he did, they say you can't swim.

GALLAGHER: Yes, and how do you run an election, Larry, when you're trying to, you know, adhere to a court docket?

ELDER: You tell me. That's why I think the judges would likely postpone this, so it won't be going in the middle of a campaign like that. Talk about election interference. This is just outrageous. Completely outrageous.

GALLAGHER: Yes. Vivek Ramaswamy said the following here: "It would be much easier for me to win this election if Trump weren't in the race, but I stand for principles over politics. I commit to pardon Trump promptly on January 20th, 2025, and to restore the rule of law in our country." Do you think most of the candidates feel like that? I know Asa Hutchinson doesn't. Chris Christie possibly doesn't. Are you, kind of, in the same camp as Vivek on that?

ELDER: I'm in the same camp as most Republicans are about this this outrage. It is a double standard, as I said before, if the, if the Biden people if the Trump people, Trump family had done one fraction of what the Biden family is accused of doing, they had to be marching on Washington. It's just such, such an outrageous thing going on right now.

GALLAGHER: So, you're worried about the power of the DOJ in this, in this case?

ELDER: Absolutely. The power of the DOJ, we found out because of the Twitter Files, what the DOJ was doing to suppress dissent about, about COVID. And we saw what the former CIA Intel officials did in drafting that letter claiming that Hunter Biden laptop story with Russian disinformation. This is just top to bottom.

GALLAGHER: Yes. I mean, there's a lot of that going on. Larry, back to you soon. To pick up on Larry's point, this is not just about the first-time federal indictment of a former president, it is the Biden administration also indicting the leader of an opposition party. Donald Trump is right now leading that party by a pretty big number. The senior national correspondent, Kevin Corke, is live in the nation's capital with more on that side of the story. Kevin, good evening.

KEVIN CORKE, FOX NEWS SENIOR NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Evening, Trace. Quite a story, indeed. This is a

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political earthquake on a day when the current president, President Biden, is under scrutiny for allegedly taking part in a multi-million-dollar bribery scheme. His chief political rival, has been indicted by the Biden DOJ.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CORKE (voice-over): Politically speaking, it's frankly more of the same for the GOP front-runner who is now facing state charges in New York and ongoing investigation in Georgia. And, of course, now federal charges in the great state of Florida. And this is where people are wondering what on earth is going on, especially when you consider the unusual nature of this. This is all happening as the former president leaves the current president pretty comfortably in some polling. In fact, in the latest Harris Poll, I think it was like 47 to 40.

TRUMP: They're trying to destroy your reputation, so they can win an election. That's just as bad as doing any of the other things that have been done over the last number of years and especially during the 2020 election.

CORKE: And this, of course, from Louisiana's Steve Scalise: "Let's be clear about what's happening. Joe Biden is weaponizing his Department of Justice against his own political rival. This sham indictment is the continuation of the endless political persecution of Donald Trump."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CORKE: Still, the question remains, however, tonight, Trace, will independent voters sensing perhaps inequity in the treatment under law and unfairness begin to move toward the former president or will they, given the drama, say enough is enough? Critics argue, that's the point of all this, by the way, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Yes, that is a very good point. Kevin Cork, live for us in D.C. Kevin, thank you. Let's get reaction from inside Trump world now, from Make America Great Again Inc., Spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt. Karoline, great to have you on. I'm just wondering, in Trump world tonight, what's the mood? What's the status?

KAROLINE LEAVITT, SPOKESWOMAN, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN INC.: Well, it is certainly a sad day for our country. And just a few minutes ago, Trace, Rachel Maddow, a very liberal pundit on MSNBC, send the quiet part out loud. He posed the question: can the DOJ drop this case in exchange for assurance that Donald Trump will never be able to run for office again? As astonishing is that it, as those words are, that is the true intention here. Joe Biden, Merrick Garland, Jack Smith, they are colluding to target their political opposition, Donald Trump, because they know they cannot fairly beat him at the ballot box next November.

And they are also announcing this indictment on this day to cover up for Joe Biden's corrupt crime family and the revelations that were revealed today on Capitol Hill that he and his family accepted millions of dollars from foreign nationals. But they are sadly mistaken because the American people, Republicans, Independents, and sound-minded Democrats in this country will rally around President Trump more than ever before and rally around law and order. We cannot stand for this. Good-hearted Americans will win.

GALLAGHER: Yes, part of that rally includes Ron DeSantis, his closest competitor here. DeSantis, said the following, "The weaponization of federal law enforcement represents a mortal threat to a free society. We have, for years, witnessed an uneven application of the law depending upon political affiliation. Why so zealous and pursuing Trump yet so passive about Hillary or Hunter? The DeSantis administration will bring accountability to the DOJ, excise political bias and then weaponization once and for all." So, he came out in favor of former president, little campaign boost in the, in the midst of that, but your thoughts on what the governor said?

LEAVITT: Now is not the time for political candidates to be huddling with their political consultants and arguing over what's advantageous to their campaign, campaigns. Now, is the time to stand with the American people, to stand with Donald Trump. Every Republican running for president has a responsibility to condemn this corruption because it's not just about Donald Trump. This is about a two-tier system of justice that is targeting these 74 million people who proudly voted for Donald Trump in the past election, as well. They've targeted moms and dads showing up to school board meetings, labeling them with domestic terrorists. They're targeting Catholics and Christians going, showing up to worship, the Lord in church.

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This is not OK. And any nation that has a Department of Justice that does not seek to promote justice and law and order but rather seeks to jail, its political opponents will not stand.

GALLAGHER: Karoline Leavitt, great to have you on. Thank you.

LEAVITT: Thank you.

GALLAGHER: Meantime, let's break down the legal specifics of former President Trump's notice to appear in federal court in Miami on Tuesday. Marianne Rafferty joins us live with those details. Marianne, good evening.

MARIANNE RAFFERTY, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Yes, good evening, Trace, and while that indictment has yet to be unsealed, the Justice Department officials have yet to speak publicly on the matter as well. Former President Trump is providing these logistical details about his arraignment on Truth Social. He says, I've been summoned to appear at the federal courthouse in Miami on Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. He goes, goes on to say that reporters are already flocking to that courthouse where the existence of a grand jury has only recently come to light.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RAFFERTY (voice-over): A second grand jury has also been investigating Trump's handling of the classified documents, also hearing from witnesses at the direction of Special Counsel Jack Smith in Washington, D.C. for months now. But ultimately prosecutors have decided that Florida, where the documents were allegedly mishandled at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate, would be the appropriate place for these charges. It's also notable that the jury pool could be more favorable to Trump in his home state.

Now Trump told Fox Digital in an exclusive interview Thursday evening, that he will plead not guilty in court and maintained that he is "totally innocent."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

RAFFERTY: Now, as far as what Trump will be doing between now and Tuesday's court appearance, he has two previously scheduled campaign events that for now remain on the books. I mean, he is coming out strong.

GALLAGHER: Indeed, he is. Marianne, thank you. Let's bring in Criminal Defense Attorney and Federal Litigator, Vic Bajaj. Vik, great to have you on I just want to kind of get your take on that. Is Miami a better venue for the former president than, say, Washington?

VIK BAJAJ, CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY AND FEDERAL LITIGATOR: Beyond a shadow of a doubt, it absolutely is. But let's not forget how we get here, right? We get to the presentation to the grand jury. And that's what returns what we call a true bill. Now, the interesting thing about a grand jury is we call it kind of secret as a defense practitioner and being in court all the time. We consider it to be a secret. But specifically, the prosecution in a federal indictment that they're seeking does not have the obligation to present all the good evidence on the other side, such as the reliance on the attorneys, the attempts to cooperate, and the other attempts to dissolve this and put it down to something less than criminal.

GALLAGHER: Yes, and what about the Presidential Records Act, Vik? I mean, does that play into this at all, when you have -- and I'll play Jim Trusty's sound bite here in a minute, but I want to get your take on the Presidential Records Act, and how much how much influence that has in this.

BAJAJ: It has a lot of influence, but let's not forget what the charges are in this case. It allows the president to make unilateral decisions, to consider certain things to be private. However, when a document is considered to be classified, then the entire subject matter around that classification stamp then becomes classified as well, which means that everything that has to do with that subject matter previously determined to be classified is now in the classified compartment. So, what that means is, at a certain point in time, the President has protection but the president according to the pundits will say this: Yes, you can declassify, but you need to ask for permission, and you need to go through the process. The presidential powers, on the other hand granted by the Constitution say, I'm the president, I can do what I want with it items that are in my possession.

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GALLAGHER: Yes, let's play this because Jim Trusty says the Presidential Records Act allows the president to do pretty much anything and avoid obstruction. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM TRUSTY, TRUMP ATTORNEY: So, when you have the Presidential Record Act defense, when you have declassification as a defense, then there's really nothing. I mean, he could have had a party throwing stuff in a bonfire and it wouldn't be obstruction.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: Put in the bonfire, Vik, and no such thing as obstruction.

BAJAJ: Well, OK, let's, let's be realistic about it. Yes, in that microcosm of letting something become part of the public eye, in the public purview, maybe that's not obstruction. But the obstruction that's levied in multiple counts in this indictment may be as simple as I'm asking you for something, Trace, and you're not giving it to me as the Department of Justice, you're obstructing my goal to get justice in the furtherance of the investigation. So, I wouldn't put all my eggs in the basket of obstruction of justice is destruction of the materials, perhaps, we can sit, can consider; obstruction of justice is just not cooperating.

GALLAGHER: What about the fact that you know, mishandling of documents, right? Is that something you think, well, the prosecutors have put themselves in kind of a narrow path here because didn't Joe Biden mishandled the very same kind of documents? I mean, didn't Mike Pence mishandle the very same type of documents? It's one of those good for the goose arguments.

BAJAJ: It's right. But as John Yoo just told us, he hit the nail on the head, it doesn't matter. Within the four corners of a legal case, you can challenge both the facts and the law. You cannot challenge the fairness of this system. That's something that's already statutorily dictated by Congress and on the way down. So, the fact that there may be a thousand other potential defendants who committed the same crime is irrelevant. I remember one of my first cases in the Southern District as a green lawyer, 22 years ago, U.S. Attorney looked at me in the eye and said, hey, if we see a crime, we cannot ignore it. Well, that's not the way things actually are.

GALLAGHER: Yes, Vik Bajaj, back to you later, thank you. Coming up more on the legal fallout of the Trump indictment and later, parents' rights groups are the newest addition to the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate and extremism. Groups like Moms for Liberty, the co-founder of that group joins us live, coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GALLAGHER: Welcome back to continuing coverage on the breaking news concerning the federal indictment of former President Donald Trump now facing seven charges in the Mar-a-Lago documents case. Let's bring back in Republican Presidential Candidate Larry Elder, and Attorney Vik Bajaj. Larry, we're just talking about politics in the break. And this is really all about politics, and there's a couple of trains of thought on this right. One is, is that you know what the Democrats really want is they want to push, they're doing this because they want to push the president the former president out of the race altogether. And the other thought is, is that they want to make sure the former president wins the primary because they believe they can beat him in the general, which side do you come down on?

ELDER: Well, that is my theory, Trace, otherwise, I wouldn't be on this race. I believe that Democrats want Donald Trump to be the nominee. I think they believe he's the only one who can really, they can really beat. I think virtually any of the other nominees will be able to beat Biden. Biden is underwater on every issue, whether it's gasoline prices, inflation, borders, you name it, he's underwater. And I think they want to drive up President Trump's anger, because the base loves, loves to rally around him because they feel that he's beleaguered, being mistreated, or he's already sent out fundraisers on this. So, I believe that the Democrats would love to run against Donald Trump again. If I didn't feel that way, I wouldn't be in the race.

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GALLAGHER: Right.

ELDER: My feeling is that at some point, the voters in the primaries going to realize they need to rally around somebody whose last name was other than Trump, the way the Democrats did when Bernie Sanders won the Nevada caucuses for one brief shining moment, a self-described Democratic Socialist was a Democrat front-runner, James Clyburn, then endorses Joe Biden on the eve of the South Carolina primary, Biden went to primary. All the other candidates and rally around Biden, and he gets him to the finish line. That's what I think the Republicans need to do eventually, to get around somebody whose name is other than Donald Trump.

GALLAGHER: And I don't want to put words in your mouth, Larry, but what you're saying is, is that, you know, the Biden campaign fears everybody on the GOP side, except for the former president.

ELDER: That's exactly how I would put it.

GALLAGHER: Yes.

ELDER: Yes.

GALLAGHER: I want to get back to you, legally, on this, Vik Bajaj, because we were kind of talking about this, about the concept of the handling of the documents. And George, George Washington University Professor Jonathan Turley, Fox News Contributor, had this to say about the mishandling charges. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JONATHAN TURLEY, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: If I was on the Biden legal team, I would be very uneasy right now to hear that there are mishandled accounts. Joe Biden mishandled material for a much longer period and many more locations than did President Trump. So, if I was bites counsel, I'd be a little bit uneasy. And that's one of the reasons that's going to be the first thing some of us look to is how they thread this needle.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: So, what he's talking about is what we talked about Vik, which is the what-about-ism. Well, what about Biden? What about Pence? And what about these other guys who had the bad documents? And you were kind of addressing that, does Turley make a fair point there to change your argument at all?

BAJAJ: No, it doesn't change my argument because you have markedly different approaches by both of these defenses. In other words, former President Trump has his defense which is it's my, it's my power I can do what I want to with it, I don't need to ask for permission. I'm sticking to those guns. On the other hand, others similarly situated who have been found with potentially classified documentation in unsecure areas, they're cooperating. They're saying, hey, you know what, this may have been a mistake, but come on over and get what you want. We're, we're cooperating completely. So, I don't believe that this is something that changes my opinion because the approaches are so markedly different. One, purely rests on a constitutional presidential power. The other doesn't address that issue. It says, I may have been wrong, but we're cooperating.

GALLAGHER: By the way, NBC News reporting that Attorney General Merrick Garland did not approve these charges. Is there any world in which you think the Attorney General of the United States didn't approve the charges of going after the first indictment ever, federal indictment ever of a former president --

BAJAJ: Trace, this is my face when I'm trying not to smile or laugh, OK. Absolutely not. This is the attorney general of the United States who anointed Mr. Smith to be the special counsel. One answer would be Garland. So, of course, he has to give the final blessing. You have to kiss the ring, so to speak, before it goes public. I just wouldn't spend a dollar or, or any kind of investment on that theory that he doesn't have a horse in this race.

GALLAGHER: But on that point, Larry, it's become a very big political football, the fact that there is very little trust right

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now in government, very little trust in the FBI, very little trust in the DOJ, the Biden documents are given to the Oversight Committee today. They look at him and boom, three hours later, indictment.

ELDER: And there's also a special counsel investigating, Trace, the handling of the Biden classified documents. What's the status of that investigation? When are we going to find out about that? Why is it taking so long?

GALLAGHER: Yes, it's a fair question. And that's the whole thing is we're not even, when do we get the indictment? When did they open this indictment, Vik? I mean, you know, it's been -- we know there's seven counts, right? We know we're kind of picking and cherry picking some of these counts out, there some of the leaks, and we don't know who's leaking, but we kind of have an idea who is leaking. But we don't know when the indictment is going to be unsealed, is it going to be at 3:01, Tuesday afternoon?

BAJAJ: Yes, it will be, and shortly after President Trump makes his way into the courthouse. The court will have to order it to be unsealed, unless there are co-conspirators that may be still on the run, let's say, and not apprehended or not having made their appearance in court, it will be unsealed. And an interesting point of this is they've alleged a conspiracy. The reason why that's so important is this a conspiracy allegation in federal court requires overt acts to be delineated on that paper. So, it tells a story that may give us better light as to what the crux of the obstruction charges are.

GALLAGHER: What do we take away from all this, Larry, your final thoughts?

ELDER: Final thoughts, it's going to make Trump more popular among the base, more likely to be nominated. They're going to rally around him, and they're going to fundraise off of all of this.

GALLAGHER: There are already fundraisers. We already get the e-mails right now, are you surprised?

ELDER: As I said before, because of Trump derangement syndrome, and it's not his fault for the most part, there are so many swing voters for whom this is going to be just another nail in the coffin. I cannot vote for this man. Too much drama, too much legal jeopardy. I'm not going to vote for this man. That's what I think ultimately is going to happen, which again, is why I'm in this race.

GALLAGHER: Larry Elder, Vik Bajaj, gentlemen, thank you.

ELDER: Thank you.

BAJAJ: Thank you.

GALLAGHER: Well, coming up, some of the day's other top stories, plus we have told you about those heated clashes between parents and school boards over controversial LGBTQ curriculum. Now, some of those parent groups have been labeled as extremist and hate groups right along with the KKK. That's coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GALLAGHER: President Biden has dismissed the accusations of his involvement in a bribery scheme when he was V.P. as a "bunch of Malarkey." A source familiar with that key FBI document reviewed by members of the House Oversight Committee tells Fox that the document does not say Joe Biden received any payments but Republican Representatives like Lauren Boebert and Marjorie Taylor Greene insist they need to see the related documents as well.

Much of the Northeast remained in the grip of smoke from Canadian wildfires on Thursday. Some effects of the smoke are expected to last at least another day, maybe longer, possibly into the weekend as skies begin to clear in New York City. Air quality alerts have been issued from the Midwest down to the mid-Atlantic in the Carolinas. A shift in the winds was expected to spread westward toward Pittsburgh and the Ohio Valley.

California Governor Gavin Newsom is looking to enhance his national political profile again, this time proposing a constitutional amendment on gun control. Newsom said, he thinks he can get Republican leaders on board. Watch.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: How is this possible? How is this going to happen?

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM (D-CA): It's possible because their constituency demands it. California gun death rate today, 73 percent lower than Texas. These federal judges want to turn America into Texas. We cannot let that happen.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: The amendment would raise the minimum age to buy a firearm to 21 mandate universal background checks impose a waiting period on gun purchases and banned civilians from buying so-called weapons of war. Critics are wondering why a governor is waiting into federal issues, so are we.

The United States and Cuba are denying the Wall Street Journal report that China is planning to build an electronic eavesdropping facility on the island of Cuba. The alleged spy facility would allow the Chinese to listen to us communications throughout the southeast, where there are many military bases and also allow it to monitor U.S. ship traffic. Pentagon says it is aware of the precarious relationship between Cuba and China, but claims the report of a spy station is not accurate.

A conservative group that pushes back against school curriculum, it believes is harmful to children, it's now being classified as an extremist, extremist group and the Moms for Liberty have plenty of company. Here's correspondent, Molly Line.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MOLLY LINE, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Arguing schools are now on the front lines of hatred and violence. The Southern Poverty Law Center has dubbed a dozen parental rights organizations as anti-government extremists, in the center's annual report. Moms for Liberty is highlighted for harassing teachers and school officials joining other organizations branded anti-LGBTQ, neo-Nazi and anti-immigrant on the Law Center's hate map.

TINA DESCOVICH, CO-FOUNDER, MOMS FOR LIBERTY: We are letting it kind of roll off our back in a sense because it's just ridiculous. When you look at the people listed at the top of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Web site, those that are considered in their hate group, its members of the KKK.

LINE: The SPLC touts its legal advocacy in the fight for civil rights, but it's faced multiple defamation lawsuits for its hate labeling. The conservative nonprofit, Family Research Council, a longtime target of the SPLC has launched a petition calling to investigate the center for anti-conservative bias. Founded in Florida in 2021, Mom's for Liberty, now boasts more than 100,000 members and chapters in 40-plus states. Activists have pushed or remove books and curriculum in school that they deemed controversial or not age appropriate, some dealing with sexuality or gender issues. The nonprofit has emerged to be politically influential. GOP White House hopeful, Vivek Ramaswamy, hold the town hall with the group today in the first in the nation primary state of New Hampshire.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I'll tell you, if you're a hate group, count me in, and we can take that actually as a badge of honor for where we are today as a country.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LINE: Moms for Liberty will host a national summit this month, speakers include: several Republican candidates for President, including former President Trump. Trace.

GALLAGHER: Molly, thank you. Let's bring in co-founder of Moms for Liberty, Bridget Ziegler. Bridget, great to have you on. I know, the Southern Poverty Law Center as far left, but it's just baffling to me that they would label you as domestic terrorists. I mean, it's, it's reposterous. Your thoughts on that?

BRIDGET ZIEGLER, CO-FOUNDER, MOMS FOR LIBERTY: Well, listen, first of all, I think it's just the last desperate

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attempt to continuously try to discredit parents and silence them. Because as you noted, this growing group of amazing moms and dads who are speaking up, and advocating for their children are a very powerful and influential voting bloc, and the last realizes that they're losing their stronghold on education, which has been their stronghold for decades. So, again, it hasn't worked before when it worked with the National School Board Association and Department of Justice, and it won't work this time. I know these moms and dads, I know these -- the women who run Moms for Liberty, fighting very hard to make sure that they're in charge of the direction and upbringing of their children.

GALLAGHER: Yes, and you know, what, when I see things, I look at this, and when you're labeling people as domestic terrorists, and when you're sending Antifa out like they did in Glendale, California, and they're sending Antifa out to fight with parents, you know, there's some fear, they're afraid of you. Whatever you're doing is working.

ZIEGLER: Exactly. Well, that's exactly right. And I think another thing is, not too long ago, I think that this, this week, we saw something happen. I don't -- you mentioned Glendale, California with the Antifa and the Armenian parents who are at a school board meeting, again advocating for the rights of their, parental rights and for the protecting of their children. We also saw this in Montgomery County, Maryland, where there were hundreds of parents that were Muslim faith-based backgrounds that were pushing back again, against the curriculum that's been forward. And I think it does, again, the left has tried to push this white, right wing, white supremacy bigot. All -- I mean, all these different labels they give us but we can see this is across the backgrounds of religion and different backgrounds that are fighting back to protect their kids.

GALLAGHER: I mean, QAnon, Proud Boys, teacher haters, just plain haters, they've pretty much call you guys everything that they can think of, you know, it's the same thing as the climate deniers, and you know, assault on democracy. There's got to be a name because there's no way to actually debate, nobody wants to debate. They just want to call your name and walk away because they know the debate -- those who are ill-equipped to debate, don't like to debate.

ZIEGLER: You're right on that is exactly right. Because if we were to go head-to-head on the issues, they would lose, they know it. It's common sense. It's not even partisan driven. It is common sense. People want to see their children be successful. They want the government staying out. They want families to be able to raise their children as they see fit. And there's no name that they can call us that's going to make parents back down.

GALLAGHER: We saw that we talked about the numbers, Bridget, and you know, a hundred thousand, you're talking about your group growing, I mean, exponentially. How is the influence for the 2024 election, do you see a big voice for your group going forward?

ZIEGLER: So, to be fair, I'm actually no longer affiliated officially with Moms for Liberty's initial founder, but I work closely with them as a Leadership Institute Director of School Boards, but I can tell you that I work with them collectively across the country and I talk to these moms and dads. They are on the ground. Many weren't politically active ever before, but you can bet they're politically active now and will be playing a very vital role in 2024.

GALLAGHER: Lastly, are you surprised by how much your message is resonating? And how many parents, mama bears, have come together to fight for what you believe in?

ZIEGLER: Listen, I'm a mom of three young daughters. So, I'm not surprised because there's a fire in our belly when it comes to our children, and that is the innate aspect of us as parents. And when anyone gets in the way of us and our children, you can bet we're going to step up and you're going to bet we're going to speak up and no label is going to keep us from protecting our children. And again, this will be a big calling, call to action. This has actually only spurred more people to step up, so they can call us what they like, we won't back down.

GALLAGHER: Bridget Ziegler, great to have you on, thank you.

ZIEGLER: Thank you.

GALLAGHER: Well, first up in tonight's "REAL NEWS ROUNDUP." President Biden announcing a new White House effort to combat so-called booked bands which will include a new coordinator to tackle the issue. The coordinator will be dispatched to train school districts on civil rights laws. According to American Library Association, seven of the 13 most

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challenged books featured sexually explicit content.

This video of San Francisco first responders appears to salute a progress for pride flag has gone viral. The San Francisco sheriff's office posted the video of the flag raising ceremony this week. The uniformed officers can be seen saluting as an American flag and LGBTQ flag were raised over a county jail. The San Francisco sheriff's office say they were saluting the American flag.

And Elon Musk is once again the richest person in the world. Musk lost the title three months ago to French business magnate, Bernard Arnault. Musk's net worth reportedly now sits at around \$220 billion. His net worth has kind of fluctuated as much of it is tied to Tesla's stock.

Well, coming up an update on the unprecedented indictment against former President Trump, breaking news continuing coverage next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GALLAGHER: Back now to the breaking news. Tonight's big story, former President Trump indicted on federal charges in the Mar-a-Lago, Mar-a-Lago documents case. Matt Finn is back with us here in Los Angeles. Matt's been covering this case; he led the news at the top of the show. Matt, what's the important thing we need to take away from this?

FINN: Well, Trace, as we have been discussing on this show, former President Trump really insists he's an innocent man and he says the FBI is being weaponized against him. Trump wrote on Truth social media earlier tonight: "The corrupt Biden administration has informed my attorneys that I have been indicted seemingly over the boxes hoax, even though Joe Biden has 1850 boxes at the University of Delaware, additional boxes in Chinatown, D.C., with even more boxes at the University of Pennsylvania and documents strewn all over his garage floor where he parks his Corvette." Worth noting, the investigation into President Biden's handling of documents is ongoing.

Now, earlier tonight, one of Trump's attorneys, Jim Trusty, said in an interview that they have not been given a copy of the actual indictment, rather what they got is a summons from the DOJ asking to be at the Miami courthouse on Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. That summons indicates what the seven charges are, including the charge under the Espionage Act and charges related to obstruction and false statements. Trump's attorney says he spoke with the former president tonight. Former President Trump considers these charges garbage. He says, he's not going to hide and he will be there in Florida on Tuesday.

GALLAGHER: And I think it's important you note, and Jim Trusty has noted this, they still haven't seen the indictment, right? The indictment has not been unsealed. And so, the things that we're hearing about the charges that might include had been leaked, presumably by the DOJ, and that's kind of part of the interest in the intrigue and all of this. Thank you, Matt, for that. As for the political fallout from this unprecedented indictment, senior national correspondent, Kevin Corke, has been tracking that side of the story. What's the latest on that, Kevin?

CORKE: Yes, I have to tell you this is as much about the rule of law, frankly, is it is about the right to choose. For American citizens, they have the right to choose who they want to run our government. And that's what elections are supposed to be about. But tonight, Trace, critics are accusing the Biden administration, by way of the DOJ, of trying to sideline his chief political opponent, former President Trump. And that view, by the way, is particularly true on Capitol Hill among Republicans.

This from the Kevin McCarthy. His office putting this tweet out, "Today is indeed a dark day for the United States of America. It is unconscionable for a president to indict the leading candidate opposing him. Joe Biden kept classified documents for decades. I, and every American who believes in the rule of law stand with President Trump against this grave injustice. House Republicans will hold this brazen weaponization of power accountable."

This from Marco Rubio, "There's no limit to what these people will do to protect their power and destroy those who threaten it, even if it means ripping our country apart and shredding public faith in the institutions that hold our republic together."

In 246 years, it's never happened. And both ends of the political spectrum will have to pay a price. Don't forget, this country

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will change forever on Tuesday, and as I said earlier today, knives are long in Washington and so, are memories. Trace.

GALLAGHER: Indeed, they are. Kevin Corke, thank you. And Kevin makes a great point there because Alvin Bragg, the D.A. in New York was accused of losing the narrative when he indicted the former president in New York. And you wonder if the DOJ will come out and try and control the narrative, because as we know, the former president is utilizing this to his advantage. He is already fundraising, and he will use this. The last time it bumped his numbers, we will see this time. Thank you for watching Americans late news, FOX NEWS @ NIGHT. I'm Trace Gallagher in Los Angeles. See you back here tomorrow night.

END

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June 9, 2023

The lowdown: 20,000 volumes leave Sebastian River High School library? Book ban run amok?

Amid rumors linking high school changes to book challenges, Sebastian River re-envision its library as esports stadium, cafe, collaborative place.

Laurence Reisman, Treasure Coast Newspapers

The calls and emails, from usually reliable sources, went like this:

"I was talking to someone very knowledgeable about the present book banning in Florida," one early one began. "I was informed that 16,000 books were being removed from the Sebastian River High School library ... apparently, the books didn't meet the criteria for acceptable reading."

It sounded over the top, but I continued to get reports from folks concerned the next generation will be educated as well if not better than the past.

Like much of what we hear nowadays, the reports included kernels of truth.

Yes, there are efforts in Indian River County, like elsewhere, to rid school libraries of material objectionable — risqué or racial — to some adults.

Sebastian students ultimately will benefit

Shock value? Moms for Liberty targeting pornography, diversity, both? Clear message essential

No charges filed: Will fight to boot books become fool's folly? Indian River to find out soon?

But no, there's been no massive purge at Sebastian River or anywhere else.

So far in Indian River County, only 10 books have been removed, including an illustrated version of Anne Frank's diary, according to TCPalm records. Last year, the district reviewed about 160 challenged books. Jennifer Pippin, chair of the county chapter of Moms for Liberty, told TCPalm in April she has a list of about 250 books she plans to challenge.

The fact is the Sebastian River High School library will have room for almost 11,000 books when its renovation is completed this fall. Its complete collection, which includes VHS tapes, outdated digital and print encyclopedias, magazines and books, is 32,000, according to Cristen Maddux, public information officer for the Indian River County School District.

The tips longtime school librarian Michelle Funnell is leaving were true, too. She declined to comment, but an April 4 message to the district said she would leave June 1 and would begin taking retirement payments.

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District officials said it is the first major renovation of the library since Sebastian River opened in November 1994. Back then, a Press Journal article touted the school's "high-tech" assets, including encyclopedias on CD-ROM and connections to such digital services as Infotrac, Biology Digest and Newsbank.

Times continue to change

It was cool stuff, and certainly more user-friendly than when I was in high school, when we had to find books using card files and deciphering the Dewey Decimal system. We had more fun chatting above a whisper, but not getting caught, and watching films on a projector of things like the Hindenburg disaster or the World War II-era "Victory at Sea."

These days, there's no need to browse library stacks for the latest issue of Time, Sports Illustrated, The Miami Herald or any other periodical.

A student's cellphone, their school-issued laptop or computers in libraries can access far more information, including literary classics, for free in seconds. Students can watch online the same content I did, and much more.

I don't think my college-graduate sons, in their 20s, ever checked out a book from their high school library. And Indian River County School District data show that's not unusual.

In the first 3.5 months of the 2022-23 school year at Sebastian River, 172 students, fewer than 1 in 10, checked out 215 books, according to the district. At Vero Beach High School, 79 students, 2.8% of the populace, checked out 111 books.

At the county's four middle schools, a range of 3.6% of students at Gifford to 35.2% at Oslo, checked out a total of 851 books over the same time frame. There are 3,328 middle school students in the district.

Re-inventing the media center space

How one school sees the future: Lincoln High School renovations are nearly ready for the public. Here's a sneak peek at some of the changes.

Thus, what's the point of a book-centric library, or media center, anymore? It's a question that's been asked for several years nationally. Schools have been evolving.

Sebastian River, which had a history of innovation under principals Fran Adams and Peggy Jones and athletic director Michael Stutzke, will have a media center with a student union feel, according to Principal Christopher Cummings.

"We need to get out in front of this," he said, citing the massive change in how youngsters consume media. "We will have a media center to support a wide range of students' interests."

There will be flexible seating, making it easier for small-group work. It's part of the district's evolution from old classroom seats, where more stationary desks are aimed at the teacher, to a setup where collaboration and discussion is encouraged.

The library will have interactive, touch-screen displays for research and presentations during class, group projects, clubs, etc.

"It will be so much more (when it opens)," Cummings said "Our overall objective is to make it inviting to students."

Sharks getting an indoor 'stadium'

I'd be drawn to the old VHS tape room, which will be turned into a café. It could offer students entrepreneurial and food-beverage experience.

The library also will become the "stadium" for the school's esports team and its fans, said James Thimmer, the Sharks assistant principal.

I don't get the fascination with watching other people play video games, but I'm not a member of Generation Z (folks born since 2000).

They love their games, and there's a lot of money to be made playing them and critiquing the action. Universities offered more than \$16 million in esports scholarships to top video game players last year, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations, which began sanctioning esports in 2018.

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More than 30 of Florida's 67 school districts already have esports teams, with about 8,600 high schools playing nationwide, Thimmer said.

Making substantive improvements

Yes, there should be lots of excitement at Sebastian's library in the fall. If all goes as anticipated, renovations could occur at Vero Beach High School in 2024.

No, the renovations are not as shocking as the idea the district would capitulate to folks who don't think some books from Pulitzer Prize-winning authors John Steinbeck or Toni Morrison belong in school libraries.

The aforementioned checkout data show how trivial the well-publicized and politicized book challenges are. It's too bad communities spend more time reviewing books no one checks out rather than doing what Sebastian River is doing: Re-envisioning a system to better serve children, who must be the focus of our efforts.

This column reflects the opinion of Laurence Reisman. Contact him via email at larry.reisman@tcpalm.com, phone at 772-978-2223, Facebook.com/larryreisman or Twitter @LaurenceReisman .

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June 9, 2023

Moms for Liberty, FreePA flagged as 'antigovernment' groups by watchdog

Brett Sholtis; LNP, Lancaster, Pa.

Jun. 8—Moms for Liberty and FreePA, two political entities that have been at the vanguard of Republican politics in Lancaster County since 2021, were labeled on Tuesday as “antigovernment” groups that oppose democracy.

The Southern Poverty Law Center included the two organizations in its annual report on hate and extremism. Both groups have Lancaster County chapters and have been embraced by some Republican elected officials. The groups’ critics say the designation will help spread the word about broader threats to electoral democracy, while defenders accuse the SPLC of playing politics.

The SPLC is an Alabama-based nonprofit legal advocacy group that formed in 1971 and rose to prominence for filing lawsuits against the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacists. It has also fought against discrimination due to sexual orientation and other violations of civil rights. More recently, it drew attention to the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys years before their leaders helped coordinate and participate in the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

”In the aftermath of Trump’s election loss and the insurrection at the Capitol, the right shifted tactics: Without Trump at the helm, activists have made a concerted effort to organize in the local arena, pursuing their agenda in venues where it is easier to gain power,” the report states.

Schools have been a locus of these attacks following a backlash to COVID-19 public health measures, the report notes. “But they have grown into an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.”

Moms for Liberty

The Florida-based parental rights group Moms for Liberty features prominently in this year’s report and is seen as one of the most widespread actors at school districts. SPLC identified 25 Moms for Liberty chapters in Pennsylvania.

Moms for Liberty chapters “combat what they consider the ‘woke indoctrination’ of children by advocating for book bans in school libraries and endorsing candidates for public office that align with the group’s views,” SPLC states. “They also use their multiple social media platforms to target teachers and school officials, advocate for the abolition of the Department of Education, advance a conspiracy propaganda, and spread hateful imagery and rhetoric against the LGBTQ community.”

That’s played out in Lancaster County, where Moms for Liberty has had an outside influence in shaping school district policies and helping elect candidates.

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Chapter chair Rachel Wilson-Snyder, who lives in Warwick Township, didn’t respond to requests for comment but posted on Facebook about the SPLC designation on Wednesday.

”This is just another attempt to silence and discredit the effective work we are doing,” Wilson-Snyder wrote. “We will not stop. We cannot stop. Our children are depending on us. A mother’s love and desire to protect her children is the strongest force on earth [sic].”

But Karen Svoboda said the SPLC designation will help her group educate people about Moms for Liberty. Svoboda is president and CEO of Defense of Democracy, a non-partisan, New York-based organization advocating for public schools. The group formed in 2022 in response to attacks against inclusivity.

”I was kind of watching with horror in response to these white, straight Christian groups trying to get their agendas into schools,” Svoboda said. “Now it becomes less of us shouting into a void, and more of us saying, ‘OK, this is what we have to do.’”

FreePA

Like Moms for Liberty, FreePA emerged out of opposition to COVID-19 lockdowns and mask mandates. According to its website, the group seeks to educate people about the Constitution and history, organize physical meetings, vet conservative political candidates, push for pro-parental rights educational policies and “support businesses that defy tyranny.”

”FreePA strives to be a constitutionally conservative patriot organization that is filled with people who love our country,” said Danielle Lindemuth, an Elizabethtown Area School District board member who also serves as a point of contact for the group. Lindemuth declined to answer additional questions.

The SPLC places FreePA within “the antidemocratic hard-right movement,” a category it says includes people who “believe the federal government is tyrannical” and “traffic in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government of leftist elites seeking a ‘New World Order.’”

These issues have featured prominently at Lancaster County FreePA meetings, according to the group’s meeting minutes posted online. The group’s website displays videos falsely claiming Donald Trump won the 2020 presidential election. The group also has shared videos and hosts lectures by people warning against perceived threats of 5G cell phone towers and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Last May, the group featured Tom DeWeese, a conspiracy theorist described by the SPLC as a key figure in the antigovernment movement. DeWeese often focuses on a sustainability initiative advocated by the United Nations, suggesting that it’s actually a leftist plot “to destroy America through creeping socialism.”

GOP criticism of SPLC

FreePA also has hosted Lancaster County’s two Republican county commissioners, who were quick to defend the group and attack SPLC.

”This is a political tactic to try to oppose those groups who they see as conservative,” said Commissioner Josh Parsons, whose photo with FreePA activists is on the group’s website. “And the reason you cite the SPLC’s history, which has a proud history during the civil rights movement, is to try to show you that they have gravitas. But they have changed. It’s now a political organization, and this is simply a political tool. And you then amplify it, rather than being skeptical about it.”

Commissioner Ray D’Agostino, who spoke at a FreePA gathering in February, downplayed the significance of some of the group’s conspiracy theories while defending people’s rights to share ideas.

”We are dividing ourselves in ways we shouldn’t be dividing ourselves, by labeling people,” D’Agostino said. “It’s dangerous to good public discourse.”

Moms for Liberty, FreePA flagged as 'antigovernment' groups..., 2023 WLNR 19922531

Parsons' and D'Agostino's criticisms of SPLC mirror ones made about the group by national conservative groups, including the Heritage Foundation.

Election Board Vote 16.jpg

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County Commissioner Ray D'Agostino speaks during the Board of Elections meeting on Wednesday, April 12, 2023.

SUZETTE WENGER — Staff Photographer

"The Southern Poverty Law Center publishes a 'hate map' plotting 'hate groups' across the United States," wrote Tyler O'Neil, the managing editor of the think tank's online publication. "Of course, the map features chapters of the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups like the National Socialist Movement, but it also includes a broad swath of conservative organizations whose major crimes amount to disagreeing with the SPLC's policy positions."

Critics also often point to the 2019 dismissal of Morris Dees, SPLC's longtime leader, over allegations that women and non-white staffers at the group were paid less and treated poorly under his leadership.

In discussing FreePA on Wednesday, D'Agostino said he wanted more information about how the SPLC came to its decision to label the group as antigovernment. Responding to a request by LNP — LancasterOnline, SPLC Senior Research Analyst Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon provided a statement.

"Overall, FreePA trades in the rhetoric and goals of the larger antigovernment movement, fearing UN power and calling their political opponents Marxists and communists," Wiinikka-Lydon wrote. "They demonize their opponents, attack inclusive education and scapegoat LGBTQ persons, and they work with other organizations to undermine faith in legitimate democratic elections. They have also engaged in extremist activities and with extremism groups, from the January 6th insurrection to Moms for Liberty."

FreePA's connections to violent extremism is demonstrated by some members' involvement in the January 6 attack on the Capitol, Wiinikka-Lydon added. He pointed out that three members of FreePA were arrested for their participation in the Jan. 6 riot, including Sandra Weyer of Mechanicsburg, who was convicted this week of obstructing Congress' work and illegally entering the Capitol. Weyer is currently listed as the group's Cumberland County point of contact.

'Politics and religion': Why two longtime Republican school board members have had enough

Local effects

In Elizabethtown, FreePA members have taken over the local Republican committee and helped get Lindemuth and others elected to the local school board, said school board Vice President Michael Martin.

Martin, who did not seek reelection this year, described himself as a "fiscally-conservative lifelong Republican," and said he feels little in common with the FreePA board members and candidates.

"Support Our Students" rally before Elizabethtown Area School District board meeting

Vice President Michael Martin, during the school board meeting at Elizabethtown Area High School Tuesday March 22, 2022.

CHRIS KNIGHT Staff Photographer

"My concern would be that they are going to potentially embark on a Christian Nationalist agenda that will end up tying up the school district in lawsuits that could really exceed \$1 million in legal fees," Martin said. He pointed to ongoing lawsuits at Central Bucks School District in Bucks County as an example of where that's already playing out.

Moms for Liberty, FreePA flagged as 'antigovernment' groups..., 2023 WLNR 19922531

Martin wasn't hopeful that the SPLC designation would change anyone's minds on the group. He said people should be concerned about overreach that would especially target LGBTQ+ people.

"They think there's a liberal bogeyman around every corner, and there just isn't in Elizabethtown," Martin said. "So they're going to put forward solutions in search of a problem."

Sholtis' work is funded by the Lancaster County Local Journalism Fund. For more information, or to make a contribution, please visit lanc.news/supportlocaljournalism.

'Not a hate group': Warwick school board members defend meeting with lawyer tied to anti-LGBTQ+ council

Local News

'Not a hate group': Warwick school board members defend meeting with lawyer tied to anti-LGBTQ+ council

— BRETT SHOLTIS — Staff Writer

---- **Index References** ----

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NewsRoom

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June 9, 2023

Section: News

Moms for Liberty named 'extremist group'

Will Carless and Sarah Leach

June 9, 2023

LIVINGSTON COUNTY – The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several “parents’ rights” groups as extremist, including one group with a member leading the Livingston County GOP.

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing “parents’ rights” groups received the “extremist” designation in the SPLC’s annual report released Tuesday, June 6.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as “anti-government extremist groups” based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA TODAY. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they’re drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

”[The movement] is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools,” Corke said. “We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level.”

Jennifer Smith, who heads the Livingston County Chapter of Moms for Liberty, was elected chair of the Livingston County GOP in December to serve through 2023.

Smith has been a vocal opponent of quarantines, mask mandates and other public health policies discussed by school boards over the course of the pandemic.

The 12 new groups brought the total number of active extremist groups to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the SPLC designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That’s almost unchanged from 2021, when the SPLC counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate groups. The SPLC has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

But the SPLC has also been criticized for designating as extremist some groups that argue they simply take a political position, and has defended itself in lawsuits, including from immigration policy groups it has designated as anti-immigrant

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hate groups. (The organization is also currently fighting a lawsuit from Gavin McInnes, who founded the Proud Boys and who has argued the SPLC's hate group designation harmed his career.)

Moms for Liberty did not respond to USA TODAY's request for comment Tuesday. Smith did not respond to a request for comment from The Daily.

The report also has other findings, including that the so-called "militia movement" declined significantly last year, that antisemitism continues to be a major force animating the extreme far-right and that alternative tech sites aren't as niche as perhaps might be expected.

Moms for Liberty

Moms for Liberty has made headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The SPLC study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the "social-welfare" nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

The group pitched itself as a potent grassroots movement of outraged parents, many of whom weren't active in school politics until COVID-19 restrictions forced them to pay attention. It's sprouted local chapters in at least 40 states, claims more than 100,000 members and has the ear of the Republican establishment: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has championed their efforts to restrict teaching about race in schools and universities. Critics in Florida slam the group for turning schools into a political battlefield.

That influence solidified the group's position in national politics. At the end of this month, barely two years after the group came into existence, both DeSantis and former President Donald Trump will speak at Moms for Liberty's National Summit in Philadelphia and may now compete to win the Moms for Liberty vote.

Despite the national profile, these organizations spread conspiracy theories and operate on the myth that educators are engaged in "Marxist indoctrination" of the nation's children by imbuing them with dangerous ideas about equality and sexuality, the SPLC said.

Smith in Livingston County has been vocal since the onset of the pandemic.

In December 2021, she filed lawsuits against some members of the Brighton Area Schools Board of Education, alleging a school board subcommittee in charge of public health policies violated the Open Meetings Act. She later dropped the suits.

She's faced backlash in the news and on social media for comments made during BAS board meetings — which some found threatening.

Brighton resident Sarah Cross was granted a temporary personal protection order against Smith in late November after Cross advocated for tougher COVID-19 protocols in the district. When she believed a pair of school board members disparaged her, coughed in her direction and dismissed COVID-19 safety, she sought recalls against them.

Because of her COVID-19 stance and the recalls, Cross said Smith harassed her. She alleged Smith posted on social media that Cross was often alone while she collected recall signatures and that Smith and her husband allegedly drove by and made crude gestures to Cross while screaming insults at her.

The PPO was terminated in March after a judge said, although the harassment ended once the PPO was granted, there was no direct evidence to prove Smith was orchestrating the acts.

While the Moms for Liberty movement may be reasonably new, it's founded on the same traditional racist, misogynist and homophobic views that brought people out to protest the desegregation of schools in the 1950s and '60s, the SPLC argues.

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"Over the past two years, reactionary anti-student inclusion groups have been popping up from coast to coast, claiming to battle for parents' rights. Just like their predecessors, their rhetoric takes on marked anti-LGBTQ, racist and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographic segments of American society," the report states.

"These groups publicize their fight for alleged parents' rights while simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they oppose."

The primary focus of these groups has been twofold: They've fought against curriculums that teach about America's racist and violent history and have more recently taken aim at any educational efforts to teach children about LGBTQ issues. To attract attention and seek new followers, groups like Moms for Liberty promote the false claim that left-wing teachers and educators are engaged in a conspiracy to "sexualize" or even "groom" the schoolchildren under their care.

It's a narrative that's had significant success, the SPLC notes.

Moms for Liberty alone claims to have "flipped" 17 school boards nationwide to parental-rights supportive majorities, the report states. "Almost immediately following elections, many of these boards began making sweeping changes at school board meetings, such as firing superintendents and making curriculum changes," the researchers found.

"They have just been really successful in leveraging their relationships with school officials, and extremist groups, to put them kind of in a place where they can make sweeping changes for the majority of people, when they're actually in the minority," said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst at SPLC.

The SPLC's standard criteria for determining if a group is anti-government is spelled out on its website:

"An anti-government group is an organization or collection of individuals that — based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities — believes the federal government is tyrannical and traffics in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government of leftist elites seeking a 'New World Order.'"

The SPLC report notes that, at the group's first national conference, former U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said, "I personally think that the Department of Education should not exist," a quote the group then used on its website.

Moms for Liberty joins the ranks of the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the United Constitutional Patriots, a self-styled militia that "patrols" the U.S.-Mexico border.

The 12 "parents' rights" groups labeled by the SPLC as extremist groups include: Moms for Liberty; Moms for America; Army of Parents; Courage is a Habit; Education First Alliance; Education Veritas; No Left Turn in Education; Parents Against CRT (PACT); Parents Defending Education; Parents Rights in Education; Purple for Parents Indiana and Parents Involved in Education.

Other findings

The comprehensive annual SPLC report has a number of additional findings, including:

Extremist flyering and propaganda incidents continued to increase in 2022: The SPLC counted 155 incidents on campuses, 4,739 public propaganda incidents and 169 "banner drops" where groups hung hateful messages on banners in public spaces. Flyering incidents have increased 291 percent since 2018, the report found.

Hate at public events: As USA TODAY has reported, the SPLC found that hate groups have increasingly descended on public events, primarily targeting drag shows and school board meetings to protest against LGBTQ-inclusive programming.

The so-called "constitutional sheriffs" movement continues: In 2022, members of the group, who believe that local sheriffs are the highest authority in the country and are not beholden to state or federal law enforcement, began interfering with elections, the SPLC said. "Members melded their extremist positions with their law enforcement authority to investigate rogue, conspiratorial allegations of fraud in the 2020 presidential election and brought doubt into the legitimacy of the 2022 midterm elections," the report states. The movement has also been used to react to gun laws. Livingston County joined the

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fray in April in reaction to newly passed and proposed gun control laws in Michigan. Although such resolutions are symbolic and have no legal basis, they establish county officials' mindsets when it comes to enforcing and funding gun control measures passed by a higher legislative body.

Antisemitism continues to motivate the extremist far-right: "In 2022, Jewish people and spaces were regularly harassed, assaulted, vandalized and threatened," the report found.

— Contact executive editor Sarah Leach at sleach@livingstondaily.com. Follow her on Twitter @SentinelLeach.

---- Index References ----

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June 9, 2023

The right-wing, anti-gay movement has reached California schools. Thankfully, it's not Florida | Opinion

By Fabiola Santiago, Miami Herald

Now, unbelievably so, the third-most and largest Democratic state in the country is living its own “Don’t Say Gay” moment.

With the launch of Pride Month, a vocal minority of Californians have taken Florida-style, hate-fueled conservative grievances to two school district boards, the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale and Temecula, Southern California wine country.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second-largest system in the nation, a transgender teacher’s Pride flag was burned at an elementary school and a demonstration held to protest a Pride assembly.

Parents, including Mom for Liberty chapters, and school board conservatives are weaving the same “parental rights” vs gender-identity narrative that led to Florida’s explosion of book and curriculum restrictions at all educational levels, anti-transgender laws — and the whitewashing of Black history, even at universities.

But despite a vote in Temecula in favor of erasing inclusive education in grades 1 to 5, thankfully, this isn’t Gov. Ron DeSantis’ Florida.

Education leaders are speaking out and standing up to the gay-bashing.

”This is not the time when silence is an option,” Alberto Carvalho, the former Miami-Dade Schools superintendent, now in charge of Los Angeles Unified, told me. “Because what’s next, right? It starts with ostracizing, dehumanizing, humiliating the minority, whichever that minority is, and before you know it, the majority sees its rights gone, too.”

Although gaining chapters in California, Moms for Liberty, founded in Florida — and recently labeled an “extremist” group by the civil-rights watchdog Southern Poverty Law Center — is still seen as fringe by the mainstream.

Politicians are not eagerly embraced them — or, as happened in Miami-Dade — recruited to the task of political censorship by elected officials, one of the reasons the group is able to claim that they successfully helped turn anti-gay and anti-Black history views into law and School Board action.

READ MORE: Miami censors Amanda Gorman’s luminous poem. Will they ban José Martí, too? | Opinion

Not happening in Los Angeles, says Carvalho, where the gay community’s “place is not in a dark corner.”

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”It’s on stage with bright lights, and I’m deeply passionate about this. It’s part of our school system policy, our curriculum and our theory of action [to be inclusive at all grade levels],” he said.

”Treating immigrants as merchandise, as commodities that can be moved without consent or enacting policies against human beings because of who they are and who they love, that may be politically expedient for the short term, but for the long term it isn’t,” he added. “Times have changed already. That’s not the America we all want.”

This is why his leadership is sorely missed in Miami-Dade County Schools, unrecognizable under DeSantis’ anti-gay and anti-immigrant mandates.

”It breaks my heart,” Carvalho said. “I read the future well. I would have been their biggest target. Good people are being pushed out and left. So many great people are fearful, tormented and left behind.”

Newsom vs. DeSantis

In California, the anti-gay movement also has met with strong rejection from Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom.

”With hate on the rise nationally, we must rise together in California to affirm what both Pride month and immigrant heritage month represent — that in The Golden State, no matter who you are or what diverse community you are from, you belong,” Newsom said in a statement, referring to the DeSantis migrant flights to Sacramento and clashes in the two school districts over LGBTQ+ curriculum and Pride celebrations.

READ MORE: [By turning immigrants into crime victims for publicity, DeSantis guarantees their stay | Opinion](#)

Like every other state, California may have problems, like the housing affordability crisis, that go unsolved, but how refreshing it is to hear a unifying message instead of DeSantis’ dribble of lies and divisiveness for political purposes.

Californians in Sacramento will hear a mouthful of them when DeSantis visits June 19 for a “roundtable breakfast” fundraiser priced at \$3,300 per ticket.

Florida — once a battleground state where, only five years ago, politicians had to earn votes courting minorities, not dissing them — serves as a lesson on how quickly and fearlessly the right can push its message and win.

Newsom has his work cut out for him.

Temecula & Glendale anti-gay acts

In the Temecula Unified District, the School Board president led a move to strike LGBTQ+ discussions from elementary school curriculum and ban a biographical supplement about civil rights activist and San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, calling him a “pedophile.”

”Ignorant,” Newsom called the baseless claims about the first openly gay man elected to office in California and assassinated in 1978 at San Francisco’s City Hall.

California Gov. Garvin Newsom ‘ignorant’ tweet about Harvey Milk called ‘pedophile’ & book ban, ‘not Florida’

And on Wednesday, his office issued a joint-statement with California Attorney General Rob Bonta “urging” the Temecula Valley Unified School District Board of Education to provide information about its decision to reject the Social Studies Alive program in elementary school, a possible violation of the state’s FAIR Act.

” . . . our kids have the freedom to learn — and there are consequences for denying that freedom,” Newsom said, using the same “freedom” verbiage DeSantis manhandles to deny representation and civil rights.

”California,” Newsom added, “is closely watching the actions of malicious actors seeking to ban books, whitewash history,

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and demonize the LGBTQ+ community in Temecula and across the state. If the law is violated, there will be repercussions.”

Bravo.

It was about time somebody took on homophobia and prejudice without fear of political liability.

In Glendale, the fourth largest city in Los Angeles County, conservative groups wearing T-shirts that read “Leave Our Kids Alone” clashed with gay-rights defenders outside of a school board meeting in a brawl that led to three arrests after punches were thrown and pepper spray dispersed.

The issue: whether the school district would recognize June as Pride month.

Speakers debated how sex education and gender issues are handled under school policy. Some argued that LGBTQ+ children must feel safe and included. Some made the same arguments as Moms for Liberty in Florida, claiming that by discussing gender identity in classrooms educators are usurping parental rights.

Everyone was heard, but the school board voted in favor of a resolution designating June as LGBTQ+ Pride month for the fifth year in a row.

That’s because, unlike Florida — where only Democratic civil rights activists fought DeSantis and the rest of the people caved — in California, from the school board level to the governor’s office, elected officials and education leaders are eloquently verbalizing the obvious.

’False dichotomy’

There’s no question where the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education stands on gay issues, and following the burning of the teacher’s Pride flag at Saticoy Elementary in North Hollywood and a parents protest against a Pride school assembly, they took action.

All members not only voted in favor of, but also signed on as co-sponsors of board member Nick Melvoin’s resolution celebrating Pride Month and affirming support for the gay community.

Melvoin told local television station Fox 11 that he welcomes parental involvement and they should see how lessons are imparted “on the ground.” But he rejects the premise that sex and gender-identity education “sexualizes” and “grooms” students.

Similar cause-and-effect arguments were used in the 1960s and 70s to act against immigrant and Black families, he said.

He called the framing of issues as parent rights vs. inclusive education “a false dichotomy.”

”We need to prepare kids for the world as it exists and as it will be when they leave the schools,” Melvoin said. “. . . Talking about families and different types of families is an appropriate thing in our school communities. It’s about making kids ready for the world as it exists.”

Words — and a reality — DeSantis and Florida conservatives, with their heads stuck in sand, don’t want to hear.

---- Index References ----

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NewsRoom

These are the 20 books that Moms for Liberty sought to..., 2023 WLNR 20036837

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June 9, 2023

These are the 20 books that Moms for Liberty sought to remove from Wake school libraries

By T. Keung Hui, News & Observer

The Wake County chapter of Moms for Liberty filed challenges against 20 books that it says are not appropriate to be in school libraries.

The county school system has rejected all 189 challenges on the grounds that they were not filed by parents at those schools. The targeted books may include profanity and sexually explicit language and, in some cases, graphic sexual illustrations.

"We're talking 'Fifty Shades of Grey' or word-by-word instructional manuals for every kind of fetish that you can imagine for kids in school," Julie Page, the Wake County chapter chair of Moms for Liberty, claimed in an interview.

Here are the books that the group wants removed or placed in a section of the school library where parental consent would be needed before students could check out the material.

List of targeted books in Wake

- "All Boys Aren't Blue" by George M. Johnson. It's a memoir written by a queer, Black author who discusses growing up among a family with other queer members in it.
- "Blankets" by Craig Thompson. It's an autobiographical story of a young man coming of age in a rigorously fundamentalist Christian family.
- "Breathless" by Jennifer Niven. It's about an 18-year-old girl's summer romance on a remote island.
- "Doing It! Let's Talk About Sex" by Hannah Whitton. The book describes itself as a educational introduction to sex, as well as a guidebook for those who are already sexually active, with topics such as porn, contraception and sex shaming.
- "Flamer" by Mike Curato. It's a semi-autobiographical graphic novel about a young man coming to terms with his homosexuality.
- "Gender Queer: A Memoir" by Maia Kobabe. It's a graphic novel autobiography that explores Kobabe's path to identifying as nonbinary and asexual. It's been cited by North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson because of some illustrations of people having sex.

GRAPHIC CONTENT: NC Lt. Gov. responds to criticism of his LGBTQ comments
GRAPHIC CONTENT: Watch as North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson speaks at press conference in Raleigh Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021, where he says he is the

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target of hate and vitriol because his comments about LGBTQ people are being twisted.

- “Identical” by Ellen Hopkins. It’s a novel about 16-year-old twin sisters who’ve been the victims of sexual abuse and engage in drug abuse and self harm because of the pain they’ve experienced.
- “It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, Gender, and Sexual Health” by Robie H. Harris. The book is meant to teach children 10 and older about sexual health.
- “Jack of Hearts (and the parts)” by L.C Rosen. The novel is about a queer high school student who is stalked after starting a teen sex-advice column for an online site.
- “Jesus Land” by Julia Scheeres. The book is about the author’s experiences of attending a strict religious reform school in the Dominican Republic with her adopted brother.
- “Lawn Boy” by Jonathan Evison. It’s a coming-of-age story about a 22-year-old man who is growing up in poverty. It’s been challenged for scenes such as describing how two young boys engaged in oral sex while at a youth group gathering at their church.
- “Life Is Funny” by E.R. Frank. The novel traces the lives of 11 teenagers growing up in a Brooklyn neighborhood over a seven-year period as they experience a series of challenges.
- “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl” by Jesse Andrews. It’s about a teen who makes a movie about a classmate he’s befriended who has been diagnosed with leukemia.
- “Push” by Sapphire. The novel tells the story of a 16-year-old pregnant teen living in Harlem who was raped by her father.
- “Sex Plus: Learning, Loving, and Enjoying Your Body” by Laci Green. The book covers issues and concerns that go along with sexuality: anatomy, consent, LGBTQ issues, pregnancy prevention, sexual empowerment, healthy relationships and more, according to Harper Collins Publishers.
- “Shine” by Lauren Myracle. The novel follows a teenager who is investigating a hate crime involving the beating and near-death of her gay best friend in Black Creek in Wilson County.
- “This Book Is Gay” by Juno Dawson. The nonfiction book is intended as an instruction manual for those not finding answers to questions about gender, sex and sexuality.
- “Tricks” by Ellen Hopkins. The novel falls the stories of five teenagers who fall into the world of prostitution.
- “What Girls Are Made Of” by Elana K. Arnold. The novel is described as an examination of what it means to be a girl, a woman and a physical object as it follows the sexual experiences of a teenage girl.

lgbtq book grid.jpeg”All Boys Aren’t Blue,” “Gender Queer” and “Lawn Boy” are among 20 books that Moms for Liberty have asked the Wake County school system to remove from school libraries.

’It’s Perfectly Normal’

These 20 books often make annual lists of most banned books due to their content.

Page, of Moms for Liberty, said most of the challenges were sent to high schools, a few to middle schools and one to an elementary school for the book “It’s Perfectly Normal.”

Speakers regularly show up at Wake County school board meetings to read excerpts from books they say are too vulgar to be in the hands of students.

These are the 20 books that Moms for Liberty sought to..., 2023 WLNR 20036837

On Tuesday, Jessica Lewis, a parent and critic of the district, read excerpts about how to have sex from “It’s Perfectly Normal.” The book includes full-color illustrations of naked people performing sex acts.

”The book is teaching our children it is perfectly normal to have sex and then it’s OK to get an abortion,” Lewis said as illustrations from the book were held up at the board meeting. “Why, just why are you allowing books to target and sexualize our children? Why do 10-year-olds need to know how to have sex?”

A1mnxIXkJ0L.jpg”It’s Perfectly Normal” is one of the books that the local chapter of Moms for Liberty wants removed from Wake County school libraries. The group says the book is found in one elementary school and some middle schools and high schools.

Lewis accused the school board, teachers and librarians who allowed the book to be in school libraries to be “groomers.”

Questioning Pride Month

The Rev. John Amanchukwu read excerpts about how to have anal sex from “Jack of Hearts (and other parts)” at Tuesday’s board meeting.

Amanchukwu then directed his remarks to school board chair Lindsay Mahaffey for wishing people a “Happy Pride Month” at the start of the board meeting.

”Is that what you celebrate Lindsay?” Amanchukwu said. “Happy Pride month to what? ... Is that what you condone? Is that what you celebrate when you acknowledged Pride Month?”

His wife, Crystal Amanchukwu, also spoke out Tuesday against the book “Queer: The Ultimate LGBT Guide For Teens” that she said is found in some Wake high schools. A video of her speech posted by Libs of TikTok, a conservative Twitter account, had drawn more than 500,000 views by early Friday afternoon.

Michele Morrow, who lost her run for school board in November, also took aim at June being celebrated as Pride Month during her public comments.

”There’s no pride in perversion,” Morrow told the board.

While most speakers on Tuesday condemned the books, some speakers spoke in defense of the school board.

”While I am uncomfortable with some of the material that is being read right now, I’ve read some of the books that have been on some of the banned books lists across the country,” Robin Livingston, a parent, told the board. “I don’t find most of them too be inappropriate for a high school kid.”

---- Index References ----

Company: HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS LIMITED

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Harper Collins)

These are the 20 books that Moms for Liberty sought to..., 2023 WLNR 20036837

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June 9, 2023

Moms for Liberty files 189 Wake book challenges in past week. Why all were rejected.

By T. Keung Hui, News & Observer

Moms for Liberty, the group at the forefront of a national effort to get some books removed from schools, filed nearly 200 challenges in the past week about 20 books it says are too explicit for Wake County school libraries.

The school system rejected all the challenges, meaning the books will stay.

"Parents are not going to sit here and let this sexually explicit, vulgar, obscene and erotic and tell all how to do it everything sex rated stuff ... be in school libraries," Julie Page, a parent and chair of the Wake chapter of Moms for Liberty, said in an interview.

The Wake chapter filed 189 challenges on May 30-31 against 20 books, such as "Sex Plus: Learning, Loving, and Enjoying Your Body," "Gender Queer" and "Lawn Boy." The group claims the material in those books is vulgar, pornographic and not appropriate for students to read.

Page said she only filed challenges at the schools where she knew the books were located. Most of the challenges involved books in high school libraries.

In an email on Thursday to Page, Wake says the challenges are invalid because they weren't filed by parents at the individual schools where the books are. Allison Reid, Wake's acting chief technology officer, said it is "not tenable" that the use of a book at one school could be challenged by a parent from another school.

"Interpreting the policy and regulation to allow parents who do not have children in attendance at a particular school to file formal challenges and have a book removed from that school's media center would be unfair to the parents of students who do attend that school," Reid wrote.

"Interpreting the policy and regulation to allow any WCPSS parent to challenge any material used in any school would mean, in theory, that students could be denied access to a library book even if not a single student or parent at that school objected to its content."

The requests come as the school system is considering new rules that would limit how often book challenges can be filed. Previously, only five book challenges have been filed in Wake since 2021.

"I fully support their right as parents to not have their child read a book in the school library," Renee Sekel, a parent who has opposed the book challenge efforts, said in an interview. "What I do not support is them infringing on my right as a parent to have my child read books in the school library."

Moms for Liberty files 189 Wake book challenges in past..., 2023 WLNR 20033357

AP22259460753377.jpg"Gender Queer" is among the 20 books that Moms fo Liberty has asked the Wake County school system to remove from school libraries.

Moms for Liberty active nationally

Moms for Liberty members have spoken at school board meetings across the nation and in North Carolina.

This week, the Southern Poverty Law Center released a report that labeled Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist group." The organization has fired back, calling it a "leftist attack, political hit job," USA Today reported.

Earlier this school year, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system removed two books from some high school libraries following complaints from the Mecklenburg chapter of Moms for Liberty, the Charlotte Observer reported.

One of those books: "Sex Plus: Learning, Loving, and Enjoying Your Body" is among the 20 challenged by Moms for Liberty's Wake chapter. It's described by Harper Collins Publishers as a book that will "help you take control of your sex life."

School librarians, locally and nationally, have urged the public to trust their judgment in selecting the books that students can find.

"I can't believe I have to say this, but here it goes," Julie Stivers, the librarian of Mt. Vernon Middle School in Raleigh, said at an April school board meeting in Wake. "We are not, and I quote, 'peddlers of pornography.' I am a middle school librarian. I choose books that are a good age fit for middle school students."

Stivers was recently named the National School Librarian of the Year.

These are the 20 books that Moms for Liberty sought to remove from Wake school libraries

Criminal complaints and accusations of 'erotic smut'

Page says the efforts in Wake are a grassroots effort of concerned parents.

"We have minds of our own, and we decided to act on this," Page said. "We had no idea that this erotic smut was in K-12 public schools until the last couple of years."

Speakers now regularly read at school board meetings explicit excerpts from books that they want removed. On Tuesday, Dana Ramos read excerpts of scenes featuring vaginal and oral sex from "What Girls Are Made Of," a novel which tells the story of a teenage girl.

"Why is vulgar erotica in our schools for minors?" Ramos said. "Please explain how this has literary value or supplements academics?"

Page was among a group of people who in December 2021 filed criminal complaints accusing the Wake County school system of violating obscenity laws based on some of the books in school libraries. But Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman announced she would not file criminal charges.

Some Wake County parents want some books taken out of school librariesNine Wake County parents have filed criminal complaints against the Wake County Public School System over books that they believe are inappropriate and far too explicit for children of a certain age. Reported by our media partner, ABC11 News.

A month earlier, in November 2021, Page had filed a grievance asking the school system to remove those 20 books or to require parental consent before students could check them out from school libraries.

Moms for Liberty files 189 Wake book challenges in past..., 2023 WLNR 20033357

Book challenges rejected

Page said that she filed the individual challenges last week after Wake declined to handle them at a district level. Most of the challenges were sent to high schools, a few to middle schools and one to an elementary school for the book “It’s Perfectly Normal.”

”It’s been a culmination of 18 months of being pushed back and pushed off from their obligations as a school system to take up the issue in the way the policy outlines,” Page said. “It should never have come to this.”

Under the challenge process, the principal would have to form a committee to review requests. The committee’s decision can be appealed to the school board.

Among proposed revisions to the challenge process that the school board is considering would be that decisions are binding for two years before a new challenge could be filed again at a school against a previously challenged book there.

The updated policy explicitly says that challenges at the school level must be made by parents at that school. Page says that requirement isn’t listed in the current book challenge policy so any Wake parent can file a request.

But in Wake’s letter on Thursday, Reid gives multiple reasons why she says only school-level challenges can be filed by parents at that school. She said the school-based review committee looks at whether the challenged material “violates the constitutional or other legal rights of the parent or student.”

Reid said it’s not possible for a book at Fuquay-Varnia High’s library to violate the rights of a student who attends Richland Creek Elementary in Wake Forest.

”The policy and regulation are designed to allow parents to challenge instructional materials and media center books housed or used at the school their children attend,” Reid wrote.

”Unless the Board of Education decides to expand the scope of the policy to expressly allow any parent of any WCPSS student to challenge instructional materials or books found at any WCPSS, this is the final position of the WCPSS administration on this question.”

Page said Friday that she is reviewing the district’s email to determine what steps, if any, to take next.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER PUBLISHING COMPANY; WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS LIMITED

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); North Carolina (1NO26); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Mt. Vernon Middle School; Richland Creek Elementary; Board of Education; Charlotte Observer; Wake County Public School System; Southern Poverty Law Center; Harper Collins Publishers)

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NewsRoom

EDITORIAL: School superintendents suddenly scarce, 2023 WLNR 19998686

NewsRoom

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North Port Sun (North Port, FL)
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June 9, 2023

Section: Editorials

EDITORIAL: School superintendents suddenly scarce

Staff Writer

OUR POSITION: Political forces are changing, perhaps forever, the way people and prospective school employees think about education in Florida and it's not for the better.

Andrea Messina, executive director of the Florida School Boards Association, is familiar with the problem.

Messina, a former Charlotte County School Board member, was hired to lead a nationwide search for a new superintendent for Charlotte County Schools after Steve Dionisio announced his planned retirement. The job paid well. Charlotte County is considered a superior location to raise children and it's relatively affordable, with the obvious exception of housing.

The School Board has not been involved in any major controversies and Dionisio helped put the school system on track to make huge strides in graduation rates and its standing among the state's other school districts.

So why did Messina get only 19 applicants for such a normally juicy position? It's not just a Florida thing, Messina said in a Tampa Bay Times story. "Education is in a state of transition, and the most obvious single visual demonstration of change is a new superintendent," she said.

Charlotte ended up with a quality hire in Mark Vianello, former deputy superintendent and chief operations officer for Marion County Schools. But politics are playing too much of a role on the job of superintendent of schools. That has been obvious in Sarasota County where three board members elected last year - two of them new - tilted the board heavily conservative. Their first move was to fire a superintendent who had good reviews and had been all but praised by the candidates in interviews leading up to the election.

That is happening all over the nation. Florida's 67 school district have hired 61 new superintendents in four years. The issue, according to critics, is that school boards are not listening to parents. People want to change that.

One local group whose influence has spread nationwide is Moms for Liberty. The grassroots organization is a conservative coalition of parents who want to keep Critical Race Theory out of schools, protect children from being subjected to sexual orientation of any type and do that through book bans and threatening penalties for teachers.

Moms for Liberty was recently designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. A hate group designation would be a little extreme we believe. But the group makes no bones about its intentions to overhaul how children are being taught and wants to keep a tight grip on curriculum and LGBTQ+ issues. The SPLC said in The Daily Sun story, "schools are a primary target for locally driven extremist mobilization."

EDITORIAL: School superintendents suddenly scarce, 2023 WLNR 19998686

This kind of political activism in our schools cannot be dismissed as bad for students if it is well meaning and open to ideas from the community as a whole. But trying to force feed ideas and policies through a hand-picked superintendent can have a negative impact on school districts and students.

Sarasota County recently announced its four finalists for its new superintendent.

We can't pass judgment on people we have not personally interviewed. But we can look at their resumes and experience and tell you that a district as big and attractive as Sarasota County seemingly could have set the bar a little higher. Perhaps one of the final four will turn out to be an outstanding superintendent.

But there is no doubt the upheaval nationwide concerning expectations has taken a toll on people who trained and have waited for an opportunity to lead a school district.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Florida School Boards Association; Charlotte County School Board; Charlotte County Schools; Marion County Schools; Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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June 9, 2023

Section: News

Schools Superintendent Ryan Walters defends parental rights group labeled as extremist

Cheyenne Derksen

June 9, 2023

For the first time, the Southern Poverty Law Center designated the conservative organization Moms for Liberty as an extremist group. The update came this week in a report.

On Wednesday, Oklahoma's state schools Superintendent Ryan Walters issued a statement where he "wholeheartedly condemns the Southern Poverty Law Center's reckless and boneheaded comments toward mothers in Oklahoma."

"This is yet another example of left-wing extremism and their insidious methods of labeling moms engaged in their kids' education as public enemy number one," Walters said in the statement.

"I will never stop fighting for the good people of Oklahoma, especially a patriotic organization like Mom's for Liberty. I will always defend Oklahoma from the radical left and their obsession with our children."

The law center says the group is at the forefront of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks on schools, citing disruptions at school board meetings to combat inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ rights and what they see as inappropriate reading material in classrooms and libraries.

The Moms for Liberty website lists Walters as one of several speakers at its national summit later this summer in Philadelphia, and he previously appeared on a Moms for Liberty podcast this year.

The law center says it documented 523 hate and 702 anti-government extremist groups last year, totaling 1,225 active groups.

"In 2022, the hard-right movement succeeded in burrowing deeper into people's lives in visible and material ways, even if it did not have widespread electoral success," the law center says. "Its fingerprints are everywhere: people's homes, schools, doctors' offices, libraries, bars, restaurants, churches and other community spaces."

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Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85))

Schools Superintendent Ryan Walters defends parental rights..., 2023 WLNR 20072519

Industry: (Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Internet Media Content (1IN04); Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Oklahoma (1OK58); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Schools; Moms for Liberty; Mom's for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center) (Superintendent; Ryan Walters)

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June 9, 2023

Section: Opinion

Letters to the Editor

Air-quality crisis

Like most of the region on Thursday, our 13 school-based health centers in Philadelphia were on high alert. Because of the air-quality crisis, our most vulnerable asthmatic students were about to experience one of their worst days imaginable. As a June 8 op-ed by Daniel R. Taylor pointed out, asthmatic students are the most at risk from this air-quality crisis. Fortunately, some students have access to school-based health centers - facilities with medical providers embedded in schools, which focus on asthma because it is a leading cause of absenteeism. Unfortunately, not every student has that same opportunity available to them. As we see more instances of chronic absenteeism and academic slip post-pandemic, we need to embrace and amplify a proven strategy that works - school-based health centers.

Julie Cousler Emig, executive director, Education Plus Health, PA School-Based Health Alliance,
julie@educationplushealth.com

Attack on IRS

I read with interest the Republican efforts to cut a quarter of the \$80 billion targeted to improve the Internal Revenue Service's ability to provide better service, update its technology, and ensure that the wealthy pay their taxes. Years ago I was laid off from my job and needed employment. I took a job at the IRS service center in Northeast Philadelphia. Despite my reservations, I soon learned that the employees were dedicated, overworked, and extremely underpaid. I spent a year in the collections department. It was run by a handful of women, mothers whose children were grown and who were looking for a way to supplement their family income. They were responsible for enforcing tax collection for the entire East Coast and the Virgin Islands.

I learned that over the years the tax codes grew from a few regulatory books to dozens of volumes with arcane rules created for small groups of individuals and companies that had been awarded reduced or tax-free status because of intense, backdoor lobbying.

The current attacks on the IRS by these deadbeats and their paid lackeys in Congress are simply another attempt by tax cheats doing everything in their power to demonize a mostly fine government workforce and their ability to make them pay their fair share.

Paul Mercurio, Lafayette Hill

Time to shelve AI

Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 20020622

There is a Hollywood writers' strike that is getting very little attention these days, but a key sticking point is a serious concern that studios will use artificial intelligence to replace writers, and then only offer minimum salaries with no job security to humans who will then turn the AI scripts into something people will watch.

We have now seen that AI is not only not ready for prime time but downright dangerous. A lawyer used it to write a brief where the AI created precedents out of thin air. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association has noted that ChatGPT provides critical resources to people with serious problems only about 22% of the time. I asked it for lyrics to a song, and it just made them up.

This technology is no more ready to be out in public than teleportation, which exists in theory but cannot beam us up anywhere yet.

Hollywood will lose nothing by acceding to writers' demands for dignity, job security, and a fair wage.

Kenneth Gorelick, Wayne

A planning proposal

Fishtown and Kensington, like lots of other neighborhoods, are overdeveloped and exploited by developers. Here's an idea: Why doesn't the planning commission create financial incentives to encourage growth in underdeveloped areas? One way could be for start-up businesses and small companies valued under \$1 million to be given a five-year business tax abatement.

New zoning codes could initiate residential and business empowerment zones for specific establishments. Zoning incentives and grants could deter businesses from moving to and settling down in nearby counties.

Frank T. Brzozowski, Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee, Philadelphia

Mütter Museum's mission

I was deeply saddened to read the June 3 article about the change of mission at the Mütter Museum. It is clear that the Mütter's new leaders, college president and CEO Mira Irons and Executive Director Kate Quinn, lack a fundamental understanding of what makes the museum a unique and special Philadelphia treasure. Shifting the mission of the museum to "health and well-being" sets this 160-year-old institution on a path to bland, sanitized mediocrity.

The displays can be hard to look at, but they operate on multiple levels in the way they weave biology, anatomy, medical history, and social history together.

If ever there was a place that isn't broken and doesn't need fixing, it is the Mütter. It should be viewed as a place we take care of and pass on to the next generation.

Michael Grothusen, Erdenheim

Saddled with college debt

I thought Wednesday's letter on college debt forgiveness was particularly narrow-minded and harsh. It's a "shape up or ship out" mentality. The writer equates choosing a college with shopping around for the best deal on a new car. Not quite the same thing. What is not mentioned is how college costs have ballooned exponentially over the past decade or so, a lot of it caused by expanded university administrations whose members enjoy high salaries. Students in many countries pay little or no tuition for a college education, thus are not burdened with large loans when they graduate. We are a wealthy country and surely can afford to support college education to a much greater degree than we do today.

Barry Juran, Philadelphia

Moms for Liberty

Letters to the Editor, 2023 WLNR 20020622

I applaud the efforts of employees of the Museum of the American Revolution and other groups to attempt to stop the summit planned by Moms for Liberty at the museum. Moms for Liberty is foremost a hate group that embraces disdain for the LGBTQ community. It pretends that its stated quest to protect children is its core desire. It does this by forcing schools to ban books it deems offensive and to not teach curriculum that exposes its bigotry. It is no coincidence that the books and curriculum it attacks deal with gender identity, racial inequality, and inclusion. Why doesn't it put its efforts behind commonsense gun control? In my lifetime, I have never heard of a book or course of study that attacked and killed children as they sat in their classrooms.

It is with the same breath that I criticize the museum's board for allowing the event to take place. The board said that "rejecting visitors on the basis of ideology would be antithetical to our purpose." So when the Nazis and the Proud Boys and the KKK come for a permit, are they going to be let in, too?

Jim Lynch, Norristown

Lost cause

In 1502, Pope Alexander VI ordered the burning of all books questioning papal authority. It was a futile attempt to stem the rising tide of new thought exploding across Europe. In the 20th century, the edicts of Popes Pius XI and Paul VI rejecting birth control for Catholics was another hopeless attempt to keep modern thought and contemporary morality back from their natural course. In both cases, as in numerous other examples that could be cited, the old way of thinking simply couldn't stop the changes occurring in society. It was too late and just too unpopular.

Today's version of this self-proclaimed piety lives in the voices and actions of those like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and extreme right-wing Republicans in power in places such as Tennessee, Florida, and Texas (and the Central Bucks School District). They speak of freedom for some, like parents of school-age children, while making it their mission to limit it for others. Just as they couldn't stop Elvis from gyrating on stage in the 1950s, so, too, will their current attempts fail.

Joseph Goldberg, Philadelphia

---- **Index References** ----

Company: Central Bucks School District; Internal Revenue Service

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Business Management (1BU42); Corporate Events (1CR05); Education (1ED85); Executive Personnel Changes (1EX23); HR & Labor Management (1HR87); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55))

Industry: (Allergy & Immunology (1AL96); Asthma (1AS17); Entertainment (1EN08); Respiratory & Pulmonary (1RE29); Upper Respiratory Disease (1UP05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Congress; Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee; Moms for Liberty; Central Bucks School District; Internal Revenue Service)

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NewsRoom

Hanover school district removes 'gender identity' from..., 2023 WLNR 19918923

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Hanover school district removes 'gender identity' from disputed parental notice policy Hanover schools rewrote a controversial policy that would have violated a child's right to privacy after the state Attorney General sued them.

Mary Ann Koruth, NorthJersey.com

A North Jersey school district has rewritten a controversial policy after critics argued it would have violated a child's right to privacy and the state Attorney General sued the district.

Hanover Township school district in Morris County announced Tuesday that it "substantially" revised and replaced a new "parental notice" policy.

The policy violated the state's law against discrimination by requiring teachers to "out" LGBTQ+ kids, according to the lawsuit brought two weeks ago by the Office of Civil Rights in the state Attorney General's office.

The original policy laid out criteria which teachers were expected to use to inform parents about concerning behavior exhibited by their children related to a range of problems, such as eating disorders and depression, but also sexual orientation and gender identity.

At a court hearing on May 30, Morris County assignment judge Stuart Minkowitz tended to agree with the state's position but did not grant the temporary injunction it requested. Instead, he suggested both parties to work together and rewrite the policy so parents' rights to be involved in their children's lives was maintained while staying within the confines of the law.

The revised policy has removed criteria and examples of situations that staff could report, including any mention of gender identity and sexual orientation. It can be read [here](#).

Asked to comment on the revised language, the Attorney General's office said it would continue to protect gay and transgender students from harmful policies. It said in a statement that Hanover Township had passed the revised policy "on an emergency basis" on Monday and would cast a final vote next week.

"On Monday, June 6, 2023, the Hanover Township Board of Education passed, on an emergency basis, a new parental notification policy. The new policy is up for a final vote on Tuesday, June 13, 2023," the office of the Attorney General said. "The Attorney General's application for injunctive relief remains pending," and it would continue "to protect LGBTQ+ students from any policy that unlawfully targets or adversely affects their health, safety and well-being due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression," it said.

School superintendent Michael Wasko told NorthJersey.com that he could not comment because of pending litigation, when asked if the district worked with the state to craft its new policy.

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Board members also did not tell meeting attendees on Tuesday if the new policy was created with input from the state after Fern Wolkin, a member of the Hanover Township Democratic Committee, asked them during public comment at the meeting.

Staff must 'take necessary steps' to inform parents

The revised policy requires all staff members to “take necessary steps” and “promptly inform a student’s parent(s) whenever a student discloses an issue and/or exhibits behaviors that may have an adverse impact” on their well-being.

Much of this ground is already covered by state laws around harassment, intimidation and bullying, which require teachers to report incidents that could result in harm to a student.

Gender identity in particular is considered confidential information if a child decides to discuss it with a teacher or counselor.

More: NJ attorney general sues Hanover school district over policy on LGBTQ students

Parents who thanked the board for revising the policy also criticized the older version for describing gender identity and sexual orientation as possible areas of concern for parents.

A smaller number praised the original policy for working to support what they call “parental rights” in their children’s education, a movement supported by conservative groups such as Moms For Liberty, which has a chapter in Morris County, and endorsed two candidates on the Hanover Township’s school board.

Meanwhile, the Morris County court has scheduled a status conference for June 13 at 9:30 a.m. between both parties.

New policy did 'a better job' at balance

The revised policy did “a better job” of “balancing the student’s privacy rights with the parents’ interest in being informed of behavior,” said attorney Paul Barger, who specializes in education law. However, though it is intended to improve parental involvement in their children, it could have the opposite effect, he said.

”There remains a concern, however, about whether a student would be willing to approach a trusted staff member about an issue given the policy language,” he said. “If a student believes disclosing information results in the staff member having no choice but to report the information to the family, that student will be reluctant to share information.”

The policy could also cause disagreements between staff and administrators on what sort of issues they are expected to notice and report, Barger said — a warning offered also by Judge Minkowitz last week. He said the policy would fuel subjective decisions on the part of school staff.

Whippany resident and parent Karen Mascolo told the board she strongly supported parental involvement and transparency but opposed the original policy, calling it “vague” and “subjective,” and that it put teachers “at risk” of making wrong decisions.

”I’m disappointed that discriminatory criteria were put into the original policy,” she said. “I want my children to trust their teachers and learn in an environment without fearing repercussions.”

The board of education is supposed to be “non-partisan” and “meet the need of all students, teachers and families,” she said. “It is clear that is not the case right now.” Mascolo asked the board to focus on educating kids and not on controversial issues.

A few speakers defended the original policy as it was written. Parents were “the front line of defense” for their children, said one Whippany resident.

The schools were effectively prohibiting parents from being involved in their children’s lives and telling kids to “to keep secrets from their parents,” she said.

Hanover Democratic Committee member Fern Wolkin spent several minutes reading the new policy into the record during

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public comment because the board did not do so. "I have no faith" she told the board, and questioned their reasons for rewriting the policy, because the earlier version seemed designed to expose LGBTQ+ kids.

This article originally appeared on NorthJersey.com: Hanover school district removes 'gender identity' from disputed parental notice policy

---- Index References ----

Company: THE MORRIS COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

News Subject: (Consumer Privacy (1CO05); Consumer Protection (1CO43); Data Privacy & Protection (1DA12); Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Hanover school district; Hanover Township school district; Office of Civil Rights; Hanover Township Board of Education; Hanover Township Democratic Committee; Moms For Liberty; Hanover Democratic Committee; Morris County)

Keywords: (Hanover, NJ,K-12 education,LGBTQ Issues)

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NewsRoom

Ziegler defends Moms for Liberty, 2023 WLNR 19974406

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June 9, 2023

Section: News

Ziegler defends Moms for Liberty Southern Poverty Law Center labels it extremist

Steven Walker

June 9, 2023

In response to the Southern Poverty Law Center's labeling of Moms For Liberty as an extremist group, Bridget Ziegler, the chair of the Sarasota School Board and one of the group's co-founders, questioned the organization's credibility, calling the label "reckless."

Moms for Liberty, a right-wing activist group founded in Florida by Ziegler and former Brevard County School Board member Tina Descovich, and 11 other groups were labeled by the Southern Poverty Law Center as "anti-government extremist groups," according to a report released by the group Tuesday. The group has been active in Sarasota's School Board politics and policies, endorsing two of the three conservative board candidates in August's election and having members speak at various school board meetings in support of parental rights in education.

The SPLC, a civil rights advocacy nonprofit organization, detailed the new designations in its annual 2022 Year in Hate and Extremism report. The SPLC's standard criteria for determining if a group is anti-government is spelled out on its website:

"An anti-government group is an organization or collection of individuals that — based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities — believes the federal government is tyrannical and traffics in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government of leftist elites seeking a 'New World Order.'"

When asked for comment in response to the label, Ziegler told the Herald-Tribune she felt the SPLC had no merit, and called the label "laughable."

"The Southern Poverty Law Group is not a legitimate organization with any merit," Ziegler said. "Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there's no credibility behind it. It's truly laughable."

She said other organizations have sued the SPLC for defamation and she hopes the organizations labeled in the report challenge them legally.

"They're utilizing the term hate group in a very reckless manner and I think that they should be held accountable," she said.

The SPLC did not label the organization a hate group, but added it to a list of "anti-government" extremist groups. That puts them in the company of groups such as the Oath Keepers.

Ziegler defends Moms for Liberty, 2023 WLNR 19974406

The SPLC paid \$3.38 million and issued public apologies to Maajid Nawazan, an Islamic activist and the founder of the Quilliam Foundation, to avoid a defamation lawsuit after the SPLC labeled him and others as “anti-Muslim extremists.”

Alexis Spiegelman, the Sarasota chapter chair of Moms for Liberty, said the mission of the group is to protect parental rights in education, which she said were “God-given and fundamental.”

”You’d have to ask, what kind of government are (SPLC) advocating for? Because we’re just pushing back against government overreach and a tyrannical form of government that does not align with our founding principles or constitution,” she said.

Spiegelman said the SPLC can expect continued advocacy from Moms for Liberty, regardless of labels.

”If they think that using the Saul Alinsky-style method of the ad hominem is going to stop parents from advocating for their children, they’re wrong,” Spiegelman said.

The 12 new groups added to the SPLC’s roundup brought the total number of active “extremist” groups listed in the 2022 report to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the SPLC designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That’s almost flat from 2021 when the SPLC counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate groups. The SPLC has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty has hit the headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The SPLC study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the coronavirus pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the “social-welfare” nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

The group pitched itself as a potent grassroots movement of outraged parents, many of whom weren’t active in school politics until COVID-19 restrictions forced them to pay attention. It has sprouted local chapters in at least 40 states, claims more than 100,000 members and has the ear of the Republican establishment: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has championed their efforts to restrict teaching about race in schools and universities. Critics in Florida slam the group for turning schools into a political battlefield.

That influence solidified the group’s position in national politics. At the end of this month, barely two years after the group came into existence, both DeSantis and former President Donald Trump will speak at Moms for Liberty’s national summit in Philadelphia and may now compete to win the Moms for Liberty vote.

Despite the national profile, these organizations spread conspiracy theories and operate on the myth that educators are engaged in “Marxist indoctrination” of the nation’s children by imbuing them with dangerous ideas about equality and sexuality, the SPLC said.

While the movement may be reasonably new, it is founded on the same traditional racist, misogynist and homophobic views that brought people out to protest the desegregation of schools in the 1950s and ‘60s, the SPLC argues.

”Over the past two years, reactionary anti-student inclusion groups have been popping up from coast to coast, claiming to battle for parents’ rights. Just like their predecessors, their rhetoric takes on marked anti-LGBTQ, racist and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographic segments of American society,” the report states. “These groups publicize their fight for alleged parents’ rights while simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they

Ziegler defends Moms for Liberty, 2023 WLNR 19974406

oppose.”

The primary focus of these groups has been twofold: They have fought against curriculums that teach about America’s racist and violent history and have more recently taken aim at any educational efforts to teach children about LGBTQ issues. To attract attention and seek new followers, groups like Moms for Liberty promote the false claim that left-wing teachers and educators are engaged in a conspiracy to “sexualize” or even “groom” the schoolchildren under their care.

It’s a narrative that has had significant success, the SPLC notes.

Moms for Liberty alone claims to have “flipped” 17 school boards nationwide to parental-rights supportive majorities, the report states. “Almost immediately following elections, many of these boards began making sweeping changes at school board meetings, such as firing superintendents and making curriculum changes,” the researchers found.

In Sarasota, Moms for Liberty-backed candidates helped overturn the ideological makeup of the school board, where a new, conservative-leaning board took over and immediately moved to fire the sitting superintendent Brennan Asplen.

This story includes reporting from USA TODAY reporter Will Carless.

Follow Herald-Tribune Education Reporter Steven Walker on Twitter at @swalker_7. He can be reached at sbwalker@gannett.com.

inside

Civil rights group links far-right extremists, hardline laws in Florida. 10C

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SPLC PLUS TEACHERS UNION IDEOLOGY EQUALS MORE DISPARAGEMENT

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SPLC PLUS TEACHERS UNION IDEOLOGY EQUALS MORE DISPARAGEMENT

WASHINGTON, DC

The following information was released by Capital Research Center (CRC):

by Michael Watson

June 8, 2023

In 2021, Republicans swept to power in Virginia, riding a popular wave rejecting their opponents' commitment to the teachers unions' agenda of critical race theory-inspired instruction, COVID-19 mask mandates and school closures, and dismissal of parents' involvement in their children's education. During the buildup to this political rout, the Biden administration Justice Department proposed at school board meetings as "domestic terrorists." The resulting firestorm almost brought down the National School Boards Association, which had encouraged the administration to take such action.

This week, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) showed it had learned nothing from the examples of Virginia and the NSBA. Instead, the controversial (to put it mildly) left-wing watchdog of extremism and "hate groups" formally designated 12 conservative parents' advocacy groups as "anti-government extremist groups" in its latest annual report. Two of the most prominent of these groups are Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education.

It's Just Politics

Unsurprisingly, the SPLC is again wielding its self-appointed power to identify "hate groups" to target peaceful and mainstream opponents of left-wing ideology. This is entirely expected and aligns with the group's traditional practices.

As the Heritage Foundation's Daily Signal reports:

The SPLC long has demonized conservative Christian groups such as Alliance Defending Freedom as "anti-LGBT hate groups," national security groups such as the Center for Security Policy as "anti-Muslim hate groups," and immigration groups such as the Center for Immigration Studies as "anti-immigrant hate groups."

Essentially, if an organization opposes any part of the SPLC's left-wing agenda, it makes itself liable to a hate-group or extremist designation alongside the remnants of the Ku Klux Klan. The SPLC's own statements about the most recently designated groups suggest this. According to USA Today, SPLC's annual report included:

Moms for Liberty alone claims to have "flipped" 17 school boards nationwide to parental-rights supportive majorities, the report states. "Almost immediately following elections, many of these boards began making sweeping changes at school board meetings, such as firing superintendents and making curriculum changes," the researchers found.

SPLC PLUS TEACHERS UNION IDEOLOGY EQUALS MORE DISPARAGEMENT

”They have just been really successful in leveraging their relationships with school officials, and extremist groups, to put them kind of in a place where they can make sweeping changes for the majority of people, when they’re actually in the minority,” said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst at SPLC.

If I am reading this correctly, SPLC is complaining that Moms for Liberty supported candidates for public office and that those candidates kept their promises to the voters when they took office. And while SPLC may claim that the elected candidates “[are] actually in the minority,” those who unseated candidates backed by teachers unions actually overcame known structural advantages that the teachers unions’ candidates enjoy in school board elections.

A Funny Definition of Democracy

So according to the SPLC, engaging in the constitutional rights of self-government constitutes being an “anti-government extremist group.” Perhaps the modern left-wing is revealing their own curious definition of democracy, which might loosely be characterized as “democracy is when liberals win, and the more the liberals win the more democratic it is,” regardless of constitutional procedure.

With this revealed definition, many apparent incongruities begin to make sense. In this bizarro upside-down world, the Supreme Court is anti-democratic to return abortion policy to the state and federal legislators because the left-wing agenda did not win. Similarly, the National Labor Relations Board would be acting democratically if it supersedes secret-ballot votes by fiat. Yet Republicans in the House of Representatives seeking policy concessions in return for their votes to raise the debt ceiling constitutes anti-democratic hostage-taking. But using corporate leverage to enact ESG policies that the people’s elected representatives choose not to pursue is obviously democratic since the liberals win.

Big Money for Big Liberalism

The Southern Poverty Law Center does not corporately experience poverty. It has extremely deep-pockets, despite a wave of scandals that led to the 2019 ouster of SPLC chief trial counsel Morris Dees and the resignation of then-president Richard Cohen. SPLC annual revenue still reaches nine figures, and its assets are just shy of \$700 million. Its donors have included many major names of liberal Big Philanthropy, such as the Heising-Simons Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation. SPLC is a big-money operation and maintains assets in the Cayman Islands, a notorious tax shelter.

SPLC plays a key role in the liberal infrastructure: It serves to formally disqualify and discredit the opponents of social liberalism, and it has for decades. Thus, opposition to “COVID-19 public safety measures in schools” and “any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities” is designated “anti-government extremism.” Never mind the “safety measures” were pointless and SPLC’s “any inclusive curriculum” claim is misleading, since curriculums in states like Florida require teaching subjects like African-American history.

The Left presumes to decree what is and is not scientific (according to what fits the left-wing narratives), and all must “follow the science.”

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June 9, 2023

Arkansas' education boss to speak at Moms for Liberty convention

Michael Tilley

Jun 09, 2023

Arkansas Education Secretary Jacob Oliva is speaking this summer at the national convention of Moms for Liberty, a group recently identified as an “extremist” group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for its racist and homophobic ideas and partnering with militia groups.

Florida-based Moms for Liberty was founded in early 2021 primarily to push back against mask and vaccine mandates in public schools. The group has quickly grown its membership and political reach, and is now active in pushing schools and libraries to ban LGBTQ+ books, blocking discussions of the gay and transgender community in schools, working to block education about race history, and partnering with militia groups like the Proud Boys to pressure school boards and other political bodies. The group is also active in working to elect members and supporters on public school boards.

Moms for Liberty organizers said at their first national convention in July 2022 that they had almost 200 chapters in 37 states with around 100,000 members.

The Montgomery, Ala.-based Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) recently labeled Moms for Liberty as an “extremist” group in its “The Year in Hate & Extremism 2022” report. The SPLC likened the nascent organization as being similar to many of those created after the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown V. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that required integration of U.S. public schools.

”Segregationist parents did not relent and side-stepped *Brown v. Board* through self-titled ‘school choice’ that made it possible for parents who were allowed to maintain their racist values by sending their children to private Christian academies. Some 3,500 white, racially discriminatory church-based schools sprung up in the wake of *Brown v Board*,” according to the SPLC. “Today’s so-called parental rights activists have also copied and pasted from the scripts of past groups, adapting old racist and homophobic ideas, as well as conspiracy theories asserting Marxist indoctrination. They are now adding a dash of QAnon rhetoric, accusing progressives of attempting to groom and sexualize children.”

The SPLC said Moms for Liberty has helped support the rise of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, noting that 84 anti-student inclusion bills were pre-filed or introduced in 26 states by the end of 2022.

Moms for Liberty co-founder Bridget Ziegler dismissed the SPLC label.

”Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there’s no credibility behind it. It’s truly laughable,” Ziegler said in a story posted by USA Today.

Arkansas' education boss to speak at Moms for Liberty convention, 2023 WLNR 20043469

Kimberly Mundell, director of communications for the Arkansas Department of Education, said Oliva's purpose at the convention is to simply share what Arkansas is doing through the recently approved LEARNS Act.

"The education transformation we are embracing in Arkansas serves as a blueprint for the nation, not only for its emphasis on early literacy and improving learning for all students, but also for empowering parents with educational choice options for their child. We welcome this opportunity to share our efforts with stakeholders around the country," noted the ADE statement.

The LEARNS Act is Gov. Sarah Sanders' signature education legislation. Implementation of the new law has been blocked with a temporary restraining order based on a legal challenge alleging the legislation was not properly approved by the Arkansas Legislature.

Among its many provisions, the LEARNS Act creates "education freedom accounts" giving families access to about \$7,000 for non-public school options that otherwise would have gone to the public schools where their children would have attended. It also increases the minimum teacher salary from \$36,000 to \$50,000 and provides every teacher a \$2,000 raise.

When the office of Gov. Sarah Sanders was asked to comment about Oliva's participation at the convention, her spokeswoman Alexa Henning referred Talk Business & Politics to the following Sanders tweet: "Nothing scares Joe Biden more than parents defending their kids. His allies just labeled concerned moms and dads 'anti-government extremists.' He can smear parents all he likes but we are not giving up the fight for our kids' future."

Other speakers at the Moms for Liberty national convention in Philadelphia include former President Donald Trump, Florida Governor and U.S. presidential candidate Ron DeSantis, and former South Carolina Governor and U.S. presidential candidate Nikki Haley.

The post Arkansas' education boss to speak at Moms for Liberty convention appeared first on Talk Business & Politics.

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NewsRoom

Book ban debate plays into deepening divides. Are we..., 2023 WLNR 19972747

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June 9, 2023

Book ban debate plays into deepening divides. Are we either ‘fascists’ or ‘groomers’? What’s happening at school libraries are not book bans. No one is saying stop publishing them. Rather, the questions are about what’s appropriate.

Ingrid Jacques, USA TODAY

As an English major, I love books. I always have. And I’m continually adding to my collection, which becomes obvious (and daunting) whenever we have to move.

So when I hear about book bans, I pay attention. Such rhetoric has dominated the headlines lately.

Yet, that is what’s at the heart of many of these heated discussions: rhetoric – not reality.

What books should be on the shelves of school libraries has become the epicenter of the country’s culture wars. With that, rationality has gone out the window.

If you oppose graphic sexual content on classroom shelves, you’re not just a concerned parent: You’re a “fascist.” And if you advocate for any book addressing LGBTQ themes? You’re a “groomer.”

Surely, there’s more nuance to be had in these debates.

Parents’ group Moms for Liberty labeled ‘extremists’

Maybe not.

This week, the nonprofit group Moms for Liberty – composed of moms who are concerned about what’s going on in their children’s classrooms – was ridiculously slapped with the “extremist” label by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

It’s beyond a stretch to say that these parents are all “haters.”

”I get a little bit irritated with those who are trying to conflate legitimate concerns about age appropriateness with an anti-LGBTQ stance,” Robert Pondiscio, a senior fellow in K-12 education at the American Enterprise Institute, told me. “I think it’s really important to be kind of clear that those are not the same thing.”

Who knows what’s best for kids? Hint: Biden and Democrats don’t think it’s parents

Moms for Liberty, which gained national prominence during school lockdowns for COVID-19, is an effective advocate at the local level in calling attention to books and curriculum that might not be suitable for children.

What started as a grassroots campaign among parents has caught the attention of leading 2024 Republican presidential

Book ban debate plays into deepening divides. Are we..., 2023 WLNR 19972747

contenders, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump.

DeSantis has risen in prominence in large part because of the stances he has taken against “woke” ideology being taught in schools.

Given the political implications, don’t expect the rhetoric to calm down anytime soon.

”That’s really the problem with this discussion is people retreat to their ideological priors and refuse to exercise the kind of common sense and adult discernment that would have just been obvious and unremarkable in any other time,” Pondiscio said.

These aren’t ‘book bans’

I realize it’s a lot to ask, but it would be nice if accurate language were applied to these “book banning” disputes. Because let’s be clear: What’s happening at school libraries are not book bans. All the books up for debate are all very much available to anyone who wants them. No one is saying stop publishing them altogether.

Editing history: The thought police come for Roald Dahl and Ian Fleming. Better buy the books you want now.

Rather, the questions revolve around what’s appropriate for elementary or middle school children and whether a book deserves a place on a classroom or school library shelf.

If the definition of a book ban were that a library didn’t have the book in its catalog, then 99.9% of all books would effectively be banned.

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Libraries and bookstores curate what they want to highlight, so it only makes sense that parents would be involved in making selections that reflect their school communities’ values.

Let’s calm down with the hyperbole

Unfortunately, the word “ban” is thrown around to elicit outrage when it’s not justified. That’s what happened recently when a Florida school allegedly “banned” poet Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb,” which has been published as a short book.

I know the definition of “ban” is already somewhat flexible but surely there are better words to describe a book being moved from one section of the school library to... another section of the same library pic.twitter.com/x3iedHKtA1

— Kat Rosenfield (@katrosenfield) May 24, 2023

When the facts came out, however, the story was much less sensational. The book was always still available to middle school students, just with some limits to elementary students. The school has stated that the book remains widely accessible.

In other words, much ado about nothing.

How can they think that’s OK?: Progressives want to ban Amy Coney Barrett’s book

Similarly, PEN America, which advocates for writers, including poets and novelists, has raised the alarm that “banning” is at an all-time high. A report from last year claims that more than 2,500 books were banned in public schools in the 2021-22 school year.

It sounds alarming, if true.

But it’s not, according to an investigation from The Heritage Foundation, which looked at the online card catalogs of the school districts in question. It found that 74% of the books identified by PEN America are in fact available to students.

The books the Heritage scholars most often couldn’t find include “Gender Queer,” “Flamer,” “Lawn Boy,” “Fun Home” and

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“It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health,” which are among the most frequently challenged because of their sexual and graphic content.

”Determining what books are age-appropriate and educationally valuable enough to be purchased and kept in school libraries is inherently contentious even among well-intentioned people,” Heritage’s researchers wrote. “But having a productive process for adjudicating these disputes is rendered impossible by false and hysterical claims from organizations like PEN America that there is ‘widespread censorship in America.’”

Therein lies the problem.

This kind of inflated rhetoric ironically does a disservice to the ones this debate is supposed to be about: your kids.

Ingrid Jacques is a columnist at USA TODAY. Contact her at ijacques@usatoday.com or on Twitter: [@Ingrid_Jacques](https://twitter.com/Ingrid_Jacques)

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The SPLC called out extremists targeting schools. Then..., 2023 WLNR 19986053

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June 9, 2023

The SPLC called out extremists targeting schools. Then came a melee at California school board.

The SPLC takes on parents' rights. A Proud Boy is arrested. A big new report on the military. It's the week in extremism across the U.S.

Will Carless, USA TODAY

As school board meetings across the country have grown heated and even violent, the Southern Poverty Law Center threw down a gauntlet Monday, designating 12 so-called "parents rights" groups as anti-government extremist groups, including nationally influential Florida-based Moms for Liberty. Meanwhile, a school board meeting in Glendale, California, descended into brawls and arrests during a Pride Month discussion. In St. Louis, a prominent Proud Boy is accused of rape. And a new study shows a strong correlation between military service and domestic extremism.

It's the week in extremism.

But first, this week's breaking news

As of Thursday evening, former President Donald Trump had been indicted on charges related to handling of classified documents, according to a person briefed on the case.

When those files were first seized by the FBI last year in a raid at Trump's Mar-a-Lago home in Florida, a backlash spread across the extremist right wing. At least one man died after an armed standoff with agents. Experts worried at the time about the spike in anti-government rhetoric, which had echoes on 1990s-era unrest over events such as the Waco, Texas, standoff.

But Trump's previous indictment on state charges in New York didn't trigger a major outpouring of new protests. What happens in response to these federal charges? We'll be watching.

'Kill FBI on sight': Truth Social reveals the final days of an attacker

Moms for Liberty designated an extremist group by SPLC

On Monday, the Southern Poverty Law Center designated the Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty as an extremist anti-government group in its annual Year in Hate and Extremism report. The move elicited anger and disparagement from Moms for Liberty and conservative commentators.

From USA TODAY: SPLC lists a key Florida "parents' rights" group as anti-government extremists

Moms for Liberty and 11 other groups were added to the SPLC's list of 702 antigovernment groups across the country. They join the ranks of armed so-called "militia" groups like the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters. The designation sparked scorn from Moms for Liberty co-founder Bridget Ziegler. "Outside of it being a leftist attack, political hit job, there's no credibility behind it. It's truly laughable," Ziegler told the USA TODAY Network. The comprehensive annual report also noted the "militia" movement is faltering, "alt-tech" sites that cater to the far-right are booming, as is the spreading of extremist

The SPLC called out extremists targeting schools. Then..., 2023 WLNR 19986053

propaganda, and antisemitism is still rampant across the country. SPLC is one of the most well-known groups monitoring extremism. But its rankings are sometimes controversial and have drawn lawsuits in the past.

Glendale school board meeting on Pride descends into chaos

A school board meeting in suburban Los Angeles, where board members planned to discuss a resolution to recognize June as Pride Month, descended into chaos and brawls on Tuesday, resulting in at least three arrests. The melee happened after the Glendale school district warned that parents have been primed with disinformation about the district's approach to teaching about LGBTQ issues, sex education and trans rights.

The anti-school board propaganda circulating "includes disinformation about LGBTQIA+ curriculum, sex education and supporting transgender and gender non-conforming youth," the Glendale Unified School District said in the statement. Videos from the Glendale protests showed several scraps between the hundreds of pro- and anti-LGBTQ protestors. Local police said they attempted to de-escalate the situation, and arrested at least three individuals who were using pepper spray and obstructing officers.

The bigger picture? For the last two years or more, public forums related to LGBTQ issues have become a primary focus of the extremist far-right, which focuses on how those intersect with children in ways real or imagined. That includes events like all-ages drag shows or school board discussions.

Extremist groups including the street gang the Proud Boys and neo-Nazis have protested LGBTQ and Pride events across the country. Pro-LGBTQ protesters, including anti-fascists, have increasingly begun to show up in response.

St. Louis Proud Boy accused of rape

Lucas Rohlfing, a 28-year-old vocal supporter of the Proud Boys in St. Louis, appeared in court late last week facing charges of rape or attempted rape and sodomy or attempted sodomy, according to a local media report.

The Riverfront Times reported that Rohlfing has been an active member of the Proud Boys for years. In 2018, the report states, "he was listed in the group's constitution and bylaws as one of the eight members of its Elders Chapter." A police probable cause statement for the alleged incident says on Sept. 26, the alleged victim contacted police and told them that on the day prior she had "consumed a large quantity of alcohol and narcotics rendering her incapable of consent," the report states, after which she alleges she was sexually assaulted by Rohlfing and another man. The case will go to a grand jury in July. Rohlfing's attorney told the court he will be filing a motion seeking to dismiss the case.

Statistic of the week: 451

That's how many people with military backgrounds committed extremist offenses between 1990 and 2022, according to a new study from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START.

START found that having a military background was the single strongest predictor of domestic extremism.

"We thought having a criminal history or undiagnosed mental illness were the things that would come out as distinguishing the mass casualty offenders. Those matter, but the thing that came out as being the most significant predictor was having a military background," Michael Jensen, a senior researcher at START told the Military Times.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: The SPLC called out extremists targeting schools. Then came a melee at California school board.

---- Index References ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Glendale School District; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Assault & Battery (1AS33); Crime (1CR87); Education (1ED85); International Terrorism (1IN37); Sexual Misconduct & Crimes (1SE01); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62); Violent Crime (1VI27))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism; FBI; Glendale school district; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty's hate group label riles fellow conservatives, 2023 WLNR 19921832

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June 8, 2023

Moms for Liberty's hate group label riles fellow conservatives

Austin Bailey

Jun 08, 2023

The right-wing group Citizens Defending Freedom employed the old “I know you are but what am I?” defense Thursday, attacking the Southern Poverty Law Center for being the real haters.

A vocal advocate for anti-transgender legislation, Citizens Defending Freedom took aim at the Alabama-based civil rights watchdog group after the SPLC categorized Moms for Liberty as an extremist organization. James Judge, spokesman for Citizens Defending Freedom, sent this statement:

The SPLC itself is the actual ‘hate group’ here, and frankly a terror organization. It is absolutely absurd that they would list a parental rights organization alongside the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis, when Moms for Liberty’s mission is to ensure that parents have a say in their children’s public school education, which of course is funded with taxpayer dollars from those parents. The SPLC has caused more real-world hate and violence than Moms for Liberty ever could, all because of the labels it recklessly slaps on ordinary conservative organizations.

Founded in Montgomery in 1971, the Southern Poverty Law Center aims to champion the plight of the poor and powerless. The SPLC keep a watchlist of organizations fueling racism, division and hate, and this week, they added Moms for Liberty.

Moms for Liberty launched in Florida just a few years ago and has spread quickly, organizing parents to push back against pandemic-era precautions including mask mandates and school shutdowns. Post-pandemic, Moms for Liberty members are among the loudest voices in the many campaigns to scrub children’s library shelves of books on sex education, systemic racism and gender identity.

Arkansas Moms for Liberty took a PR hit in 2022 after one of its members, Missy Bosch, mused about gunning down a school librarian at a meeting in Cabot. Audio recordings of the meeting went viral. Bosch wasn’t criminally charged, but Cabot Public Schools officials limited her access to school campuses.

Moms for Liberty is on a winning spree of late, though. A member of a Northwest Arkansas chapter, Kristen Hargett, scored a coveted spot on the “parental empowerment/school choice” working group formed to help determine how Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders’ far-reaching Arkansas LEARNS Act will be implemented.

And Arkansas Education Secretary Jacob Olivawill be a featured speaker at the Moms for Liberty convention in Philadelphia this summer.

Moms for Liberty's hate group label riles fellow conservatives, 2023 WLNR 19921832

The post Moms for Liberty's hate group label riles fellow conservatives appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Alabama (1AL90); Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Citizens Defending Freedom; Ku Klux Klan; Cabot Public Schools; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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Feds Inform Trump He Is Target In Documents Probe; Interview With Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD); NYC Air Quality Worst In The World; Amanda Gorman Defen...

Feds Inform Trump He Is Target In Documents Probe; Interview With Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD); NYC Air Quality Worst In The World; Amanda Gorman Defends Work After Florida School Restricts Access To Her Book; Zelenskyy Says Hundreds Of Thousands Without Drinking Water After Ukrainian Dam Collapses; Feds Inform Trump He's A Target In Docs Probe. Aid 8-9p ET

ERIN BURNETT, CNN HOST: Thanks so much for joining us.

AC 360 starts now.

[20:00:11]

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN HOST, "ANDERSON COOPER: 360": Good evening.

Tonight on 360, breaking news: Lawyers for the former president are officially told their client is a target in Special Counsel Jack Smith's classified documents probe, as his former vice president announces he is running, saying Trump should never be president again.

Also tonight, American cities shrouded in smoke because of Canadian wildfires. Seventy-five million Americans under air quality alerts. When will the smoke clear?

Plus, inaugural poet, Amanda Gorman has her book pulled from the Miami area grade school because one parent complained though it turns out the parent never actually read the book.

Amanda Gorman joins me tonight.

We begin with the growing legal jeopardy that former President Trump now faces in the federal documents investigation. A letter from the Justice Department to the former president's attorneys saying he is a target in a federal investigation. It is often, but not always a strong sign that the person in question will be indicted.

It is hard to overstate the unprecedented nature of this latest development. CNN's Kaitlan Collins joins us now with what we know.

What is the latest on this letter? And what is the Trump team's reaction?

KAITLAN COLLINS, CNN ANCHOR AND CHIEF CORRESPONDENT: We haven't gotten a formal reaction from the

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Trump legal team so far, but what we do know is that Justice Department prosecutors did recently inform the former president's legal team that he is a target in that federal investigation into whether or not there was mishandling of classified documents, of course, an investigation that we've been tracking closely here at CNN.

The reason this is significant for people sitting at home is that this means that -- this could mean that the special counsel's investigation is moving closer to a possible indictment of the former president.

It's not guaranteed, of course. And I should note that we have several sources on this. They have not directly seen this letter Anderson, but they have been informed of it and its contents.

And so this is a troublesome sign, obviously, for the former president's legal team. I spoke to one person in their orbit earlier who said yes, everyone is alarmed by this. And so, it is a great cause for them. The question, of course, what happens next remains to be seen, it doesn't actually mean that he will be indicted, but it is certainly not a sign and not a letter that any legal team wants to get.

COOPER: And has the foreign president himself addressed this somewhere?

COLLINS: He is writing on Truth Social today. He said earlier, "No one has told me I'm being indicted and I shouldn't be because I've done nothing wrong, but I've assumed for years that I am a target of the weaponized DOJ and FBI."

Of course, it's obvious to point out here not being told that you're being indicted is not the same as not receiving a target letter. You would get the target letter before the actual indictment would happen.

And Trump also spoke earlier to Maggie Haberman of "The New York Times," he denied that he has been told he is being indicted. But again, that is different than saying you have not gotten a target letter from the DOJ.

I should also remind viewers that earlier this week, Trump's attorneys went into the Justice Department to meet with Justice Department officials. They were in the fourth floor of that building.

Jack Smith, the special counsel was actually in the room for that meeting, but I'm told he did not say a word in there. He walked in, he said hello, he said goodbye, but he did not have anything else to say during that meeting, which was really more of the Trump team airing their grievances, their complaints about the special counsel's investigation.

COOPER: So in terms of a timeline or next steps, I mean, it could be very quick.

COLLINS: It couldn't be quick. We don't exactly know. I mean, this is kind of uncharted territory of what exactly this would look like. I should note that it doesn't guarantee that Trump is going to be indicted here, but this is the likely pattern.

Now of course, Trump will have a chance to respond to this, to come in and basically push back on what the prosecution has here to defend himself. We don't know what the next steps here are going to look like. We just know that they have recently been informed of this letter.

And it comes as there has been, you know, all of these questions and reporting about what is at the center of this investigation, and we've seen just the trove of evidence that Jack Smith does have, whether it ranges from the cell phone of a maintenance worker or that audio recording of him talking about classified documents, that was part of Mark Meadows writing his book.

So certainly a lot of things adding up here, as we do believe that this investigation is coming to an end.

COOPER: Kaitlan Collins, appreciate it.

There is more late word that Steve Bannon, the former president's one-time strategist was subpoenaed to go before the January 6th grand jury. CNN's Sara Murray has that. What have you learned?

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SARA MURRAY, CNN POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, look, we learned that Steve Bannon has been subpoenaed for documents and testimony. The subpoena came through about a month ago, a person familiar with the situation tells us.

And look, Bannon is someone who was riling up the GOP base, spreading falsehoods about the 2020 election on his podcast. He predicted all hell would break loose a day before the January 6th attack on the Capitol. You know, this is what prosecutors are focusing on with Bannon with the January 6 investigation.

You know according to the book, "Peril," he was also talking to Trump in December of 2020 and urging Trump to focus on January 6th, to focus on this Electoral College certification.

[20:05:08]

So it certainly is late in the game for Bannon to be receiving a subpoena, but it is an indication that even as the Mar-a-Lago documents probe may be winding down, there are still witnesses that the Justice Department, that Jack Smith's team wants to hear from or try to hear from on the January 6th investigation.

COOPER: So is there any indication of whether Bannon will cooperate?

MURRAY: Well, that's a great question. I mean, we've reached out to him and his attorney for comment and to see how they're going to proceed with this. And, you know, Bannon was subpoenaed by the January 6 committee that was investigating the attack on the Capitol, the House January 6 committee, he defied that subpoena.

He was convicted of criminal contempt of Congress and sentenced to four months in prison and a judge put that sentence on pause while he appeals. So, it's unclear exactly how Bannon is going to wrangle now with this federal subpoena -- Anderson.

COOPER: Sara Murray, appreciate it.

Joining us now is former Virginia Republican congressman, Denver Riggleman who served on the staff of the House January 6 Select Committee.

Congressman, what do you make of this reporting that the former president has been told he is a target on the classified documents case?

DENVER RIGGLEMAN, FORMER US REPRESENTATIVE: I think it's not a big surprise. You know, I don't believe in coincidences, Anderson, so when you see Mark Meadows, him being questioned, some of the reporting that we've seen there, I think that Mark Meadows has always sort of been the center point, not only with declassified documents, but also with the January 6 events.

You know, we saw this in the data. But Anderson, if we go back, you know, a year ago, when we said he is the roadmap, you know, the text messages, Meadows was involved with everything, and I have never -- I think it's part of his MO.

You saw him going down on his knees with Boehner after he failed to oust Boehner from the speakership. When we got the text messages, remember, Anderson, we talked about it. I was so surprised that we had that treasure trove of text messages, which really indicated a roadmap.

So it's not a surprise to me that Meadows is talking to Jack Smith. It is not a surprise to me that he could be a very key witness in not only the classified documents case, but also on January 6th. I just think they have the data they need right now to really pursue this in a great manner.

COOPER: Yes, even for the case in Georgia, he went down to Georgia. He was involved in that effort. Well, he's really at the nexus of this. What do you think the likelihood is that he may have struck a deal?

RIGGLEMAN: You know, it is absolutely possible. I think when you have this sort of overwhelming verified forensic evidence, it is very difficult to get away from that.

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I mean, we saw that in the J6 committee with over 30 million lines of data. Jack Smith, with his law enforcement authorities has more access to data than the J6 committee. Anderson, we couldn't get all of it.

So my guess is, not only did they get Trump for phone calls, they probably got a geolocation data. They have more text messages than we can imagine. They have communications, virtual communications, whether it's e-mails, SMS or MMS, or VOIP or landlines.

So Anderson, with that kind of authority, with that kind of warrant authority and subpoena authority, my guess is, there are people in real trouble, and I think when you see people coming in to talk, and they're talking for the hours that they're talking, I think they've got them dead right on data, and I think you're starting to sort of see the dominoes fall as people are coming in right now.

COOPER: Because I mean, there was -- you know, there were phone calls to the White House on January 6 that were not identified to the January 6 committee. You think it's possible Jack Smith would have been -- might have been able to identify where some of those calls were from.

RIGGLEMAN: You damn well know I wish they did. You know, I asked for those for months, right? We had wanted to know those calls. So I want to know about the White House phone numbers that we found.

We do know that Oath Keepers were texting White House staff. We also know that the White House called a rioter, right? Your own network reported the name of that individual. So, we know that there's phone calls to the White House that we could not identify the other end of the call. And my guess what you're seeing right now, they have so much data.

I mean, we delivered 30 million lines of data. So my guess is they have so much data right now they could be actually looking at the actual switchboard calls. If you look at the phone calls in the White House right now, we don't know that.

My guess is that they're pretty good at this. My guess is they did get our data in some way or some fashion because we had to send it back to Congress. So right now, it would be really interesting.

After one year, Anderson, after we talked about this,, it would be really interesting to see if they do have those White House phone numbers and if there are other individuals that are going to be called in that is going to shock us all.

COOPER: What about Steve Bannon? There is new reporting that he was subpoenaed in the January 6 DOJ probe. Question is obviously, he didn't cooperate. He obviously defied the January 6 committee. He was convicted in federal court.

We should also point out, and later pardoned by the former president.

RIGGLEMAN: Well, I think with Steve Bannon, Anderson, you know, I have been doing this a long time.

COOPER: I am sorry, he was convicted of contempt. Sorry, he was convicted of contempt of Congress.

RIGGLEMAN: Contempt of Congress.

COOPER: Right. Yes.

RIGGLEMAN: Yes, sir. And I think, Anderson, with Bannon, you know, I call them the four horsemen of the griferverse, right?

You had Steve Bannon, you had Roger Stone, you had Alex Jones and Mike Flynn, right? The issue is that they practiced pretty good operational security. The thing that we found and I think what they are going to find in the data is that their assistance did not, right?

So a lot of times the people that are working for them are making calls or connecting to individuals that could be pretty dire,

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pretty nefarious.

[20:10:00] So I think Bannon might be in trouble also and again, we had access to massive amounts of data. The DOJ, the FBI, they have access to data that I used to use when I was back in the intelligence community.

So, Anderson, you know, I'm not telling people to be overly positive. It's been a long time. But I do think when you're looking at these individuals being called in, that there are data threads that have been pulled, and I do really want to thank the team that I had, the forensic team, they really are the anonymous heroes.

And it was hurtful. You know what happened, right, when I came out to talk about this? But the thing is, that committee did a good job. But right now, what we're seeing is we're seeing what's going to happen in the future.

And Anderson, I just want people to understand that the data does indicate how people are going to react in 2024. I think that is where we need to look. We know how they're going to do things. So I think we need to look to the future to stop these type of activities going into the 2024 election,

COOPER: Denver Riggleman, I appreciate it. Thank you.

More now on all that would come with any decision to charge the former president with a federal crime. CNN legal analyst and former deputy assistant attorney general, Elliot Williams, is with us tonight.

So once someone has been notified by federal prosecutors that they are the target of an investigation, how common is it for that notification to be followed by an indictment, and when?

ELLIOT WILLIAMS, CNN LEGAL ANALYST: Extremely common, Anderson, and relatively soon thereafter.

Look, it would be highly unlikely for any target of an investigation to receive a letter and not get charged because what a target letter means is that the Justice Department has what is called substantial information or substantial evidence linking that person to a crime and that they are the primary target of an investigation.

So you know, it's also a suggestion that it's not just people around that person, it's that person themselves.

Look, it's not a requirement that the Justice Department charge that person with a crime, but it would be pretty unlikely for it not to happen within a relatively short period of time thereafter.

COOPER: So based on what we know, publicly, I mean, if an indictment is handed up for the former president, if, what are the most likely charges in your mind?

WILLIAMS: Obstruction of justice is probably the most likely. Now look, we know that -- or at least the reporting seems to suggest that this target letter was related to the documents probe, not the January 6 probe, at least that's my understanding right now. So number one, there will be obstruction of justice. Number two, possibly destruction of documents, or tampering with documents, or removal or retention of documents -- each of those things could potentially be a separate crime, but it's related to or the mishandling of defense information as well, but that is another crime as well.

It's a number of different crimes that could potentially be at play here, not all tied to whether they were classified documents just merely that they were government property that was sensitive, that was in a place that it shouldn't have been, and potentially an investigation got tampered with.

COOPER: What are your thoughts on the Florida grand jury that continues to hear testimony and the federal investigation? I mean, can you learn anything from the fact that the focus seems to have moved to that location?

WILLIAMS: Yes, with the very important caveat that we just don't know and everything that happens in the grand jury is secret, Anderson. You really would bring a grand jury in another state because the thing about bringing charges there, different crimes.

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The Justice Department charges crimes based on where they happen, and a document retention or possession crime may take place in different places, right?

It is something that was taken from Washington, DC, but brought to Florida and maybe destroyed or mishandled in Florida. That's probably two different crimes. Same thing with obstruction of justice that may have happened in one place or another.

My guess is that the Justice Department would be looking at bringing charges in the places that they would have the clearest and most obvious venue, that seems like Florida. But again, it remains to be seen based on what evidence they have and the actual crimes that they are charging.

COOPER: And if then chief-of-staff, Mark Meadows did choose to answer questions when he testified before a grand jury rather than simply take the Fifth. I mean, he was involved in so many different things, what questions do you think are the top priority for the Justice Department?

WILLIAMS: Oh, goodness, there's two big buckets of things that Mark Meadows could testify about. So first, on January 6. He would have been in the Oval Office with the former president as January 6th was playing out, so he would have been privy to conversations with the president or overheard other conversations that the president had with other people and he can testify to that.

He can testify as to conversations he had with third parties, and remember that Mark Meadows is a former member of Congress, and would have been or potentially could have been a liaison or speaking to members of Congress who were seeking to either overturn or disrupt the election. So there's plenty that he could provide there.

COOPER: Yes, I mean, everybody had Mark Meadows' phone number, it seems. I mean -- yes.

WILLIAMS: Everybody -- the text messages, the conversations, it's all there, and he can be asked about all of that with respect to January 6th. Now moving to documents, we'll just call it, l'affaire document. Right? And there's plenty there given that as White House chief-of-staff, in his role, he would have been number one, just the most senior person in the White House and both a political aide and a policy aide, but also the liaison to the National Archives.

[20:15:00]

Anytime he got information from the Archives about where documents were or what should have been done with them. He can testify about that and whether the president was put on notice that he needed to remove or send documents back, he could provide evidence on that as well.

COOPER: Elliot Williams, appreciate it. Thank you.

WILLIAMS: Thanks, Anderson.

COOPER: I want to get perspective from Maryland Democratic congressman and former January 6 committee member, Jamie Raskin.

Congressman, great to have you on.

Given the latest reporting, how likely in your view is an indictment of the former president?

REP. JAMIE RASKIN (D-MD): Well, it certainly seems like they're closing in on the target and the person who undoubtedly set all of the events of January 6 into motion.

I mean, I recall, one of the things we learned in the January 6 committee was that all of the right-wing protests against Biden were set up for January the 20th, for Inauguration Day, as if to say we are going to be your opposition, we question you and so on, but not January 6th.

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But Donald Trump got everybody to switch it to January 6th. He galvanized the focus on January 6th. So, you know, Donald Trump really is the mastermind and the ringleader of the entire operation. And I think that it's his intimates and his enablers in his immediate vicinity, who have now been called forward, including Steve Bannon, and including Mark Meadows.

And so nobody knows what's going on with the investigative questioning, but it certainly seems like it's a serious and methodical investigation.

COOPER: Yes, and what about -- I mean, from what you know, I mean, you know, Mark Meadows cooperated for a short time with the committee, handed over some important text messages and then chose not to cooperate. What do you make of his role in all of this? How important he would be?

RASKIN: Well, right. He was sort of doing the hokey-pokey, one foot in and one foot out, and when Trump got mad at him, he sort of pulled the plug on his participation. But you'll recall from the January 6 hearings, Cassidy Hutchinson reporting in a lot of different ways that Mark Meadows was really privy to what was going on with Donald Trump and when --

COOPER: And also Cassidy Hutchinson's testimony was so stunning to your committee, and she was just kind of an ear witness and an eye witness to a couple of things. You know, she was adjacent to Mark Meadows.

Mark Meadows would have seen everything or heard certainly, exponentially more than she did.

RASKIN: And he intimated to her at numerous points, that Donald Trump wanted to keep the insurrectionary violence going. He didn't want to interfere. And of course, we know through his inaction that he did not operate like the commander-in-chief. He did not get in touch with the Armed Forces. He did not get in touch with the local police. He did not activate the National Guard.

But what we need is more indications of what he was affirmatively saying during that time. And undoubtedly, Mark Meadows was in a position to know.

COOPER: Do you think, if he was offered a deal, and he took it, do you think that would have been a good move by the special counsel?

RASKIN: Well, yes. I mean, look, Mark Meadows proved to be a very weak chief-of-staff. I mean, what I took from all of the people who testified about him before our committee was that he agreed with whomever was talking to him at the time, but fundamentally, he would go with whatever Donald Trump's will was.

So he was really an empty vessel for Donald Trump's determination to stay in office and overthrow the 2020 presidential election.

So I think Trump was obviously the mastermind and ringleader, not Mark Meadows. And so I think it would make sense to, you know, figure out how to get his complete, comprehensive, truthful testimony that makes sense to me.

COOPER: Sources are saying or telling CNN that Steve Bannon has been subpoenaed to provide documents and testimony to a federal grand jury regarding January 6th. He famously defied a subpoena from your committee, was found guilty of contempt of Congress.

What would you like to see federal prosecutors ask Steve Bannon if he testifies? Because I mean, he had the whole war room thing. I mean, there's a lot he theoretically would know.

RASKIN: Yes. Let me take one moment to observe that the people that we held in contempt in the last Congress like Steve Bannon or Dan Scavino or Peter Navarro were people who did not provide a single document to our committee, and did not come and testify before our committee and utter a single sentence before us, so it was primarily people like that.

Whereas, they are talking about holding the FBI director, Christopher Wray, a Trump appointee in contempt for actually

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turning over a document giving the majority exactly what they wanted to see, but they just want to be able to keep it into, you know, distribute it as they see fit, but he overwhelmingly and substantially complied with what exactly they were asking for.

[20:20:00]

But any event, look Steve Bannon I think was primarily involved at the strategic and philosophical level for Donald Trump. He was trying to develop a plan based on how the Electoral College works, based on the convening of Congress in joint session, kicking everything into the House of Representatives for so-called contingent election.

I think that he was probably involved in trying to get Vice President Pence to step outside of his constitutional role, and simply declare that certain states' Electoral College votes wouldn't be accepted.

So I would want to ask him about all of that. What was the grand theory of how they were going to overturn the election in the final analysis? And what was the interaction contemplated between the violent insurrection, the unleashing of the extremist groups against us with the inside political coup, the attempt to put the coercive pressure on Pence and to pull a rabbit out of the hat in terms of the machinations of the Electoral College?

COOPER: Yes. I mean, it is incredible when you lay it all out. Congressman Raskin, appreciate it.

RASKIN: Thank you so much for having me, Anderson.

COOPER: Coming up next, the latest on the smoke, where it's coming from, how to stay safe in it and when it might lift?

Also, my conversation with poet, Amanda Gorman about how she and other authors are facing off against moves to restrict school kids from reading their work, even though many of the people doing the complaining have never actually read the books they want removed.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:25:22]

COOPER: So take a look at that. That is the Empire State Building about three-quarters of a mile across town from where I'm sitting right now. On any other night, it would look like the landmark that it is, not something out of 1918 London or maybe Pittsburgh in the 1940s. There is a remarkable time lapse video from earlier today showing the Manhattan skyline, slowly vanishing. Take a look at that behind the wall of smoke and watching the gray turn to orange as the sun moved across the sky. It's been surreal.

There's also this one passenger's view aboard a flight into LaGuardia. Conditions there forced a ground stop at one point today for flights and delayed many other flights across the region.

The smoke also triggered health alerts for schools to cancel outdoor activities and although the end to this could be in sight, so to speak, the worst isn't over yet.

CNN's Bill Weir is in Brooklyn tonight, joins us now.

Talk about how historic this is for New York City. I mean -- I don't -- I mean, I can't think of a time it's been like this.

BILL WEIR, CNN CHIEF CLIMATE CORRESPONDENT: Good evening.

Yes, even longtime jaded New Yorkers who have seen everything have seen nothing like this.

COOPER: I am a long time jaded New Yorker.

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WEIR: The Air Quality Index -- true, true, but the Air Quality Index goes from zero to 500. On an average day, it's around a hundred or so, Today, at five o'clock it was 484.

Mayor Adams saying today, the city has not seen this kind of air since the unregulated pollution days of the 1960s.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

WEIR (voice over): Canadian wildfires have burned an area 15 times above average for this time of year, and in a world connected by climate crisis, fire and wind are now creating other worldly scenes across the American northeast.

And on the streets of New York, a mixture of amazement --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I've been living in New York for the most part of 35 years and I've never experienced anything like this before.

WEIR (voice over): And concern.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: For years, we've been wearing masks indoors and taking them off outdoors, and now, it's the reverse.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Well, we're from Australia and we have a lot of bushfires in Australia, so we're used to this, and this season hasn't been as bad, but it did shock me how quickly it came in last night and the air quality was bad later in the evening.

WEIR (voice over): The sky over Lower Manhattan turned from dirty yellow to a frightening orange in just a few midday hours.

The smoke forcing ground stops at LaGuardia and the streetlights and Central Park to come on in the middle of the day. WEIR (on camera): If you get any glimpse of the sun at all on these surreal days, it's this apocalyptic glowing ball in the sky. The Air Quality Index today on par with New Delhi, India, a city four times larger, with much lower air quality standards of course.

And just today, the American Lung Association dropped a new report where they examined how many lives will be saved if the US could electrify its vehicle fleet by 2050. It would be almost 90,000 lives saved and that doesn't account for the prevalence of wildfire smoke, now more common on a planet heated up by fossil fuels.

WILLIAM BARRETT, NATIONAL SENIOR DIRECTOR, AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION: Yes, the study is really only focused on emissions from those power plants and the vehicle tailpipe so we really need to take a comprehensive view and that new study really illustrates that making these changes today can help bring out major, major public health benefits over time.

WEIR (voice over): Any number above 300 on the Air Quality Index is considered dangerous for everyone regardless of health. And since parts of New York topped 400 today, doctors are bracing for what comes next.

DR. DANIEL STERMAN, DIRECTOR OF PULMONARY MEDICINE, NYU LANGONE: Short term, I can say that I'm very worried as a pulmonologist who takes care of patients with COPD and lung cancer, asthma, that I'm very worried about all of my patients.

Patients who have had COVID and had COVID injuries who may not have had other lung injuries but survived COVID only to have this exposure and the risk to them of re-exacerbation of their underlying lung disease-- many, many health problems that I'm worried about for all of my patients.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

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COOPER: Bill, how concerned should people be that outdoor pollution is getting indoors? Because even like in my house today, I mean it smelled like smoke.

WEIR: Absolutely. We have this sort of false sense of security. We spend 90 percent of our lives indoors, but the way municipalities come together to make sure your water is drinkable. That doesn't exist for air. You're kind of on your own, and indoor air monitors today were showing three times the level of that PM 2.5 that normally doubles emergency room visits for asthma sufferers as well.

So now, a great time to check. Make sure if you have the out the window air conditioner that it is recycling, not pulling the smoke into your house and if you have a central AC, a good reminder to check those filters because it could be a long smoky summer -- Anderson.

COOPER: Bill Weir. Appreciate it. Thank you.

[20:30:13] Now to scene as (ph) Miguel Marquez, who is in lower Manhattan, also in the thick of it. Miguel, I know you've been covering the smoke through the day. What's it like out there tonight?

MIGUEL MARQUEZ, CNN SENIOR NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: It's a little bit better, but it's sort of -- it got better in the afternoon and then it seems to have gotten worse and worse. I want to show you. We're down in the West Village right now. So just, I don't know, a half mile or so, quarter mile from the World Trade Center. I want to try to show that to you, if you can see it. The street lights just coming on here, a regular downtown day. It looks like it is foggy here. But that is all smoke.

And the shocking and surreal thing about this is that these fires are hundreds of miles away. Just a massive amount of smoke in Los Angeles, in San Francisco, in Australia, places that are accustomed to this. They get -- cities get inundated with smoke. But the fires are usually 10 miles, 20 miles, 30 miles away. This is so far away, and there is so much smoke. I mean, people are very concerned. We do see a lot of mask wearing here.

We were up in Times Square earlier. There's a lot of tourists here, people weren't sort of prepared, not as many masks. But here in the neighborhoods in New York, you are seeing more mask wearing. But, it's the KN95 or the N95 mask that officials say is the best. The best thing to do thought is to stay home and keep those windows closed. But even that, as you know, is not a panacea for everything with the smoke. It looks like it's going to be with us for a while. Anderson?

COOPER: Yeah, Miguel Marquez, thank you.

MARQUEZ: You got it.

COOPER: In Florida, take a look at this packed event hosted by a bookstore. It's not a book signing. People were there last night to support former National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, who donated 1,200 books to be given out, including 400 copies of her book and two other titles restricted at a Miami-Dade County Public School for K-8. The books are being restricted after one parent's complaint. Gorman's book is titled "The Hill We Climb." It's the same title as the poem she read at President Biden's inauguration in 2021.

She is the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. Months later, her book was published and had been available at the school library for all students until one parent's complaint. And by the way, that parent did not actually read the book. Now, the school district says only middle school students have access to Amanda Gorman's book. The parent's complaint stated it includes "hate messages." The parent took issue with just some line that Gorman recited, here are a few of them.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

AMANDA GORMAN, NATIONAL YOUTH POET LAUREATE: We've braved the belly of the beast. We've learned that quiet isn't always peace. In the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always justice. And yet, the dawn is ours before we knew it. Somehow we do it. Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: And Amanda Gorman joins us now. It's so great just hearing you do that inaugural poem again. It's lovely. It's great to have you back. And I'm sorry it's under these circumstances.

GORMAN: Thank you.

COOPER: When you heard this, what was your initial reaction when you found out this -- that your book was being restricted by somebody who had not actually even read it?

GORMAN: I think my first response was this dual experience of shock and grief. For the first part, because over 40 million people saw that moment at the inauguration and I couldn't imagine a reason of erasing that from a bookshelf for young readers to see. And on the flip side, I felt this anguish and pain because so much of the excitement that I had while writing "The Hill We Climb" was in knowing that young people would be able to see themselves represented in this moment in our democratic history. And so to have that representation taken away from young people just felt devastating.

COOPER: You know, and this is happening obviously in places across the country. And often it's parents who have not read any of these books. They often just get a list of books from an organization, a conservative organization that wants books removed, and they send that in and show up at a school board meeting and the books are taken out.

GORMAN: I think you get absolutely to the core of the issue, which is that you can in effect ban, restrict, remove a book like that. All it takes is one person, often who isn't a parent or doesn't need to read that work to sign a complaint. And that complaint can be accomplished pretty quickly, as we saw with what happened with my book. That form can even be filled out inaccurately and that can still lead to that book become being restricted for that school, that community, that library. And so what we're witnessing is a real loophole in the educational system, where it's really easy to mobilize a small select group of people to ban thousands of books over time.

[20:35:00]

COOPER: Now, to get your book, you've got to go to the media center. I understand, you have to -- in the school, you have to prove that you're at a fifth grade reading level in order to get access to the book. That's -- kids aren't going to discover a book like that.

GORMAN: No. I think you're absolutely correct. And one of the things that keeps getting said around the circumstance of my book that has been banned and other books that were removed from the elementary school shelves at that same school due to that same complaint, a lot of what gets said is, "Oh, it's not banned. It's just moved from the elementary side -- to the middle school."

But what you have to keep in mind, exactly like you said, if a child now needs to jump over hurdles of going through a different location, speaking to media specialists, proving themselves worthy and ready of reading a book, those types of hurdles are going to really impede students from having a free-ranging, welcoming experience of being able to pull a book from a bookshelf and experience it.

And what you just said also about the role of parents, I am totally accepting and at peace with the fact that not every parent, not every guardian, is going to like my work. And I think that's absolutely par for the course. But I think the issue is, when one person's dislike for my work leads to everyone else not having access to that book, we're really encroaching on the rights to families and parents and teachers and libraries to really create access for that, that exists for other people who still want that door open.

COOPER: There have been a lot of questions about the motivation behind the number of these people who are doing this in school districts. Our correspondent Elle Reeve actually went to a Moms for Liberty school board meeting, which is becoming a nationwide group of people who are behind this and talked to a leader of a group from Moms for Liberty. And I just want to play some of what she had to say.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ELLE REEVE, CNN CORRESPONDENT: To me, it sounds like you're saying there's some kind of high-level, coordinated effort to make more children trans and gay.

DARCY SCHOENING, CHAPTER CHAIR, MOMS FOR LIBERTY EL PASO COUNTY CHAPTER: Yeah.

REEVE: Well, who's directing that?

SCHOENING: Teachers unions and our presidents and a lot of funding sources. And teachers unions are also heavily backing the curriculum that we're bringing into schools.

REEVE: Why would they want more kids to be gay and trans?

SCHOENING: Because it breaks down the family unit, which breaks down traditional conservative values. It breaks down a lot of things in this country. It changes the way that people think. It changes the way that people handle politics.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COOPER: Which is sort of a fascinating unpeeling of the onion that at the core for this woman in particular, she believes this is part of a conspiracy by teacher unions and others to destroy conservative values and destroy the American family. Does that make any sense to you?

GORMAN: It absolutely makes to me and explains why we've seen such an increase and spike in book bans over the past few years. For example, out of the 2,500+ book bans that we saw last year, the majority of them, according to "The Washington Post" came from just 11 people. So, what we are seeing is that this book banning isn't representative of the opinions and instincts of most parents, teachers, students, but from a really small subset of people who believe that they're protecting children from indoctrination of ideas of race, of gender, of sexuality.

But at the end of the day, what they're ultimately doing is eradicating the freedom of children and students from exploring those issues in a safe and protected and educational space that can be combined with the love of learning and reading.

COOPER: You're also partnering with PEN America to help others speak out against book banning. How can people help?

GORMAN: Absolutely. So, if you want to learn more about book restrictions and removals and also how you can have your voice heard, you can visit pen.org/action. We've made a web page there where you can get all the information you need about standing up.

COOPER: All right. Amanda Gorman, thanks so much.

GORMAN: Thank you.

COOPER: Just ahead, we're going to take you live to Ukraine for an up-close look at the dangers the rescuers are facing trying to help civilians trapped by flood waters after a major dam collapses.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:43:20]

COOPER: Tonight, according to President Zelenskyy in Ukraine, hundreds of thousands are without drinking water after a major dam and power station in Russian-occupied Southern Ukraine collapsed on Tuesday. Zelenskyy says that Russian troops are shooting at rescuers trying to reach civilians in occupied territory. According to the international humanitarian organization, CARE, land mines have been seen floating in the flood waters.

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Thousands are being evacuated in the war-ravaged areas, fighting continues. Our Fred Pleitgen is in Ukraine tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

FREDERIK PLEITGEN, CNN SENIOR INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Raging flood water with whole towns submerged. This Ukrainian military drone video purports to show a family trapped in a Russian-controlled village, pleading for help. But all the small drone can do is drop a bottle of water. We went on a rescue mission in Kherson, where the water levels are still rising.

PLEITGEN (on camera): So, these guys tell us that they've been at work here since last night. They said the work during the night was extremely difficult and that they're really tired. But, of course, they have to keep going.

PLEITGEN (voice-over): They found this house abandoned but rescued three kittens. Roman (ph) tells me the volunteers face Russian shelling on nearly every sortie (ph). Of course, it's extremely dangerous, he says, especially today, it's very loud. Russia and Ukraine continue to blame each other for the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power plant.

The Ukrainians say on their side alone, hundreds of thousands are without normal access to water, and nearly 2,000 homes are under water, while the rescue efforts are hampered by the near constant artillery and mortar barrages.

[20:45:00]

IHOR KLYMENKO, ACTING INTERIOR MINISTER, UKRAINE (through translator): Look, we're working despite the possibility of us being shelled. We're taking risks every day, Ukraine's Interior Minister tells me. We understand that this is war, and it is very difficult to completely avoid a drone or incoming missile.

PLEITGEN (voice-over): And that dangerous work is far from over. The authorities here say they expect they'll be busy all night, getting more people to safety.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: And Fred Pleitgen joins us now from Ukraine. What's President Zelenskyy saying about the impact of the dam collapse environmentally and on the situation? PLEITGEN: Well, he's saying that it's an absolute disaster and certainly it's still very much unfolding. In fact, Anderson, he called it an environmental bomb of mass destruction, of course, because of all the oil, all the fuel that's now being swept into the water there. In fact, the authorities today warning once again that that water is absolutely toxic. That's one of the things they told us when we were on the ground. And of course, it's also a disaster, Anderson, that is still very much unfolding and getting worse.

Throughout the day, the water levels continued to rise and the authorities are telling us they're probably going to rise for another day and at least need five days for the water to recede once again. But of course, the environmental damage is being caused by the minute in that area, and more and more people are having to flee. And we saw right there how difficult it is for the authorities to get those people out. The authorities there on the ground were telling us the shelling is ongoing and they are once again going to spend the entire night trying to get people to safety, Anderson.

COOPER: Fred Pleitgen, appreciate it. Thank you.

Coming up. A breaking news that the former president has been notified he's the target of a federal investigations, the possible mishandling of classified documents. That news comes as his former running mate, Vice President Mike Pence announced today, he is running for the presidency and will be joining CNN for a special Town Hall, minutes from now. What Pence's entry into the race means for both their campaigns next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:50:37] COOPER: Breaking news this hour. The former president has been informed he is a target in the special counsel

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investigation into the possible mishandling of classified documents. It comes as we are just moments away from CNN's Town Hall with former Vice President Mike Pence who officially declared himself a candidate for president today.

Joining me now are CNN political commentator Van Jones, former Special Advisor to President Obama; David Axelrod, former Senior Advisor to President Obama; Alyssa Farah Griffin, White House Communications Director for the former president. Also with us Jeff Duncan, Republican former Lieutenant Governor of Georgia; Republican Strategist Alice Stewart; Scott Jennings, former Special Assistant to President George W. Bush.

Alyssa, I want to start with you. It's been reported you were interviewed by federal prosecutors. I know you can't talk about this. This was in recent weeks, part of the special counsel investigation. But what do you make of the news that the former president has been informed that he is a --

ALYSSA FARAH GRIFFIN, FORMER TRUMP WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: I'm most struck by how quickly the DOJ documents investigation is moving. Jack Smith seems to be moving on a fast timeline which signals to me he understands the political pressures. Of course, DOJ doesn't factor that in. But you also -- you react to reality. If they wait too long to moves, if an indictment is coming, you end up lining up with the primary season. And I think that that's hard for the public if it comes during that period to think that it's not for one side of the aisle to not think that it's partisan. This is moving remarkably quickly.

I did speak to federal investigators. As far as I would go is to basically say, and I did it voluntarily is, they're looking at everything. They're pulling every thread that they can. I think they're very interested in the president's mood and mind-set in the period on the January 6th side, leading up to January 6th and on the documents about who was advising him on what during the transition.

COOPER: Then in terms of former Vice President Pence, he is announcing today. What he is going to say tonight. Do you think what's the target letter -- the news of the target letter, do you think that changes anything for what he'll talk about tonight?

VAN JONES, FORMER SPECIAL ADVISER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA: I bet it changes the question he gets asked.

(LAUGHTER)

COOPER: I think it's a safe bet.

JONES: I think it's a safe bet. So I think he has been very reticent to weigh in until now. You've seen the past 24 hours a very different Mike Pence. This is a Mike Pence that is willing to throw real punches at President Trump. I think all bets are off. I am surprised, honestly, that he sounds as pugilistic as Chris Christie. If Trump thought he was going to have a bunch of people who were keep tiptoeing through the tulips and not say anything against him, today changed that, yesterday changed that, and tonight is going to change it even more.

COOPER: David Axelrod, he has certainly been cautious what he has said up to now.

DAVID AXELROD, FORMER SENIOR ADVISER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA: Yes. And he was -- let's just be clear. Today, he was very strong in his speech and then went on Fox News, having thrown the gauntlet down and he picked the gauntlet up again and said he might -- that he could support the president if the president were the nominee --

(CROSSTALK)

COOPER: It's a requirement to take part in debates from the RNC to say, to promise that you would support whoever the Republican nominee is.

AXELROD: Right. But look, this is hard. Mike Pence is in a fix because, for three years and 11 months or whatever it is was, he was loyal on the verge of being obsequious. And then he did a very courageous thing and he has managed to tick people off on both sides of the Donald Trump debate. People who are very loyal to Trump think he was a traitor. People who

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watched over those four years give him credit for what he did, but still hold him accountable for having essentially being an apologist for Trump over those four years. And it's a very tough place to be.

COOPER: Scott, what do you expect?

SCOTT JENNINGS, CNN SENIOR POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, FORMER SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH AND COLUMNIST, USA TODAY: Well, I think I'd like to know whether Mike Pence would pardon Donald Trump. I mean, to me, it's fairly obvious that he's likely, I guess, to hedge that he'll (ph) be indicted and that could lead to a conviction. He might not be the next president, a Republican could be. I think it's a relevant question tonight and probably ongoing in the primary. I think Pence is in a different argument spot than say DeSantis. DeSantis' argument against Trump is we have to end the culture of losing.

The argument Mike Pence made today is he violated his oath of office, and cannot and must not be returned to the White House. That is not a political argument. That is hard-core American civics constitutional argument. That's a much different argument. How it will land with the Republicans, my guess is, candidly, not very well. I don't see much of a lane for Mike Pence. But if anybody earned the right to run for president, it's the guy who stood up for the U.S. Constitution.

COOPER: Alice, he is most conservative in the field.

ALICE STEWART, CNN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST, BOARD MEMBER, JFK INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY: No doubt. And speaking of evangelicals in the State of Iowa, they're welcoming him with open arms, as well as all the other candidates, because they are ready to turn the page on Donald Trump.

[20:55:00]

And you look at someone like Mike Pence and Tim Scott and Nikki Haley and many of these others, Asa Hutchinson, they have a genuine relationship with the evangelical community and the faith community. Donald Trump's relationship was transactional. He says, "Hey, I'll give you the supreme court justices if you give me your vote." They're done with that. They're ready to have someone that will have the policies that Donald Trump has but without all of the toxic nature.

And what I thought interesting today with Mike Pence in terms of now he is really going after Donald Trump, because he has to, but of all the legal issues facing Donald Trump, he went after the one, to Scott's point, outlining the case on the constitution. When you ask Mike Pence to choose between the constitution and the presidency, he made it quite clear that person no longer deserves to be the president of the United States.

And that was a very well-explained argument, but also he was very careful to make sure that's the legal issue that he wanted to weigh in as opposed to all the others. And we have Bob Barr saying of all the issues facing former president on the legal side, this one right here is the most troublesome.

COOPER: Lieutenant Governor?

GEOFF DUNCAN, (R) CNN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR AND FORMER LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA: Yeah, I think going back to David's point, right, Mike Pence has got a tough place to call home camp, right. I mean, the right, the MAGA crowd is not -- never going to support Mike Pence just because of the position he took with Donald Trump on January 6th. The moderates aren't going to come his way because he has just proven all the way through his political career, he is an extreme conservative.

And I think campaigns are always defined by surprises, right? All the campaigns I've always been a part of, I think the surprise that's starting to play out right now is that the weight and reality of these indictments are real. Just imagine, I don't know anybody who has got multiple indictments, federal and state. I don't know how you operate.

AXELROD: Certainly not running for president.

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(LAUGHTER)

DUNCAN: Yeah, an hourly job, more or less trying to run for president in 50 states.

(CROSSTALK)

GRIFFIN: Yeah.

COOPER: I'll (ph) see him on Netflix.

(LAUGHTER)

DUNCAN: But the reality of that, so I think the surprise is that how weighty that's going to be. The play, in my opinion, for the other Republicans need to be, to be able to put themselves into position, to be the heir-apparent when Donald Trump falls. And he is going to fall.

GRIFFIN: And I do think, real quick --

COOPER: Yeah.

GRIFFIN: -- with Mike Pence, he can make the case tonight and going forward that he would be the most qualified and ready candidate on day one to become president. Serving as vice president, you have stood in for the president and Head of State meetings. You've shaken hands with other world leaders. You've represented him on the world stage, and you've actually had to make tough choices.

Wherever you come down on the COVID response, when you're dealing with something like massive supply chain issues, the entire eastern seaboard not having food supplies and having to make hard decisions, Mike Pence did that. He also can make a case, and I want to see him do it, that Trump's biggest accomplishments wouldn't have happened without him.

I was there in the senate when tax cuts was this close to not passing, but Mike Pence did some arm twisting with his old friend Jeff Flake, got that across the finish line. USMCA, he was the one rallying members of the senate and the house to support it. And he was never one to take credit for things that he did because he was so deferential to Trump. I want to see him tell his success.

AXELROD: So, can I just say one thing on Alyssa's point? Scott, I'm sorry I jumped in on you there. But, you talk about all the candidates who have relationships with the evangelical community. And Pence, his relationship with that community was why Trump put him on the ticket back in 2016. And he became Trump's ambassador and Trump sort of took that constituency from him.

Now, he is going to have to compete not just with Trump, but with Scott, with others, Hutchinson, others who are going for that same constituency. It's one more complication for him because, if he doesn't win in Iowa with that large, large evangelical community there, he is done.

COOPER: Yeah.

AXELROD: So this is really important to him.

JENNINGS: You know, your point about the weight and reality of Trump's legal issues is a good one. But the other side of that equation is, does this cause Republicans to dig in even more? I mean, if these indictments land, my expectation is that Republicans are going to go crazy. They're going to see a double standard with Biden. They're going to see a double standard with Hillary Clinton and with others.

Trump's going to go crazy because this is far more serious than what happened in New York City. My guess is, they're going to call for Merrick Garland to be impeached and put a lot of pressure on Republicans in the house. It really is going to be a

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massive blowup. And there is no guaranty it won't end up politically benefitting Donald Trump and causing Republicans to dig in. Now, you could be right. And of course, I hope you are. I'm just not certain that's what's going to happen.

DUNCAN: I think 35 percent of Republicans are going to get upset. But a majority of Republicans are ready to move on. That's the unfortunate part of this.

STEWART: Right. The ones that have already turned their backs on the Republican Party because of Donald Trump, and those are the ones that all of these other candidates are vying for their vote. And for the Trump space, this again makes him a martyr. But others, this is the final straw.

COOPER: Thanks, everyone. We'll be back later, after the Town Hall, for analysis, following it with Mike Pence, which starts right now.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[Byline: Anderson Cooper, Kaitlan Collins, Sara Murray, Elliot Williams, Bill Weir, Miguel Marquez, Frederik Pleitgen, Elle Reeve, Geoff Duncan, Scott Jennings, Alice Stewart] [Guest: Denver Riggleman, Jamie Raskin, Amanda Gorman, Van Jones, David Axelrod, Alyssa Farah Griffin] [High: Justice Department informs Trump he is target in documents probe, a sign prosecutors may be closer to indicting Donald Trump. Mark Meadows has testified in classified documents probe and efforts to overturn 2020 elections. Seventy-five million plus under alert as wildfire smoke spreads. 5+ million Americans under alerts as smoke from 400+ fires burning in Canada spreads across the U.S. causing flights, schools, pro games to be affected; Inaugural poet Amanda Gorman addresses book bans and restrictions across the country after Florida school restricted access to her book; Landmines floating in Ukrainian floodwaters after dam collapses says relief organization] [Spec: Donald Trump; Government; Politics; Environment; Wildfires; Special Counsel; Republicans; Democrats; Russia; Ukraine; Dam Collapse; New York City; Amanda Gorman; The Hill We Climb; Florida; Book Ban; Zelenskyy; Feds; DOJ; Mike Pence]

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Region: (Americas (1AM92); Asia (1AS61); Australasia (1AU56); CIS Countries (1CI64); Canada (1CA33); Colorado (1CO26); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); Florida (1FL79); India (1IN24); Indian Subcontinent (1IN32); Iowa

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(1IO85); North America (1NO39); Oceania (1OC40); Southern Asia (1SO52); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Ukraine (1UK09))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Florida; CNN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR; Electoral College; House January; White House; National Archives; House of Representatives; Miami-Dade County Public School; MOMS FOR LIBERTY EL PASO COUNTY; Ukraine; JFK INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY; Republican Party; 2023 Cable News Network LP, LLLP; FBI; American Lung Association; Select Committee; VIQ Media Transcription, Inc.; PEN America; Feds; The Washington Post; PULMONARY MEDICINE; The New York Times) (Donald Trump; Donald John Trump; Jamie Raskin; Amanda Gorman; Zelenskyy)

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NewsRoom

SPLC adds parents' group to list of extremists, 2023 WLNR 19800013

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 19800013

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June 8, 2023

Section: News

SPLC adds parents' group to list of extremists

Krista Johnson

June 8, 2023

A national nonprofit with Kentucky chapters – one of which pushed for the ban of three books in a Northern Kentucky district – has been labeled as an anti-government extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a research organization tracking hate and extremism in the United States.

Moms for Liberty, which also has a chapter in Louisville, was added to the center's list of 1,225 hate and anti-government extremist groups across the country.

"Thanks in part to its grand disruptions at school board meetings, political alliances and extremist ties, Moms for Liberty has quickly become one of the most recognized names in the anti-student inclusion movement," the center's website says.

It is one of about a dozen right-wing "parents' rights" groups labeled as extremist in the annual report released Tuesday, including nonprofit Parents Defending Education, which also has at least one Kentucky chapter, according to SPLC's report. Kentucky Parents Involved in Education is also listed as an anti-government group in the report.

The designation is based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA Today. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they are drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

"[The movement] is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools," Corke said. "We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level."

In addition to its Louisville chapter, Moms for Liberty has chapters in Boone and Campbell. The group, founded in 2021 in Florida, is "dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government," according to its website.

In March, The Courier Journal reported that three books would not be offered to students in the Campbell County district after they were questioned by the local chapter of Moms for Liberty.

The move follows a national trend, with nearly 1,700 different books banned by districts in 32 states last school year, according to PEN America, a nonprofit focused on literature. Books with LGBTQ+ and/or non-white characters were banned the most, followed by those that contained sexual content, according to the nonprofit's report.

SPLC adds parents' group to list of extremists, 2023 WLNR 19800013

The three books that won't be in Campbell County schools each fell under the top 50 most banned books last year, according to PEN.

Local Moms for Liberty chapters have attempted to and in some cases succeeded in banning books in North Carolina, Indiana, Tennessee, Iowa, Pennsylvania and more.

Moms for Liberty did not respond to a request for comment from USA Today on Tuesday.

Contact reporter Krista Johnson at kjohnson3@gannett.com . USA Today contributed to this report.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; Pen Co of America

News Subject: (Bankruptcies (1BA08); Business Management (1BU42); Corporate Events (1CR05); Education (1ED85); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Non-Profit Organizations (1NO22); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Kentucky (1KE38); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Parents Defending Education; Southern Poverty Law Center; PEN America)

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NewsRoom

'We're not going to stop': Moms for Liberty co-founder..., 2023 WLNR 19914789

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2023 WLNR 19914789

Daily Mail Online (UK)
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June 8, 2023

'We're not going to stop': Moms for Liberty co-founder slams Southern Poverty Law Center for labeling it an 'extremist' group - and accuses organiz...

Sophie Mann For Dailymail.Com

'We're not going to stop': Moms for Liberty co-founder slams Southern Poverty Law Center for labeling it an 'extremist' group - and accuses organization of an 'orchestrated attempt to stop our voices'

Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice hit back at the Southern Poverty Law Center for labeling the parents' rights organization an 'extremist' group.

Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice took aim at the SPLC after the organization named the parental rights group an 'extremist' entity The SPLC listed 1225 in its 2022 list of 'hate and antigovernmental extremist groups' - a number that is up from 733 in 2021 Moms for Liberty was founded during the pandemic by Florida mothers concerned about the direction of their children's education

The Florida-based parental rights organization was added to the SPLC's 2022 list of 'hate and antigovernmental groups.'

Justice told 'Fox News Tonight' Wednesday the 'extremist' label is 'absolutely absurd.'

'We are a group of moms and dads and grandparents and aunts and uncles, community members that are very concerned about the direction of the country,' she said.

According to the SPLC, schools have been on the 'receiving end of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks' that has included trying to get certain books removed from school libraries.

'At the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group with vast connections to the GOP that this year the SPLC designated as an extremist group,' read the group's report.

'Galvanizing supporters around supposed 'parental rights' and 'family values' is nothing new - similar rallying cries were adopted by those who opposed school desegregation during the civil rights movement and by the Moral Majority of the 1980s,' the report continued.

'These political slogans have been used repeatedly because they are effective, framing the organizing of far-right activists as something done solely out of real concern for children.'

The Southern Poverty Law Center added the organization, among others, to their 'Hate Map' as part of the release of their 'Year In Hate and Extremism 2022' report.

'We're not going to stop': Moms for Liberty co-founder..., 2023 WLNR 19914789

They wrote that members of the non-profit can be 'spotted at school board meetings across the country wearing shirts and carrying signs that declare, 'We do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT.'"

The report said that the group 'hijacks meetings, preventing officials and parents from conducting their normal proceedings.'

They were called 'far-right' and an 'antigovernment' organization that engages in 'anti-student inclusion activities.'

In previous years, groups included on the list were comparable to neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. The addition of antigovernmental groups to the list has increased its length dramatically, shooting from 733 'hate groups' in 2021 to 1,225 'hate and antigovernmental extremist groups' in 2022.

Moms for Liberty was founded in early 2021 by concerned mothers in Florida and has quickly expanded its presence across the country.

It has attracted national media attention for its efforts fighting COVID restrictions in schools and limiting discussions about race, sexuality, and gender in elementary school classrooms.

Justice said Wednesday night that the group is 'upsetting the balance of power in public education' and that the SPLC is conducting an 'orchestrated attempt' to silence their voices.

According to the organization's mission statement, Moms for Liberty was founded in 2021 to 'unify, educate and empower parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government.'

Members have fought against mask mandates and critical race theory curricula in schools.

Undeterred by the label, Justice said: 'We're going to keep doing the work that we do across the country. We're set up by chapters. We have over 120,000 members. And if you talk to the moms and dads on the ground, they're concerned about some of the things that they're seeing taught in schools. They're concerned about the fact that not every American child is learning to read in school.'

'So we're going to keep focused on our mission of getting liberty-minded individuals elected to school board[s] and ensuring that parental rights are protected at every level of government.'

Despite opposition from groups like the SPLC, Justice said that she and her fellow Moms for Liberty are not discouraged and plan to keep up the energy.

'We are joyful warriors. We're not going to stop. I mean, no one's going to fight for anything like a parent's going to fight for their child. And, you know, we are moms and dads that are concerned about the future of the country,' she said.

The SPLC report said: 'Moms for Liberty activities make it clear that the group's primary goals are to fuel right-wing hysteria and to make the world a less comfortable or safe place for certain students – primarily those who are Black, LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ families.'

President and CEO of the SPLC and SPLC Action Fund, Margaret Huang, claimed the goal of the report is to take 'the most hateful factions in our country' and ultimately dismantle white supremacy.

We are exposing a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary.

'These groups are descending on Main Street America and disrupting people's daily lives, too often with dire consequences for communities of color, Jewish people, and the LGBTQ+ community.'

Justice and fellow Moms of Liberty co-founder Tina Descovich blasted the decision to label their organization a 'hate group'

'We're not going to stop': Moms for Liberty co-founder..., 2023 WLNR 19914789

'Two-thirds of Americans think the public education system is on the wrong track today. That is why our organization is devoted to empowering parents to be a part of their child's public school education,' they said in a statement to Fox News.

'That is our fundamental goal, which began just two years ago when teacher's unions locked students out of schools during the pandemic.

'Empowering parents continues to be our mission today and that has fueled our organization's growth - like wildfire to now 45 states in the country.'

'We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.'

Moms for Liberty joins is one of 11 other right-wing parents rights' groups listed in the annual report.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Ku Klux Klan; SPLC Action Fund; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

'You're a piece of sh*t': NYC town hall descends into chaos..., 2023 WLNR 18458448

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 18458448

Daily Mail Online (UK)
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June 8, 2023

'You're a piece of sh*t': NYC town hall descends into chaos as foul-mouthed hecklers hurl abuse at AOC over migrant crisis, drag queen hour and deb...

Paul Farrell For Dailymail.Com

'You're a piece of sh*t': NYC town hall descends into chaos as foul-mouthed hecklers hurl abuse at AOC over migrant crisis, drag queen hour and debt ceiling showdown

A town hall meeting held by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in Queens on Friday night descended into farce as the firebrand was called a 'piece of sh*t' and berated for her views on Ukraine, migrants, drag queen story hours and the debt ceiling.

In a town hall on Friday, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was loudly criticized by her constituents for her various positions. Protesters called out AOC for her stance on issues such as Ukraine, the migrant crisis, drag queen story hours and the debt ceiling. At least two protesters were escorted out by security, one of whom was demanding to know where AOC stood on the migrant issue.

The meeting was held in the Corona neighborhood, AOC's constituency. Her constituents were not in welcoming mood, especially when the town hall moved to the question and answer stage.

'American citizens before migrants,' one heckler yelled. Others chanted: 'America first.'

Another shouted: 'We are on the verge of nuclear war with Russia. Are you going to stop this war?' shouted another, according to video recorded by conservative activist group Freedom News TV.

Video shows one protester, wearing a Cuba t-shirt and waving miniature American flags, being led away by security after repeatedly calling AOC a 'piece of sh*t' and asking: 'Where are you on the migrant issue?'

An Iraq veteran attempted to defend the Bronx-born Democrat by saying: 'Immigrants have nothing to do with vets, it's just an excuse. We all, for the most part, came through Ellis Island.' At that point a protester interjected: 'Legally!'

Another woman was removed when she yelled: 'Stop funding this war, there's a lot of communities that need help and need that money. I'm from that community'

'I don't like that Republicans passed a \$1.7 trillion tax cut on the wealthiest people in this country,' told the crowd to large applause.

One prominent sign read: 'AOC: An obvious criminal.' Others had phrases such as: 'Stop funding Ukraine,' 'American First. Vetted legal migrants only' and 'AOC: Stop pushing drag queen story hour,' reports the New York Post.

'You're a piece of sh*t': NYC town hall descends into chaos..., 2023 WLNR 18458448

The congressman was criticized loudly by one protester for voting in favor of sending \$100 billion to Ukraine following the Russian invasion after she made remarks in favor of removing the debt ceiling.

When that protester was shouted down by someone telling him to wait his turn, he replied: 'Freedom of speech!'

President Joe Biden said a deal to resolve the government's crisis seemed 'very close' late Friday, even as the deadline for a potentially catastrophic default was pushed back to June 5 and seemed likely to drag negotiations between the White House and Republicans into another frustrating week.

Social media posts from AOC's team following Friday's town hall made no reference to the protesters.

'Thank you to everyone who joined us for tonight's May town hall in Corona! We had such great turnout, even on Memorial Day weekend!,' a Facebook post from her official page read.

'It was awesome answering all your questions, discussing the debt limit negotiations, and more. See you next month!,' the congresswoman tweeted in a separate post.

In 2022, AOC famously danced along to protesters at a town hall who made a drum beat telling her to resign.

The grinning congresswoman shrugged off the aggressive criticism as she sipped from a water bottle and began to move her shoulders in beat with the chants.

She sat on a stage throughout, and continued to smile even as one furious woman appeared ready to combust with rage while screaming herself hoarse from the seats.

Comedian Alex Stein posted a video of AOC commanding the crowd to 'listen!'

He jokingly wrote, 'I can't tell you in words how much it turns me on when AOC talks like this!'

Some scolded the sitting member for her apparent disregard for the views of the people who put her in office.

'You're [sic] own constituents heckled you the other night and you just started dancing and degrading them? Hopefully they're actually waking up and realizing that you have yet to pass one single piece of legislation for them or anyone else and they'll vote you out of office!' wrote Brent Smith.

A user identified by the handle @nashland wrote, 'You are an embarrassment and disgrace, sitting there 'dancing' at your town hall meeting instead of addressing the very serious issues people are raising. You think war is funny?'

Tiffany Justice, the cofounder of parents' rights group Moms for Liberty, wrote: 'Any good leader would be thoughtful when handling constituents who are upset with their leadership. Not this woman.'

'Watch as AOC sits, legs spread wide open, mocking her constituents by dancing and sticking out her tongue as they tell her they want her out of office. Gross,' she said.

As the shouts in the room grew louder, AOC said to one man in the crowd, 'very classy, thank you Sir.'

Earlier this week, AOC mocked Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' presidential campaign launch, saying on Twitter that more people watched her play videos games than watched his announcement.

While this month, the congresswoman made headlines for openly referring to the Marine veteran involved chokehold death of homeless Michael Jackson impersonator Jordan Neely on May 1st.

She tweeted before charges were filed that Neely's 'murderer' was being 'protected' while 'many in power demonize the

'You're a piece of sh*t': NYC town hall descends into chaos..., 2023 WLNR 18458448

poor.'

---- **Index References** ----

Company: NEW YORK POST CORPORATION

News Subject: (Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Government (1GO80); Immigration & Naturalization (1IM88); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Legal (1LE33); Public Affairs (1PU31); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Dance (1DA68); Entertainment (1EN08))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); CIS Countries (1CI64); Eastern Europe (1EA48); Europe (1EU83); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73); Ukraine (1UK09))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (AOC; Russia; Freedom News TV; White House; Moms for Liberty; New York Post)

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June 8, 2023

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms for Liberty are added to Southern Poverty Law Center's list of 'hate and anti-government...

Aneeta Bhole For Dailymail.Com

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms for Liberty are added to Southern Poverty Law Center's list of 'hate and anti-government groups' alongside neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms for Liberty are the latest to be added to a list of 'hate and anti-government groups.'

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms for Liberty are the latest to be added to a list of 'hate and anti-government groups' The group has been listed among 1225 'hate and anti-government extremist groups' in 2022 as part of a new report from the Southern Poverty Law Center SPLC says some of these groups have been added after schools have been on the 'receiving end of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks'

A new report from the Southern Poverty Law Center has added it, among others, to their 'Hate Map' as part of the release of their 'Year In Hate and Extremism 2022' report.

In previous years, groups to be included on the list were akin to neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan the addition of anti-government groups the list has increased from 733 'hate groups' in 2021 to 1225 'hate and anti-government extremist groups' for 2022.

Moms for Liberty was founded in early 2021 by conservative women in Florida, has quickly expanded its presence across the country.

It has landed national media attention for its efforts to fight COVID safety measures in schools, ban books, limit discussion about race and LGBTQ identities and populate local school boards with conservatives.

According to the new SPLC report schools have been on the 'receiving end of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks.'

Parental rights groups appear to have had an exponential growth according to SPLC 'spurred by the right-wing backlash to COVID-19 public safety measures.'

They've been described to have 'grown into an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.'

'At the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group with vast connections to the GOP that this

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms..., 2023 WLNR 19769360

year the SPLC designated as an extremist group,' the report reads.

'They can be spotted at school board meetings across the country wearing shirts and carrying signs that declare, 'We do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT.'

'The group hijacks meetings, preventing officials and parents from conducting their normal proceedings.'

The report goes on to claim that groups like Moms for Liberty have 'similar rallying cries' to those who 'opposed school desegregation.'

'Galvanizing supporters around supposed 'parental rights' and 'family values' is nothing new – similar rallying cries were adopted by those who opposed school desegregation during the civil rights movement and by the Moral Majority of the 1980s,' it said.

'These political slogans have been used repeatedly because they are effective, framing the organizing of far-right activists as something done solely out of real concern for children.'

It added: 'But Moms for Liberty activities make it clear that the group's primary goals are to fuel right-wing hysteria and to make the world a less comfortable or safe place for certain students – primarily those who are Black, LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ families.'

President and CEO of the SPLC and SPLC Action Fund, Margaret Huang, celebrated the report as a way of 'taking on' and 'exposing' extremists.

'Taking on the most hateful factions in our country is critical to dismantling white supremacy and advancing the civil rights of all people,' Huang said.

'We are exposing a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary.'

'These groups are descending on Main Street America and disrupting people's daily lives, too often with dire consequences for communities of color, Jewish people, and the LGBTQ+ community.'

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States.

But have been criticized for designating some groups as extremists when they're merely taking a political position.

Moms of Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich blasted the decision to label their organization as a 'hate group' and told Fox News that they're dedicated to empowering parents.

'Two-thirds of Americans think the public education system is on the wrong track today. That is why our organization is devoted to empowering parents to be a part of their child's public school education,' they said in the statement.

'That is our fundamental goal, which began just two years ago when teacher's unions locked students out of schools during the pandemic.'

'Empowering parents continues to be our mission today and that has fueled our organization's growth - like wildfire to now 45 states in the country.'

The co-founders went on to say that 'name-calling' parents who want to be part of their children's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' further exposes 'what the battle is all about.'

'Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees?' they said.

Parents' rights organizations including Florida-based Moms..., 2023 WLNR 19769360

'We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.'

Moms for Liberty joins 11 other right-wing parents rights' groups in the annual report.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Ku Klux Klan; SPLC Action Fund; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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Florida Politics
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June 8, 2023

Sunburn — The morning read of what's hot in Florida politics — 6.8.23

Peter Schorsch

Jun 08, 2023

Good Thursday morning.

A top of Sunburn birthday shoutout to the best in The Process, Kathy Mears. Our dear friend Kathy and her beloved sister and their family recently suffered a devastating tragedy that doesn't need to be repeated here other than to say that Kathy (and I'm sure her family) is deeply loved and cherished by all who know her. I hope she can find some happiness today because few people deserve it more.

Happy birthday to the industrious Kathy Mears.

Allegiant Strategies Group is continuing to grow with the addition of Kevin Cleary to the Tallahassee team as vice president of Government Relations.

Cleary brings years of political and government affairs experience to Allegiant Strategies Group. His résumé includes leadership positions at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, where he served as Legislative Affairs Director, and the Florida House, where he developed extensive government experience working as a legislative aide for five years.

On the campaign side, Cleary was the Republican Party of Florida's Statewide Congressional Campaign Director from 2012 through 2013 and as a Regional Director for two years in the late aughts. He also quarterbacked Sen. Ben Albritton's first campaign for state House in 2010 — a brief position, but a noteworthy one, considering the Wauchula Republican is in line to become Senate President for the 2024-26 term.

Kevin Cleary is bringing his years of experience to Allegiant Strategies Group.

"We are thrilled to welcome Kevin to the team," said firm founder and Managing Partner David Clark. "His wealth of legislative experience and deep understanding of the political landscape will undoubtedly strengthen our firm's ability to deliver exceptional results for our clients. Kevin's strategic acumen and track record of success make him a valuable addition to our team."

Cleary, a Florida State University alum, has established himself as a trusted professional known for his ability to navigate complex legislative landscapes and deliver results. With more than 15 years of experience working in state government,

Sunburn — The morning read of what's hot in Florida..., 2023 WLNR 19801861

Cleary has represented commercial and individual interests across several industries, including agriculture, public and private utilities, gaming, technology, and water.

Clark founded Allegiant Strategies Group in 2020, after working in state government for nearly two decades, including a stint as Deputy Chief of Staff to Gov. Ron DeSantis, which saw him provide executive guidance and policy direction for multiple state agencies on behalf of the Governor.

The firm also includes Ashley Clark, who came aboard as Chief Operations Officer in 2021 after serving in several prominent public sector positions, most recently as the Inspector General for the Public Service Commission, the state's utility regulatory body. She previously worked at the state departments of Transportation, Financial Services and Environmental Protection.

—
"Lionel Messi to Miami the seismic exclamation on South Florida's single greatest sports week ever" via Greg Cote of the Miami Herald —The long, long-awaited dream has become real.

The Powerball lottery. The mother lode. The Holy Grail.

Call it what you will. Miami has just won it.

Messi.

He is no less than a futbol deity, the biggest of sports' international icons, G.O.A.T. of G.O.A.T.s, and he is ours now. For most of the past three years, "Messi to Miami" had taken on a life of its own, growing by degrees from baseless hope to rumor to speculation to sketchy foreign reports of questionable credibility. It seemed more and more possible by hints and degrees.

Lionel Messi — the G.O.A.T. — lands in Miami. Image via AP.

The gestation has been long, dare say interminable. South Florida soccer fans have been teased and tantalized, but the celebration was always in abeyance, in maybe-someday mode, the cork never leaving the Champagne.

Until now.

Wednesday it became as official as it gets: The greatest player ever in the world's biggest sport is headed to join Inter Miami and Major League Soccer, instantly transforming and lifting a franchise, a league and a sport in America.

And the phrase "What a week!" is officially redefined.

— SITUATIONAL AWARENESS —

—@DamonLinker: Everyone's getting giddy again about a (Donald)Trump indictment. Remember: Before end of March, he was polling in mid-40s & leading his nearest rival by 15 pts. Since end of March, he's been hovering 10 pts higher, in mid-50s, and leading by 25-35 pts. Trump was indicted on March 30.

—@MarcACaputo: Hearing from Republicans who aren't (Mike)Pence folk that he knocked it out of the park today While it doesn't mean he's going to win the Primary, it's good to start on a good foot My colleague who has covered him for years — and not always to Pence's liking — also came away impressed.

—@RepMattGaetz: Our message to Speaker (Kevin)McCarthy is simple: he has to be in a monogamous relationship with one coalition or the other. He can't parade around with House conservatives on his arm for five months, and then jump in the back seat with Hakeem Jeffries.

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—@Fineout: a key distinction between the Fla sheriffs — (Grady)Judd&Wayne Iveyfrom Brevard — and the ones from Arizona. The Arizona law enforcement officials all wearing large hats. The Florida sheriffs are not.

—@Doug_Hanks: Miami-Dade's County Hall started flying the LGBTQ Pride flag during June after@MayorDaniellawon in 2020. Today's ceremony follows a failed attempt in Tally to regulate what flags local govt's can fly. "We say gay, OK?" Levine Cava told the audience. "We say trans."

—@EducationFL: As we welcome educators from around the state to the 2023 Summer Institute, we would like to thank our lead sponsor @SimplyFL for generously allocating resources that ensure districts and schools have the tools to make literacy accessible and improve outcomes for all students.

—@Natsfert: 2020: Mask indoors, remove when you get outside. 2023: Mask outdoors; remove when you get inside.

—@BSFarrington: UF just released a study on why people visit Florida. Among the reasons? "Visitors can enjoy beaches, theme parks ... and winter escapes for the snowbirds." Fascinating. Now looking forward to UF updating its zombie research.

—@Seinwall: New season of It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia debuts tonight. It is amazing that this show is still capable of making me laugh as hard in its SIXTEENTH season as it was in its second or third.

— DAYS UNTIL —

DeSantis to speak at 2023 NCGOP State Convention — 1; The 2023 Tonys — 3; Disney and Pixar's 'Elemental' premieres — 8; 'The Flash' premieres — 8; DeSantis to headline Nevada PAC's annual basque fry — 9; 'Secret Invasion' premieres on Disney+ — 13; 'The Bear' returns to Hulu — 13; Florida Chamber 2023 Florida Learners to Earners Workforce Solution Summit — 19; 'Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny' premieres — 22; 'Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning — Part One' premieres — 34; Florida Chamber 37th Annual Environmental Permitting Summer School — 41; Christopher Nolan's 'Oppenheimer' premieres — 43; Beyoncé's 'Renaissance' tour in Tampa — 69; The first GOP Presidential Primary debate — 76; 'Ahsoka' premieres on Disney+ — 76; Florida House Fall 2023 Interim Committee Meetings begin — 102; Martin Scorsese's 'Killers of the Flower Moon' premieres — 120; 2023 Florida Chamber Annual Meeting & Future of Florida Forum — 137; 'Dune: Part Two' premieres — 148; 'Captain Marvel 2' premieres — 155; Ridley Scott's 'Napoleon' premieres — 167; Florida's 2024 Regular Session begins — 215; South Carolina Democratic Primary — 240; New Hampshire and Nevada Democratic Primaries — 243; Georgia Democratic Primary — 250; Michigan Democratic Primary — 264; 'A Quiet Place: Day One' premieres — 274; 2024 Oscars — 276; 'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse' Part 2 premieres — 295; 'Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes' premieres — 351; Opening Ceremony of the 2024 Olympic Games — 414; 'Thunderbolts' premieres — 414; Georgia Tech to face Florida State in 2024 opener in Dublin — 443; 'Blade' reboot premieres — 456; 'Deadpool 3' premieres — 519; 'Fantastic Four' reboot premieres — 617; 'Avengers: The Kang Dynasty' premieres — 694; 'Avengers: Secret Wars' premieres — 1,058.

— TOP STORIES —

"After flying migrants to California, Ron DeSantis calls for multistate border partnership" via Ana Ceballos of the Miami Herald — DeSantis is doubling down on the idea that Republicans need to come together and take border security into their own hands.

At an event in Arizona on Wednesday, DeSantis listed all the hard-line immigration policies he has championed in Florida to preface that he has "the will" to work with like-minded Republican Governors and Sheriffs to respond to issues at the southern border.

Ron DeSantis floats a multistate agreement to tackle border security. Image via WTLV.

"There is no reason why we can't be working with Texas or why we can't work with Arizona, at the local level or at the state level," said DeSantis, whose event in Sierra Vista, Arizona, marked his first visit to the U.S.-Mexico border as a presidential candidate.

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Without providing much detail, DeSantis said that there will be an announcement in the coming days that will show how he plans to formalize the multistate partnership.

The effort, he said, is a rebuke of President Joe Biden's border policies.

"We have the will in states like Florida ... but you may not have the will in Washington, D.C. So, we got to work together to try to overcome that," DeSantis said.

"Prosecuting Florida's migrant flights would face legal hurdles" via Edgar Sandoval of The New York Times — When a private plane chartered by the government of Florida dropped off bewildered Latin American migrants recently on a pair of flights from Texas to California, Gov. Gavin Newsom described it as a possible "kidnapping" and called for an investigation. There was a precedent: A Texas sheriff this week announced he was recommending criminal charges in connection with two similar flights last year, also organized by the state of Florida, which carried 49 Venezuelan migrants from Texas to Martha's Vineyard. But holding anyone civilly or criminally accountable for the flights may prove challenging, legal analysts said, and would most likely turn on whether the migrants were misled when they boarded the planes.

— THE TRAIL —

"Economist/YouGov poll: Half of independent voters hold unfavorable view of DeSantis" via A.G. Gancarski of Florida Politics — A survey conducted by The Economist and YouGov from June 3-6 shows 50% of self-identified independent voters regard the Governor unfavorably. Compounding the problem, 35% of independents polled have a very unfavorable impression of the state's chief executive, a number that's far and away the biggest among the potential answers. An additional 15% see DeSantis in a "somewhat unfavorable light." The passion isn't matched on the positive side of the ledger, where 17% of independent voters see DeSantis in a "somewhat favorable" light, and just 10% hold a "very favorable" regard for the Governor. Just 23% have no impression at all, leaving DeSantis at -23 with the voters who may prove most pivotal if DeSantis secures the Republican nomination.

Independents are slow to warm to Ron DeSantis. Image via AP.

"20 Oklahoma lawmakers endorse DeSantis" via Jacob Ogles of Florida Politics — DeSantis continues to draw political support from state lawmakers — and not just in Florida. The Never Back Down super PAC just announced 20 Oklahoma state lawmakers are endorsing the Florida Governor's Presidential ambitions. The support comes days ahead of a planned visit by DeSantis to the Sooner State. He will visit Tulsa on Saturday, June 10. A list of supporters shows significant support from the leadership within the legislative branch.

"Millionaires favor DeSantis in Republican Presidential Primary, but support for Donald Trump grows" via Robert Frank of CNBC — DeSantis is the favorite Republican candidate among millionaires, although their support for Trump is growing. Only 32% of millionaire Republicans now support DeSantis as the GOP nominee. That marks a large drop from the 54% who backed DeSantis at the end of 2022. At the same time, more respondents are getting behind Trump. He has the support of 28% of Republican millionaires, narrowly trailing DeSantis. The share of Republican millionaires backing Trump jumped from 17% at the end of 2022.

—"DeSantis to visit Greensboro, North Carolina, Friday" via Peter Schorsch of Florida Politics

Tweet, tweet:

Shot... "LIV Golf-PGA Tour merger marks one more loss for DeSantis super PAC consultant Jeff Roe" via Peter Schorsch of Florida Politics — Florida politicians know Roe best as a consultant on a losing streak in the Sunshine State but who boasts the trust of DeSantis. But he also holds close ties to Clout Public Affairs, which for years has done work for the PGA. The Wall Street Journal in December reported Clout had been hired to front a campaign slamming LIV Golf for its ties to the Saudi government, and rallied 9/11 families to take shots at the then-rival tour. Clout President David Polyansky didn't push back. Polyansky has been a top Roe lieutenant. Roe as a senior adviser to the Never Back Down super PAC, brought the very same 9/11 families attacking LIV Golf to visit the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee over Memorial Day.

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Chaser... “DeSantis-linked PR shop ditches PGA Tour amid LIV Golf merger blowback” via Hailey Fuchs and Caitlin Oprysko of POLITICO — The DeSantis-connected PR shop Clout Public Affairs has dropped the PGA Tour as a client after it announced its plans to merge with the Saudi-funded LIV Golf. The firm had been working with both the PGA Tour and the families of 9/11 victims who had been agitating against LIV Golf for its Saudi ties. It was one of a number of public relations or lobbying shops that had cashed in on the high-profile feud between the storied PGA Tour and the controversial upstart LIV Golf. “Given recent events, we have respectfully ended our engagement with the PGA TOUR,” said Ashlee Rich Stephenson, Clout’s president, in a statement. “9/11 Justice remains a client.”

— MORE 2024 —

”Trump scores 50 endorsements from the West Virginia state legislature” via Meridith McGraw of POLITICO — Nearly half the West Virginia State Legislature has signed on to a letter endorsing Trump in the Republican Primary, marking an early show of strength from the former President as the campaign gets underway. “As President, Donald J. Trump fought for conservative Republican principles and delivered responsible America First policies that greatly benefited West Virginia, our nation, and the world,” reads a letter signed by members of the state House of Delegates and Senate. “President Trump exhibited strength and determination within his service to our country, as he bravely countered unwarranted attacks, never wavering from his commitment to the American people.”

West Virginia lawmakers jump on the Trump Train. Image via AP.

”Trump team braces for federal indictment as former aide testifies in Miami” via Steve Reilly and Marc Caputo of The Messenger — Trump’s ex-spokesperson appeared before a Miami grand jury Wednesday, signaling the breadth of the federal investigation into the former President’s handling of sensitive documents and how it stretches from South Florida to Washington, D.C. It’s a twist in venue that caught Trump’s lawyers and many legal experts by surprise considering a federal grand jury in Washington has overseen the case and interviewed witnesses for months, leading to speculation that the Department of Justice would charge the former President in the nation’s capital.

”Taylor Budowich appears before Miami grand jury in Trump documents probe” via Spencer S. Hsu, Devlin Barrett and Josh Dawsey of The Washington Post — A former aide to Trump appeared Wednesday before a federal grand jury in Miami as part of special counsel Jack Smith’s investigation into whether the former President mishandled classified documents or obstructed government efforts to retrieve them after leaving office. Budowich, a former Trump spokesperson who now leads a pro-Trump super PAC, was seen arriving at the federal courthouse in Miami Wednesday morning. At 11:31 a.m., Budowich tweeted that he had “fulfilled a legal obligation to testify in front [of] a federal grand jury.” “I answered every question honestly,” the tweet said. His appearance lasted about an hour.

”Trump super PAC trolls DeSantis over expanded 2024 field” via A.G. Gancarski of Florida Politics — Make America Great Again Inc. heralded the campaigns of North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and former Vice President Pence as the latest signs the Florida Governor’s campaign is faltering. “Unlike Ron DeSantis, Doug Burgum doesn’t have to point to relatives to claim Midwestern credentials. He was born and raised there. However, like Ron DeSantis, Doug Burgum will waste millions of dollars only to lose to President Donald Trump in Iowa,” asserted MAGA Inc. spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt. Burgum’s entry got more words from MAGA Inc. than the former Vice President, meanwhile. “Mike Pence’s entrance into the race caps off another bad week for Ron DeSantis’ faltering campaign, but the question most GOP voters are asking themselves about Pence’s candidacy is ‘Why?’”

Trump ad calls Democratic detractors a ‘pack of rabid wolves’ — The Trump campaign released a new ad saying Democrats are aware the former President will “crush Biden” in a head-to-head rematch, so “like a pack of rabid wolves, they attack.” The minute-long spot, released on the conservative video platform Rumble, then enumerates several supposed left-wing conspiracies and actions aimed at taking him down, such as directing “radical left prosecutors” such as former FBI Director Robert Mueller, a Republican, to charge him with crimes. These conspiracies, the ad asserts, are all meant to distract from “Biden’s incompetence, weakness and money-grabbing corruption.” The ad concludes, “But here’s the thing, (Trump) will never blink. That’s called having the courage of your convictions and it’s why he’s our President.”

To watch the ad, please click on the image below:

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”Did Chris Christie really destroy Marco Rubio?” via Aaron Blake of The Washington Post —Christie’s entry into the 2024 GOP presidential race Tuesday has provided what many Never Trumpers have long pined for: A Republican making a full-throated and unapologetic case against Trump using all the available tools. And as Christie has set about embracing that role, more than a few, including us and Christie himself, have recalled the time he supposedly slew another presidential candidate, by the name of Rubio. Rubio, perhaps needless to say, takes issue with this version of history.

”Miami Mayor raising super PAC cash, assembling campaign team as ‘24 announcement looms” via Joey Flechas of the Miami Herald —Francis Suarez has tapped City Hall staffers to join a campaign team and is steering political contributions into a federal super PAC, strong signs that he’s preparing to launch a bid for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. Suarez, who has been teasing a presidential campaign for months, is expected to join supporters Wednesday evening for a fundraiser at the riverfront Kimpton EPIC Hotel, where invitations list minimum “suggested contributions” at \$10,000 per couple. An invite shows the event sponsor is America for Everyone, a super PAC that raised more than \$6 million last year, with large contributions from donors who have previously supported the Mayor.

”Rick Scott isn’t ruling out Dwyane Wade, Grant Hill 2024 challenge” via A.G. Gancarski of Florida Politics — U.S. Sen. Scott isn’t known for his basketball prowess, but he isn’t ruling out an electoral game of one-on-one against an NBA legend. During a Wednesday interview on WMAL’s “O’Connor and Company,” the rookie Senator was asked about the possibility of hoops heroes Hill or Wade running against him in the 2024 General Election. It remains to be seen if the former basketball standouts are ready for a 2024 run. Attorney John Morgan has said Hill would “beat the s—” out of Scott. Hill has been involved in Democratic politics.

— STATEWIDE —

First on #FlaPol —”Ricky Polston, former Florida Supreme Court Justice, to leave Citizens Property Insurance” via Gray Rohrer of Florida Politics —Polston is on the move again. Three months after leaving the state’s high court to become General Counsel for Citizens Property Insurance, Polston is leaving that gig for a position with Shutts & Bowen. In a memo, Citizens President and CEO Tim Cerio said the move is effective June 30 and Polston will head up the constitutional law section at Shutts & Bowen, a well-connected firm with a roster of lawyers appointed to various state boards and offices throughout the state. “(Polston) was presented with an opportunity he felt was best for him and his family at this stage of what has been an exemplary legal career,” Cerio wrote.

Ricky Polston is saying goodbye to Citizens Property Insurance. Image via Stetson Law.

”Florida insurance costs get even worse. Lawmakers are too busy being anti-woke to see” via the Miami Herald editorial board — We know all too well that Florida property insurance costs have been skyrocketing, with no end in sight. Now there’s a new study that shows just how bad it’s gotten, and it’s even worse than we thought. The state’s property insurance costs are up by an incredible 57% since 2015 — nearly triple the national average of 21%, as the Miami Herald reported. If that weren’t enough misery, Florida distinguished itself in another way: Insurance costs have been rising faster in Florida than in any other state.

”Recreational marijuana may be on Florida ballot; here’s why leading pot advocate isn’t happy” via James Call of the Tallahassee Democrat — The Adult Personal Use of Marijuana proposed ballot measure would legalize marijuana for nonmedical use and has submitted the required number of signatures to qualify for the 2024 ballot. But the executive director of the Suncoast NORML chapter is not celebrating the milestone. Chris Cano said his review of the initiative finds people and consumers were afterthoughts in how it is written, while the interest of current marijuana industry players will benefit if the proposal becomes law. “The amendment itself does nothing to expand the cannabis industry. It essentially allows the existing limited cartel structure of license holders to start selling over-the-counter adult-use cannabis for a higher price,” said Cano, discussing the proposal last month.

”Florida immigrant exodus could spell workforce disaster.” via Brandon Girod of the Pensacola News Journal — Florida Republicans are highlighting loopholes in the legislation to prevent a potential disaster after the new law incited a movement among Florida’s sizable immigrant population to leave the state. “This bill is 100% supposed to scare you,” Rep. Rick Roth told attendees at a faith-based event in Hialeah. “We are losing employees that are already starting to move to Georgia and other States. ... It’s urgent that you talk to all your people and convince them that you have resources, state

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Representatives and other people that can explain the bill to you.” Immigrants in Florida make up a little over 21% of its total population, according to Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan institution that provides research data and analysis.

Florida faces an exodus of immigrant workers. Image via AP.

”Florida personnel in Texas round up guns, drugs, money and undocumented migrants” via Anne Geggis of Florida Politics — The state’s muscle, hundreds drawn from the Florida National Guard and other law-enforcing agencies, have swung into action in Texas, making contact with more than 5,800 undocumented migrants since May 25. More than 550 Florida personnel have been on water patrols, foot patrols and even provided perimeter security around a school in the immediate area near the border where gunfire was reported. Florida’s contribution has meant assistance in 190 arrests, 700 traffic stops and even the apprehension of an MS-13 gang member on the U.S. Terror Watch List.

— D. C. MATTERS —

”Jeff Zients calls for any Cabinet resignations ASAP” via Hans Nichols of Axios — White House Chief of Staff Zients has been quietly calling members of Biden’s Cabinet to deliver a subtle message: If you plan to leave, please do so in the next few months. Biden’s Cabinet will play a key role in his re-election campaign, as he contrasts his accomplishments with what’s likely to be a nasty fight among GOP contenders. Republicans will be eager to tweak the White House, so Biden’s team wants to avoid any confirmation battles in an election year.

Jeff Zients calls for any Biden Cabinet resignations before the campaign gears up. Image via AP.

”Joe Biden nominates Charlie Crist for U.N. Ambassador role” via Jesse Scheckner of Florida Politics — Biden is nominating Crist, as the next U.S. Ambassador to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations agency. If confirmed by the Senate, Crist would serve as America’s representative on the ICAO Council, a 36-member body composed of electees from the ICAO’s 193 member states. He’d replace famed pilot Chelsey “Sully” Sullenberger, whose “miracle” landing on the Hudson River in 2009 was dramatized in a feature film seven years later. Sullenberger has served as ICAO ambassador since December 2021.

”Kamala Harris will push for a multinational force in Haiti during visit to Caribbean” via Michael Wilner and Jacqueline Charles of the Miami Herald — Harris will renew the Biden administration’s push for an international force to assist Haiti in its ongoing security crisis when she meets with Caribbean leaders in the Bahamas on Thursday. U.S. officials told McClatchy and the Miami Herald that the multilateral force could provide “near-term support” for the Haitian National Police by securing “a limited number of critical infrastructure sites in Port-au-Prince, such as the airport and ports,” relieving the burden on the local police to focus resources on its battle with gangs.

”Conservative rebels throw House into limbo” via Emily Brooks and Mychael Schnell of The Hill — A revolt from conservatives thrust the House floor into a state of limbo Wednesday, with leaders forced to delay a second try at advancing a rule GOP rebels shot down one day earlier. The office of House Majority Leader Steve Scalise scheduled a vote for Wednesday at 12:20 p.m. on a rule to advance four bills related to gas stoves and regulatory reform. But when that time rolled around, leadership was forced to recess the chamber as the talks to break the impasse continued. Conservatives are still incensed at the debt limit compromise deal Speaker McCarthy struck with Biden that got more votes from Democrats than Republicans, though two-thirds of the GOP conference voted for the bill.

”Justice Clarence Thomas gets extension for financial report” via Emily Birnbaum, Lydia Wheeler and Kimberly Robinson of Bloomberg — Thomas received a 90-day extension for his 2022 financial disclosure report after coming under criticism for failing to report lavish trips and gifts paid for by billionaire GOP megadonor Harlan Crow. The Justice, whose disclosures were widely anticipated in the wake of the controversy over Crow, typically files his financial disclosures by the May 15 deadline. The upcoming release could offer fresh insight into Thomas’s finances for the first time since revelations this spring that Thomas and his wife traveled on Crow’s yacht and private jet. The GOP megadonor also bought Thomas’s childhood home in Georgia from the justice and his relatives and paid for private schooling for Thomas’s grandnephew.

”Anna Paulina Luna gets media attention with dire, baseless claims” via Philip Bump of The Washington Post — It does appear to be the case that the FBI expressed concern that, by making public an unredacted version of the interview, the safety

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of the confidential human source would be at risk. A source that could glean information from people in Ukraine or Russia would understandably be one the FBI would seek to protect. Notice how Luna frames this, though: The informant would be killed if “unmasked” — “based on the info he has brought forward about the Biden family.” It’s not that someone who was providing information on an ongoing basis to American law enforcement (as this informant was) would be at risk; it is, in Luna’s presentation, that this was occurring because the secondhand information related to the Bidens.

— LOCAL: S. FL —

”Bobby Powell adds 50-plus endorsements for Palm Beach County Commission bid” via Jesse Scheckner of Florida Politics — Sen. Powell is officially running for the Palm Beach Commission. Powell has submitted paperwork to seek the District 7 seat on the County Commission. The three-term Senator and former state Representative also released a list of more than 50 current and former elected officials and noteworthy community members who are backing his bid for county office. “I have worked (for years) to build consensus and develop relationships locally, statewide, and nationally that I will use to continue strengthening Palm Beach County,” Powell said in a statement Wednesday.

”Wellington Mayor makes it a 3-person Republican Primary for HD 93 seat” via Anne Geggis of Florida Politics — The House District 93 Republican Primary now has three contenders, with Wellington Mayor Anne Gerwig entering the fray. Gerwig, who is Wellington’s first Mayor elected for two consecutive terms, filed to run for the inland Palm Beach County district, a seat now occupied by Rep. Katherine Waldron. She’ll be competing in the Primary with Brandon Cabrera, who owns a real estate development company, and Chris Mitchell, whose LinkedIn profile shows is a vice president and Norcom Mortgage branch manager.

Anne Gerwig is entering the HD 93 fray.

”Deputy’s failure to confront Parkland gunman cost children’s lives, jury hears” via Rafael Olmeda of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — Lives were at stake, and Broward Sheriff’s Deputy Scot Peterson had a duty to run toward the sound of gunfire, to find the perpetrator and take him down, or at least to try, a prosecutor told jurors. But, his lawyer countered, that would have required him to know then what everyone knows now: that a single gunman was responsible for the Feb. 14, 2018, mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School; that the shots were coming from inside the 1200 building and not from nearby or outside; that the shooter systematically made his way from floor to floor to carry out his rampage.

”Broward schools finalist brings big hopes, big questions” via the South Florida Sun-Sentinel editorial board — If you live in Broward and care about its schools, get to know this name: Sito Narcisse. He’s already generating a tremendous level of buzz — good and bad — as one of three finalists to be Broward’s next school Superintendent. Narcisse (pronounced nahr-SEESE), 47, is superintendent in East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a much smaller district than Broward’s, but one that’s more diverse, with a minority student enrollment of 90%. He arrived there in 2021 after holding high-level education jobs in Boston, Pittsburgh, Maryland’s Prince Georges County, Washington D.C. and Nashville. He was a finalist for Jacksonville’s top job five years ago. His resume shows that he doesn’t stay around in one place very long. If he gets the Broward job, it will be his fifth position in the past 10 years.

”Fort Lauderdale’s water report card: Some sites fail nearly every day, others pass with flying colors” via Bill Kearney of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — Nearly half Fort Lauderdale’s water quality testing sites fail to meet clean water standards on most days, according to an annual report released by Miami Waterkeeper. It’s not all doom and gloom, however, some sites are almost always clean. The data comes from the Miami Waterkeeper Annual Report for 2022. The watchdog environmental group partners with the city of Fort Lauderdale to test 10 sites throughout the city each week for bacteria levels. They chose sites likely to see a good bit of recreational use. During their 2022 testing, the worst site was Sweeting Park (Reverend Samuel Delevoe Memorial Park) on the north fork of the New River, which failed testing 94% of the time.

”Fort Lauderdale says yes to private condos on taxpayer-owned Bahia Mar” via Susannah Bryan of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — The developers who plan to remake Bahia Mar with four luxury condo towers and a five-star hotel got their approval from the Fort Lauderdale Commission just after midnight on Wednesday during a marathon meeting that’s been years in the making. Critics objected to what they called another giveaway of taxpayer-owned land on the barrier island. But supporters said the \$1 billion project would transform the site from an aging time warp into a world-class destination. Jimmy Tate and his partners plan to build four condo towers standing 270 feet tall and a 300-foot-high hotel on the city-owned

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peninsula known for being the home base to the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

”We say gay. We say trans.’ In Miami, county Mayor celebrates raising of Pride flag” via Douglas Hanks of the Miami Herald — After watching a rainbow flag rise outside County Hall, Miami-Dade’s Mayor noted this year’s event drew the largest crowd she’s seen for the annual Pride Month celebration of LGBTQ rights. “I wonder why,” Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, a Democrat, said in a year that saw Florida’s GOP-controlled Legislature pass new laws targeting drag shows, restricting transgender people to using government-building bathrooms that match their birth gender, and regulating the ability of students and teachers to be called by their pronouns of choice. “I think people got the memo. We need to show up. We need to stand up.”

”Indian River will consider boosting bed tax 25% to fund beach repair, tourist promotion” via Janet Begley of Treasure Coast Newspapers — Would paying a 1% hotel tax stop vacationers from coming here? County Commissioners debated that question as they considered a proposal by Commission Chair Joe Earmanto hike the county bed by 25%, from the current 4% to 5%. According to Earman, increasing the bed tax by 1% could generate approximately an additional \$1 million annually, which could be used both for beach renourishment and for county tourism efforts. Thirty-four counties in Florida — including Brevard, Martin and St. Lucie — currently have a 5% bed tax. “It’s a funding source that we need to look at,” Earman said.

— LOCAL: C. FL —

”Central Florida officials vow ‘no veteran will be left behind’ ahead of influx of federal cash to house homeless” via Ryan Gillespie of the Orlando Sentinel — Fueled by a surge of funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Homeless Services Network of Central Florida has plans to rapidly rehouse homeless veterans in Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties. Officials announced a campaign following a promise of \$6.7 million in federal grants — double last year’s total — to connect veterans and their families with a range of resources from rental assistance and housing expenses to medical care and other support. The money will not only offer more services but also help families receive them quicker, the network said. It is also meant to help those who may presently have housing but are at risk of falling into homelessness.

Central Florida wants to use federal dollars to fight veteran homelessness. Image via AP.

”2 groups cancel Orlando conventions as worries over political climate grow” via Skyler Swisher of the Orlando Sentinel — AnitaB.org, an organization of female and nonbinary tech workers, is moving its annual convention out of Orlando and taking its business elsewhere, citing Florida’s political climate and actions taken by DeSantis and the Legislature. And another group of nurses is canceling a 2027 event because of similar concerns. The cancellations are the latest economic blow to the region, coming in the wake of The Walt Disney Co.’s decision to drop plans for a nearly \$1 billion corporate campus in Orlando with 2,000 high-paying jobs.

”I know why Disney is fighting DeSantis” via Sean Griffin of The New York Times — The culture wars have come for corporate America. Companies are rarely exemplars of courage, and some — particularly Anheuser-Busch, Bud Light’s brewer — switched course almost immediately. When DeSantis last year attacked The Walt Disney Co. for criticizing his anti-LGBTQ legislation, he probably believed he had secured a quick political win. Instead, Disney engaged in an all-out war. Suddenly, he was fending off charges that he is anti-business. Why would one of America’s largest corporate entities, particularly one lacking a long history of taking grand positions on social issues, go to the mat for L.G.B.T.Q. rights? Because it has no alternative.

— LOCAL: TB —

”Visit St. Pete-Clearwater CEO steps down” via Spectrum News — The leader of Pinellas County’s tourism agency has resigned. Steve Hayes, CEO of Visit St. Pete-Clearwater, resigned from his position on Tuesday. Hayes had been in that role since December 2019. The agency markets tourism for Pinellas beaches and attractions nationwide and around the world. Pinellas County Commissioners will look for a replacement to head the tourist information center. The County Administrator’s special assistant Barry Burton will take over for now.

Steve Hayes is taking an abrupt leave from Visit St. Pete-Clearwater.

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"Pinellas County Schools selects developer to build teacher and staff housing in St. Pete" via Breanne Williams of the Tampa Bay Business Journal — Pinellas County Schools has selected Tomlinson Community Partners to build teacher and staff housing at the Tomlinson building in downtown St. Petersburg. The historic Tomlinson building, which opened in 1924 and closed in December 2021, is near Mirror Lake. In November 2022, Pinellas County Schools requested proposals seeking public-private partnerships for the 1.7-acre site. Four proposals were received. Tomlinson Community Partners is a joint venture between Washington, D.C.-based Dantes Partners and the team of Alexander Goshen and Cornerstone Strategic Partners.

"Hillsborough educators now are calling 'social-emotional learning' something else" via Marlene Sokol of the Tampa Bay Times — Hillsborough County Public School educators take time in the school day to help children understand their emotions. They engage in organized programs to encourage empathy and combat bullying. They conduct surveys to find out how well-supported children feel at school. All of these activities, known in the trade as social-emotional learning, will continue, officials say. They will just be called something else. A redlined version of the student code of conduct, which the School Board approved unanimously on Tuesday, now uses terms such as "resiliency, character, and life skills education" wherever "social-emotional learning" was previously found.

"Hillsborough to again consider expanded County Commission" via C.T. Bowen of the Tampa Bay Times — Hillsborough County Commissioner Michael Owen wants to see more people join him on the dais as elected Commissioners. Owen resurrected a frequently debated topic of adding two seats to the County Commission and eliminating the three at-large, countywide seats and replacing them with Commissioners that represent specific areas of the county. Under a timeline Owen proposed Wednesday, voters would consider the charter change needed to make it happen in 2024 and, if approved, the nine, single-member districts would become effective in the 2026 Election.

"Hillsborough balks at renewed PACE home-energy loans" via C.T. Bowen of the Tampa Bay Times — A home-energy loan program that has come under scrutiny for saddling people with debt they can't afford might not be able to restart in Hillsborough County, despite a judge's order. That's because Hillsborough County tax collector Nancy Millan says she lacks legal authority to add the loan payments, or assessments, to property tax bills as the program requires. In May 25 letters to four providers of Property Assessed Clean Energy, known commonly as PACE, Millan noted the Hillsborough County Commission ended the local agreements between the county and the agencies in late 2020.

"Tampa Bay renters must make over \$80,000 to afford rent, report says" via Devonta Davis of the Tampa Bay Business Journal — Tampa Bay's rental market is only affordable to households that earn more than \$80,000 a year. The report shows that the average renter in 11 U.S. markets must make a six-figure annual salary to avoid being classified as rent burdened. Since April, the latest Waller Weeks and Johnson rental index stated that Tampa Bay's average rent was \$2,118.75 a month, a 5.04% increase from the year before and the No. 18 most expensive metro area in the U.S.

We cover everything— "Betz Farm sale in limbo as Citrus County denies third extension" via Mike Wright of Florida Politics — Citrus County's attempts to sell 350 acres of vacant property near Crystal River have hit a final snag after the potential buyer sought a third extension in his attempts to receive permitting for development. While the purchaser, Tampa real estate developer Hamid Ashtari, never formally requested another extension and the County Commission hasn't officially denied it, both occurred Tuesday. The county and Ashtari agreed in May 2022 on a \$6.6 million purchase price. The land is referred to as Betz Farm, named for the 1,500-home Tamposi family development on Turkey Oak Drive.

Development delays put the sale of Betz Farm on ice.

— LOCAL: N. FL —

"Jaguars unveil 'stadium of the future' whose cost could top \$1 billion" via David Bauerlein of The Florida Times-Union — The Jacksonville Jaguars showcased the team's vision for a dramatic overhaul of the football stadium that would build a shiny roof over the stadium and make numerous other changes that the team says would make it a "stadium of the future." A four-minute video released by the team on Wednesday morning shows a renovated and transformed stadium. A city document puts the rough estimated cost for all the improvements at \$1.2 billion to \$1.4 billion. The city's share would be 67% of the cost, or a range of \$800 million to \$934 million. The Jaguars would pay the rest for the work on the city-owned

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stadium.

To watch the announcement video, please click on the image below:

[embedded content]

”A direct disgrace’: New price tag on Northeast Park leads to latest Blueprint firestorm” via TaMaryn Waters of the Tallahassee Democrat — The fate of the long-discussed Northeast Park may come to a head when the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board meets June 15 for another round of debate about its increased price tag and project scope. The sales tax-funded project is slated for 50 acres on Centerville Road, adjacent to the Montford Middle and Roberts Elementary Schools. It’s among more than two dozen other projects previously approved by voters when the Blueprint referendum passed. However, last month, the project sparked an extraordinarily fierce debate that left County Commissioner Brian Welch in tears at one point and yelling the next.

”Former City Commissioner Dot Inman-Johnson files to run again in 2024” via Jeff Burlew of the Tallahassee Democrat — Inman-Johnson, the first Black woman ever to serve as a Tallahassee City Commissioner, is running for City Commission Seat 2, setting up a possible matchup against incumbent Curtis Richardson in 2024. Inman-Johnson, who served on the City Commission from 1984 to 1994, filed her campaign paperwork on Tuesday at the Leon County Supervisor of Elections office. Surrounded by more than three dozen friends, family members and supporters, she pledged to focus her campaign on issues, not personalities or individual “feuding.”

”Verdict watch: Former FSU, NFL player Travis Rudolph found not guilty of murder and attempted murder” via Hannah Phillips of The Palm Beach Post — Jurors found former Florida State University football player Rudolph not guilty of murder Wednesday, concluding a two-week trial in which Rudolph insisted he killed a man and almost killed three others in order to save his own life. The jury reached its decision after fewer than four hours of deliberation. Rudolph, who played briefly in the NFL, faced one count of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder for the fatal shooting outside his Lake Park home two years ago.

— LOCAL: SW. FL —

”Absolutely panicking.’ New Florida law has Bradenton immigrants leaving, employers worried” via James A. Jones Jr. of the Bradenton Herald — The never-ending, decades-long debate over immigration reform periodically throws a real scare into the voiceless community that supplies the labor for some of America’s most backbreaking work. It’s no secret that many roofers, asphalt spreaders, tomato pickers, dishwashers and the crews that mow neighborhood lawns are immigrants. Not all of them have the proper documents to work in the United States, yet native-born Americans are not exactly clamoring for those jobs. DeSantis recently signed Senate Bill 1718, making E-Verify mandatory for employers with 25 or more employees, starting July 1. The bill has created fear and panic among immigrants, and raised concerns in the wider Latino community, especially agricultural areas like Manatee and DeSoto counties.

”Reckless’: Sarasota School Board’s Bridget Ziegler rebuts Moms for Liberty ‘extremist’ label” via Steven Walker of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune — In response to the Southern Poverty Law Center’s labeling of Moms For Liberty as an extremist group, Ziegler, the Chair of the Sarasota School Board and one of the group’s co-founders, questioned the organization’s credibility, calling the label “reckless.” Moms for Liberty, a right-wing activist group founded in Florida by Ziegler and former Brevard County School Board member Tina Descovich, and 11 other groups were labeled by the Southern Poverty Law Center as “anti-government extremist groups.” The group has been active in Sarasota’s School Board politics and policies, endorsing two of the three conservative board candidates in August’s election.

Bridget Ziegler pushes back on the idea that Moms For Liberty is an extremist group.

”Public weighs in on Sarasota Superintendent search as School Board’s final decision looms” via Steven Walker of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune — More than two dozen people offered their opinions at Sarasota County’s School Board meeting on who the district’s next leader should be, as the search for a new Superintendent nears its scheduled conclusion next week. The previous day, the School Board ranked its top Superintendent candidates as follows: Terrence Connor from Hillsborough County, Josiah Phillips from Broward County, Allison Foster from Sarasota County, and Charles Van Zant from Clay County.

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But a number of speakers expressed displeasure with Van Zant as a candidate because he described himself as a “staunch conservative” in his cover letter.

”Collier School Board asks court to dismiss Alfie Oakes’ Superintendent search lawsuit” via Nikki Ross of the Naples Daily News — The hearing for Naples grocer Oakes’ lawsuit against the Collier County School Board — which claims the Board and its search firm violated the Sunshine Law in the Superintendent search — is set for Thursday afternoon. In his lawsuit, which was filed May 17 with the Collier County Circuit Court, Oakes claims that the School Board violated the Sunshine Law by allowing search firm Hazard Young Atea Associates to select 10 candidates out of 45 applicants privately, without public notice, public comment or minutes. The Board’s response, which was filed May 30, asked that the court dismiss the complaint.

”Collier County man sentenced to more than two years in Capitol riot” via Tomas Rodriguez of the Naples Daily News — A Collier County man was sentenced to more than two years in federal prison for his role at the U.S. Capitol insurrection more than two years ago. Court records indicate that John Herbert Strand, 38, was sentenced before U.S. District Judge Christopher Reid Cooper to two years and eight months for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, mob. A jury convicted him on Sept. 27, 2022, on five counts. Strand was arrested on Jan. 18, 2021, in California and indicted on Feb. 5 of that year. The U.S. Department of Justice said he is from Naples. He’s at least the second Collier County defendant to be convicted in the Capitol insurrection.

”More cyanotoxin warnings in the Caloosahatchee; algae-tainted Lake O releases paused” via Amy Bennett Williams of the Fort Myers News-Press — A week into hurricane season, as concerns over algae blooms mount, Caloosahatchee river-watchers don’t have to worry about Lake O making things worse — at least for the moment. “We have not been releasing out of the lake from the Julian Keen, Jr. Lock and Dam in Moore Haven,” wrote U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spokesperson Erica Skoltein in an email. The federal agency manages Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee with input from others including area municipalities and environmental nonprofits. On Friday, it closed the gates between the river and lake, keeping water from heading downstream to the estuary and nearby barrier islands. Once upon a time, the Caloosahatchee wasn’t permanently linked to the lake.

”Fourth of July fireworks canceled in Naples. Here’s what we know” via Laura Layden of the Naples Daily News — Naples has canceled its popular Fourth of July fireworks show over the Gulf of Mexico. By consensus, Naples City Council decided to scrap it. Why? Safety concerns related to Hurricane Ian. With some hurricane-damaged beach entrances and parking areas still closed and under repair, and many buildings and homes still vacant and on the mend from the storm near the beach, a majority of the Council agreed the potential liabilities and adverse impacts are just too great this year to host the event. Instead, the city plans to have a fireworks show on Dec. 1, as part of a centennial celebration.

— TOP OPINION —

”DeSantis wants you to be scared senseless about crime (don’t be)” via Radley Balko of the Daily Beast — Crime has been Trump’s pet issue since he launched his first campaign. It’s an issue he returns to over and over. In his grim “American Carnage” inaugural address, Trump began his presidency with a grotesque vision of a country ravaged by violence.

It wasn’t accurate — Trump inherited the lowest homicide rate of any President in 50 years. Perhaps it was aspirational. He was also the first President in 30 years to leave the White House with a higher national homicide rate than when he entered it.

DeSantis appears to be following the same playbook. The policies DeSantis is pushing haven’t mitigated crime in Florida. The state has mostly followed national trends. But when you’re trying to out-Trump Trump, you don’t bother with facts, data, or reality. Your weapon is fear.

We can start with the First Step Act, Trump’s uncharacteristically hopeful and optimistic criminal justice reform bill (which, naturally, he later regretted). DeSantis recently called the law a “jailbreak bill” that “allowed dangerous people out of prison who have now reoffended, and really, really hurt a number of people.”

There’s no evidence for any of this. If a significant number of prisoners released under the FSA have gone on to commit new violent or sex crimes, we’d know their names. Their photos would be on the cover of the New York Post, their names emblazoned in Fox News chyrons. So far, the best they can do is Glynn Neal, a man who stabbed a staffer from Sen. Rand

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Paul's office shortly after his release from prison.

But Neal would have been released without the FSA. The new law reduced his sentence by a matter of days.

— OPINIONS —

"As DeSantis relocates migrants from Texas, Republican legislators beg them to keep working in Florida" via Scott Maxwell of the Orlando Sentinel — As DeSantis spent more Florida tax dollars flying migrants out of Texas, Republican lawmakers back home were begging migrant workers to stay in their jobs here in Florida. In a remarkable video that surfaced Monday, GOP legislators Rick Roth and Alina Garcia begged migrant workers in South Florida to ignore the new immigration crackdown law that both of them supported, promising it was more tough talk than serious action. Roth said the immigration law he supported "is more of a political bill than it is policy." "This bill is 100% supposed to scare you," he said.

"Woke or joke: DeSantis cribs from Winston Churchill speech while campaigning in Iowa" via Frank Cerabino of The Palm Beach Post — There are only so many ways you can use "woke" in a sentence, and it appears that DeSantis is exhausting them. So, he has taken to grafting his small-minded, divisive sloganeering onto the inspiring speeches of great men: "As President, I recognize that the 'woke mind virus' represents a war on the truth so we will wage a war on the 'woke.' We will fight the woke in education, we will fight the woke in corporations, we will fight the woke in the halls of Congress. We will never, ever surrender to the woke mob. We will leave ideology to the dustbin of history." So, I've DeSantisized other great speeches to serve the political aims of the candidate who obviously needs to lean on bigger men with bigger ideas in order to fill the void of his own smallness.

"Here's why Florida Republicans are starting to embrace clean energy" via George Riley of the Tampa Bay Times — As the 2024 election cycle begins and Republican candidates come to Florida to court voters, they would be wise to include clean energy in their speeches. Recent polling indicates that nearly half conservative Floridians believe in human-caused climate change and even more recognize it as a serious threat. Florida is now both a Republican stronghold as well as one of the states in the nation that is most susceptible to the devastating impacts of climate change. A survey also found that almost all Floridians have experienced firsthand the results of a warming climate, such as more frequent floods and stronger hurricanes.

— INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY —

— ALOE —

"SeaWorld Orlando: Howl-O-Scream tickets on sale; twin sirens lurk" via Dewayne Bevil of the Orlando Sentinel — SeaWorld Orlando is now selling tickets for Howl-O-Scream, the theme park's after-hours Halloween fright fest that begins Sept. 8. A single-night ticket to the event is priced at \$37.99. There are options for unlimited admission, one for \$109.99. and one with block-out dates — the eight Saturdays of the 2023 Howl-O-Scream run — for \$89.99. Visitors can opt for a two-park ticket that includes an evening at the Howl-O-Scream event at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. Go once to each park for \$92.99 or go unlimited times for \$164.99. The website indicates that these prices are early purchase savings of up to 50%, depending on the ticket. It does not indicate when prices will go up.

Here comes Howl-O-Scream, with special pricing for a limited time.

— HAPPY BIRTHDAY —

Happy birthday to two highly intelligent, decent men: Chris Hand (who pens the occasional op-ed for #FlaPol) and Brad Miller, the executive director of PSTA. Also celebrating today is Rep. Kevin Chambliss, who continues to impress.

Sunburn is authored and assembled by Peter Schorsch, Phil Ammann, Daniel Dean, Ryan Nicol, Jacob Ogles, and Drew Wilson.

Post Views: 0

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Millions In U.S. Under Air Quality Warnings; President Joe Biden Reacts To Bribery Allegation; Former President Donald Trump A Target In Classified Documents Probe; Republican Candidates Campaigning Across The Country; Iran Claims First Manufactured Missile; Military Says Drag Shows Not Permitted On Bases; Parental Rights Group Listed As Extremist; GOP Presidential Candidates Court Parental Rights Group; Holloway Murder Suspect Extradited For Financial Crimes

JEANINE PIRRO, FOX NEWS LEGAL ANALYST: I'm on Jesse -- I'm on Jesse's show tonight and I'm on 6:00 show.

HAROLD FORD JR., FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: It's called Bret Baier SPECIAL REPORT.

PIRRO: No, the other -- "THE BOTTOM LINE." And that's it.

GREG GUTFELD, FOX NEWS HOST: Sorry, Martha.

PIRRO: OK, here it is --

GUTFELD: SPECIAL REPORT is up next with a sexy Trace Gallagher.

TRACE GALLAGHER, FOX NEWS HOST: Thank you, Greg. We do not have the Judge listed on the show tonight. Thank you all. Thank you everyone and good evening. Welcome to Los Angeles, I'm Trace Gallagher in for Bret Baier.

President Biden rejects corruption allegations relating to a controversial FBI document that is the subject of a tug of war between House Republicans and the FBI.

The U.S. goes after China for its alleged involvement in the development of Iran's hypersonic missile and a conservative mother's group is labeled extremist by a noted civil rights organization.

But first, much of the Northeast remains in the grip of smoke from Canadian wildfires. Meteorologists expect the effects to linger for at least another day and possibly into the weekend. Millions of people are affected, doctors in some places are advising people to limit their time outdoors. Many schools, cities and sports organizations have postponed or canceled events because of the air quality.

New York City is clearing up a bit but the smoke is kind of drifting elsewhere. Correspondent Nate Foy is in Jersey City New Jersey tonight. Nate, good evening.

NATE FOY, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Trace, good evening to you. What a difference 24 hours can make, we can

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actually see the sky tonight in New York City, which was not the case yesterday, but other parts of the country remain heavily impacted as the smoke continues to drift.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

FOY (voice over): One day after the worst air quality ever recorded in New York City. Today, cities like Philadelphia and Washington D.C. are covered in dense smoke as residents breathe air defined as very unhealthy by the EPA.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: These fires in Canada obliterated the smoke, obliterated the island yesterday, so it's obviously not just a passing phase.

FOY (voice over): Wildfire smoke from Canada continues drifting across several U.S. regions, with President Biden now offering more support to our northern neighbors.

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I spoke yesterday with Prime Minister Trudeau and I've decided to dictate a National Interagency Fire Center Response to Canada's request for additional firefighters and the fire suppression assets such as air tankers

FOY (voice over): Over 600 American firefighters remain north of the border, working to prevent health impacts for Americans, as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer blames climate change.

SEN. CHUCK SCHUMER (D-NY): From Bayside to Brooklyn, from Buffalo to Binghamton. My home state looked like the scene of a scary movie.

FOY (voice over): Over 100 million Americans are under air quality alerts as ground delays impact travel at New York's LaGuardia Airport and New Jersey's Newark International.

While baseball is back at Yankee Stadium tonight but is canceled in our nation's capital as the smoke from up North continues moving across the country.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

FOY (on camera): The smoke is expected to clear off the east coast sometime Saturday morning but before then tomorrow, central and western Pennsylvania are expected to get the worst of it, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Nate Foy across the river in New Jersey. Nate, thank you.

President Biden says he is confident Congress will supply the funding to keep funneling weapons and support to Ukraine as it battles against the Russian invasion. The president met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak today at the White House. He is also denying allegations that he was involved in a bribery scheme during his time as vice president. White House correspondent Jacqui Heinrich has details. Jacqui, good evening.

JACQUI HEINRICH, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Trace. President Biden's news conference hosting the U.K. Prime Minister was focused on Ukraine support and building the alliance especially around artificial intelligence safeguards.

But allegations of Burisma executive paid the Biden's to gain U.S. oil rights detailed in that FBI form really took center stage.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BIDEN: Where's the money? I'm joking. It's a bunch of malarkey.

HEINRICH (voice over): President Biden downplaying corruption claims from House Oversight Republicans allowed today

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to view the FBI 1023 source form alleging a pay to play scheme when he was vice president.

REP. NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS (R-NY): They do not want us talking about the contents of it. So, I want to be very careful about it. But it's all related to Ukraine and Burisma.

HEINRICH (voice over): Congresswoman Nancy Mae says the document alleged payments that also went to Biden and using shell companies.

MACE: Multiple payments of five million each -- to each Bidens. If the information contained in this document is true, then there will be absolutely bank records to back it up.

HEINRICH (voice over): But a source familiar with the FBI document tells Fox, to be clear the document does not say Joe Biden received any payments.

Former Attorney General Bill Barr says the unverified claims are still being investigated in Delaware.

BILL BARR, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL: A lot of damage is being done to the country and to the department because of the silence and the failure to reach a decision. I think it's time to fish or cut bait.

HEINRICH (voice over): Biden brushing off the clamor on the hill. But U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak took the opportunity to tacitly send a message to House Republicans about Ukraine support from other NATO allies.

RISHI SUNAK, BRITISH PRIME MINISTER: We're lucky to have America's investment in European security, but we need to share the burden alongside you.

HEINRICH (voice over): With Ukraine's counter offensive now under way, future U.S. aid packages look anything but certain after House Speaker Kevin McCarthy confirms he'll block workaround to spending caps despite protests from Senate Republicans.

BIDEN: I believe we will have the funding necessary to support Ukraine as long as it takes.

As people were picturing, what would happen if we were not supporting Ukraine? Do we think Russia would stop in Kyiv? I think not.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HEINRICH (on camera): The president was also asked about another investigation that could end with former President Trump's indictment for his handling of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago, asked why people should trust the DOJ's decision here. Biden said he's never made any suggestion to the DOJ on whether they should bring a charge, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Jacqui Heinrich live for us in the White House. Jacqui, thank you.

Lawyers for former President Trump had been told he is the subject of an ongoing criminal probe into the handling of classified material. This is in addition to a separate investigation by another special counsel.

Correspondent Griff Jenkins sorts it all out for us tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

GRIFF JENKINS, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Sources tell Fox News the former president is huddling with his inner circle, bracing for the possibility he may soon be indicted by a federal grand jury looking into Trump's handling of classified material after he left office.

Trump's attorneys have been notified in writing their client is a target of Special Counsel Jack Smith's criminal investigation.

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ANDREW MCCARTHY, FORMER FEDERAL PROSECUTOR: When you get told you're a target, it's a virtual certainty that you're going to be charged. This seems to be something that pitching as a grand jury obstruction case as much as a document retention case.

BARR: It's not going to be because he took the documents or even had the documents for a while. I think it's because they believe that he acted deceitfully once the government tried to get the documents back.

JENKINS (voice over): Trump's legal team met privately earlier this week with Smith and his team at the Justice Department, as federal grand juries, impaneled in Washington. In Miami, continued hearing evidence and weighing a range of possible charges.

Sources also acknowledged there are concerns within the Justice Department over how this investigation will be perceived politically.

MIKE PENCE, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I hope the DOJ thinks very carefully about the prospect of an indictment of a former president of the United States. I think it would only serve to further divide our country.

SEN. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL (D-CT): You know, there's a presumption of innocence, but it is going to be a weight around his candidacy that I think should be insurmountable.

JENKINS (voice over): Trump is preemptively going on the offensive, saying he has not been told he will be indicted, calling the prosecution a witch hunt.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

JENKINS (on camera): This comes, Trace, as separate Special Counsel is investigating President Biden over his handling of classified information as vice president. Sources say that investigation is far from being concluded anytime soon, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Griff, thank you.

Former President Trump is clearly the focus of the Republican presidential campaign. His former vice president is the latest to try to distance himself from the front runner. The senior national correspondent Rich Edson tells us where things stand tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

RICH EDSON, FOX NEWS SENIOR NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Its former Vice President Mike Pence's first full day as an official candidate for president.

PENCE: We need new leadership in the Republican Party and in the White House.

EDSON (voice over): Pence campaigned at a Pizza Ranch in Iowa, the state with a large evangelical base and home of the first Republican contest in the 2024 nominating process.

Pence is critical of former President Trump's behavior and his political positions. And he's pitching voters on returning the White House to a true conservative to end what he calls the disastrous Biden presidency.

PENCE: We believe that the Republican voters and people broadly across the country want to see strong, new, renewed conservative leadership.

EDSON (voice over): The number of Republicans running for president has just hit double digits with Pence North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie officially joining the field this week.

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Christie is also focused on Trump says he's acting like a baby and isn't committed to the rule of law.

CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: He's the front runner. And if you want to be the nominee, which I want to be the nominee and I want to be the guy who beats Joe Biden, you got to beat Donald Trump first.

EDSON (voice over): The Republican field is campaigning across the country. Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley toward a Texas oil rig.

NIKKI HALEY, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO U.N.: The thing energy producers need is they need consistency and predictability.

EDSON (voice over): Pence travels tomorrow to New Hampshire. Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy is already there.

The field may grow even more, Miami Mayor Francis Suarez is considering a run. The Miami Herald reports he's raising money and assembling a campaign team.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

EDSON (on camera): Pence, Trump and DeSantis are heading to North Carolina to speak at the state GOP convention in Greensboro. DeSantis's speeches tomorrow, the former president and vice president addressed the crowd Saturday, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Rich Edson in D.C. Rich, thank you.

In a five to four decision, the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of black voters in Alabama challenging the state's Republican friendly congressional map. It affirmed a lower court decision that concluded the state's existing map based on the 2020 census likely violates the Voting Rights Act.

Alabama currently has just one black majority district out of seven seats in a statewide population that is about one quarter black. Justices Sotomayor, Kagan, Kavanaugh and Jackson joined Chief Justice Roberts in the majority decision.

While the markets were up today led by technology stocks, the Dow added 169, the S&P 500 gained 26 for a return to bull market territory, NASDAQ finished ahead 134.

Up next, how China and Iran are teaming up to build hypersonic weapons and what the U.S. is doing about it.

First, here's what some of our Fox affiliates around the country are covering tonight. Fox 13 in Portland, as the city council votes in favor of an updated camping ban. It is the latest move to try to reduce homelessness. It puts Portland in compliance with state law. The ban goes into effect the first of July.

Fox 5 in New York as police search for suspects in the gang assault of a man at a Brooklyn subway station. Police say the group attacked the 50- year-old before fleeing on foot. The man is said to be in serious but stable condition.

And a live look at Honolulu, one of the big stories there tonight from KHON, the Kilauea Volcano is putting on a show with its latest eruption. Officials expect tens of thousands of visitors each day to catch a glimpse of the event from the many lookouts at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

That's tonight's live look outside the Beltway from SPECIAL REPORT. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GALLAGHER: The Russian forces have shelled a southern Ukrainian city that was inundated in a catastrophic dam collapse. Ukrainian officials say the attack forced a suspension of some rescue work.

At least five people have died, many are homeless, and tens of thousands are without drinking water after the Kakhovka

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Dam's destruction.

While the U.S. has retaliated against China for its assistance in providing Iran with technology for its ballistic missile program, the chief national security correspondent Jennifer Griffin is at the Pentagon tonight.

Jen, good evening.

JENNIFER GRIFFIN, FOX NEWS NATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Trace.

When the Iranians unveiled a missile that they claimed was the first hypersonic missile that was made in Iran, it got a lot of fanfare. Iranian state media boasted it was the first of its kind and called it Fattah, which means conqueror in Farsi.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps attended the unveiling ceremony, but Fox News has since learned the missile has never been tested and may just be a model to taunt the West.

This morning, Joint Chiefs Chairman General Mark Milley, warned of Iran's growing capabilities.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEN. MARK MILLEY, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF: Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and their support for terrorists and other malign actors and regions of the world, especially in the Middle East. Threatened to turn that region into regional conflict.

GRIFFIN (voice over): This week, the U.S. slapped sanctions on a network of seven individuals and six entities who are alleged to be part of a procurement program between the People's Republic of China and Iran's Ministry of Defense to enhance Iran's ballistic missile program.

Among those targeted, Iran's defense attache in Beijing, who was a key player in setting up the missile procurement network with China.

China shocked the world on July 27th, 2021. While the administration was distracted by the collapse of Kabul, the Chinese conducted an around the world space test with a never-before-seen hypersonic glide vehicle that can maneuver and evade all of the U.S. missile defense systems currently in place. It was called a Sputnik moment by the Pentagon.

MILLEY: War between the United States and China is not imminent, nor is it inevitable. But the People's Republic of China is clearly on the potential path of military confrontation with its neighbors and the United States. And that could very well happen on your watch in the years ahead.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRIFFIN (on camera): That message for a newly minted class of national security leaders at the National Defense University today. Trace?

GALLAGHER: Yes, it's a bold message, Jen.

Today, the Pentagon press secretary was asked why, why the defense secretary had announced a ban on drag shows on military bases during Pride Month.

GRIFFIN: Well, Trace, Brigadier General Ryder explained today that drag shows had always been banned at DoD installations and facilities.

Last week, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reminded the defense department and military service chiefs that drag shows are not permitted.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRIG. GEN. PATRICK RYDER, PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: This has been a long-standing policy in terms of activities like this, that DoD will not host drag events at U.S. military installations or facilities.

We became aware of the drag events during an April congressional hearing. The Secretary advised that the department will not host such events.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRIFFIN (on camera): General Mark Milley has also told the service chiefs to make sure that their rank and file know that drag shows are not allowed. Trace?

GALLAGHER: Jennifer Griffin live at the Pentagon. Jen, thank you.

Up next, a group of conservative mothers is labeled extremists by a noted civil rights group. We'll get reaction. First, "BEYOND OUR BORDERS" tonight. A man with a knife stabs four young children at a left side park in the French Alps.

Authority say the children between 22 months and 3 years old suffering life threatening injuries.

Two adults were also wounded. The suspect was identified as 31-year-old Syrian. The man's motives were unknown.

A Japanese court rules the lack of legal protections for LGBTQ Plus people appears to be unconstitutional. Japan is the only member of the group of seven nations without such legal protections.

The ruling may help push the country toward allowing same sex marriage.

And this is a live look at Vatican City. One of the big stories there tonight. Pope Francis is said to be in good general condition, alert, and breathing on his own following yesterday's three-hour operation to remove intestinal scar tissue and repair a hernia in his abdominal wall.

The Vatican says the 86-year-old pontiff is resting extensively. It was his second major abdominal operation in two years.

Just some of the other stories "BEYOND OUR BORDERS" tonight. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GALLAGHER: Well, a conservative group that pushes back against school curricula, it believes are harmful to children is now being classified as an extremist group, and it has plenty of company.

Correspondent Molly Line has the details from Boston.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MOLLY LINE, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Arguing schools are now on the front lines of hatred and violence. The Southern Poverty Law Center has dubbed a dozen parental rights organizations as anti-government extremists in the center's annual report.

Moms for Liberty is highlighted for harassing teachers and school officials, joining other organizations branded anti-LGBTQ, neo-Nazi, and anti-immigrant on the Law Center's hate map.

TINA DESCOVICH, CO-FOUNDER, MOMS FOR LIBERTY: We are letting it kind of roll off our back in a sense, because it's just ridiculous. When you look at the people listed at the top of the Southern Poverty Law Center's web site, those that are considered in their hate group, its members of the KKK.

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LINE: The SPLC touts its legal advocacy in the fight for civil rights, but it's faced multiple defamation lawsuits for its hate labeling.

The conservative non-profit Family Research Council, a longtime target of the SPLC has launched a petition, calling to investigate the Center for anti-conservative bias.

Founded in Florida in 2021, Mom's for Liberty now boasts more than 100,000 members and chapters in 40 plus states.

Activists have pushed to remove books and curriculum in school that they deem controversial or not age appropriate, some dealing with sexuality or gender issues. The nonprofit has emerged to be politically influential.

GOP White House hopeful, Vivek Ramaswamy hold the town hall with the group today in the first in the nation primary state of New Hampshire.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I'll tell you, if you're a hate group, count me in, and we can take that actually as a badge of honor for where we are today as a country.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

LINE: Moms for Liberty will host a national summit later this month, and speakers include several Republican presidential candidates, including former President Trump. Trace?

GALLAGHER: Molly, thank you.

While the suspect in the 2005 disappearance of an American high school girl is in the U.S. tonight. Joran van der Sloot has been in a Peruvian prison. He faces trial in Birmingham, Alabama.

That is where correspondent Jonathan Serrie is tonight. Jonathan, good evening.

JONATHAN SERRIE, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Trace.

Joran van der Sloot is scheduled to make his initial appearance here in Birmingham Federal Court at 11:00 a.m. Central Time tomorrow.

This is a bittersweet day for the family of Natalee Holloway. The missing woman's mother, Beth, issuing a statement saying that she is, "hopeful that some small semblance of justice may finally be realized." The prime suspect in her daughter's disappearance arrived in Birmingham just a few hours ago, escorted by FBI agents aboard a government-chartered flight from Lima where Peruvian authorities temporarily surrender him to the U.S. to face trial for alleged financial crimes against the Holloway family.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NICOLE PARKER, FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT: They still don't know what happened to their daughter, but he will be facing the family here on U.S. soil. It's somewhat of closure for the family. They may not get a murder charge in the United States, but at least they will face him in court.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SERRIE: The 18-year-old from Alabama was seen leaving a bar with van der Sloot just before she disappeared during a high school senior trip to Aruba in 2005. Van der Sloot was never charged, but five years later, allegedly offered to tell Natalee's mother the location of her daughter's body in exchange for money.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

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MICHAEL WHISONANT, FORMER ASSISTANT U.S. ATTORNEY: In fact, van der Sloot lied. There was no body buried where he said there was and bandicoot was and van der Sloot was able to flee Aruba to Peru before we able to file our charges against (INAUDIBLE)

SERRIE: In Peru, van der Sloot admittedly murdered another young woman, Stephanie Flores, who had met at a casino in Lima. The 21-year-old business student from a prominent family there died five years to the day of Natalee's disappearance. Van der Sloot pleaded guilty in 2012 and was sentenced to 28 years in prison. Now here on the U.S., van der Sloot faces federal charges of extortion and wire fraud, which carry maximum sentences of 20 and 30 years respectively.

Even if he's convicted here, he would first return to Peru to complete his murder sentence before doing any time here. So, Trace, it's entirely possible he will spend the rest of his life behind bars. Back to you.

GALLAGHER: Jonathan Serrie live for U.S. in Birmingham. Jonathan, thank you.

Well, Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the U.S. will not normalize relations with Syria. He made the remarks today during his trip to Saudi Arabia. It comes as Riyadh and other Arab nations allow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad back into their alliances. In tonight's whatever happened to and in the first of a two-part series. My colleague Bret Baier looks at that partnership and how foreign interests are influencing Syria.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Thanks, Trace. Syria's civil war has been ongoing for more than 12 years, the country has become divided. The U.S. is supporting opposition groups. Russia and Iran are backing the government and neighboring Turkey has troops all along its border. Now Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is receiving renewed recognition and unofficial deal has ended some violence within Syria.

But all of these international interests backing different sides, well, they're causing concern around the globe.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. GREGORY MEEKS (D-NY) HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: If you allow one brutal dictator to go unchecked, then you allow another.

BAIER (voiceover): Arab countries have welcomed Syrian President Bashar al- Assad back to their alliances after a 12-year suspension.

MEEKS: The Arab League has been and continue to be the dictators club in the region.

BAIER (voiceover): Assad attended the summit in Saudi Arabia, he called on Arab countries to reject external interference in their affairs, despite Syria having support from other foreign governments.

MEEKS: I Russia is not involved to be honest, maybe Syria is not a priority for any U.S. administration to look at in the Middle East.

BAIER: So, yes, as a country have to balance where we step out and where we kind of play --

MEEKS: Right. That's why it's important for us to be in lockstep with our allies, those that have the same beliefs that we have. Those that have the same common ideas of democracy stick together so that we can begin to isolate the dictators who kill their own people and commit war crimes.

BAIER: Reports of chemical weapons attacks began in 2012. The Syrian government blamed opposition groups. U.S. intelligence asserted the Assad regime was behind those attacks and its targets often included civilians.

BARAK OBAMA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: That's a red line for us, and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons.

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BAIER (voiceover): U.S. military intervention was avoided at that time, after Syria agreed to accept a deal negotiated by the U.S. and Russia. The agreement called for inspecting, controlling and destroying Syria's chemical weapons.

By April of 2014, 92 percent of those chemicals had been removed from Syria. Reports of the Syrian Government using chemical weapons and attacks on civilians continued after the agreement. However, experts warn Assad could be preparing to use those weapons against his own people in the future.

QUTAIBA IDLBI, NONRESIDENT SENIOR FELLOW, ATLANTIC COUNCIL: There are still reports about the Assad regime continuing to store or even produce chemical weapons.

BAIER (voiceover): The end of the chemical attacks could be the result of the current ceasefire. Military operations have mostly paused across the country.

IDLBI: Syria is living through what we can call a frozen conflict while the war has stopped. We have also seen somehow a partition of Syria.

BAIER (voiceover): Southern Syria is controlled primarily by Assad's government.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The Russia and Iran have tremendous influence over side because Russia and Iran want access to the Mediterranean and they want to control Syria.

BAIER (voiceover): The U.S. began assisting Syrian rebels in 2014 as part of a military operation to defeat the Islamic State or ISIS. Around 900 U.S. troops are still based inside Syria, most support the Syrian Democratic Forces, which control much of the North.

IDLBI: It seems that northern Syria is providing much better conditions that is even attracting families who are living under the Assad regime.

BAIER (voiceover): The U.S. supports other government opposition groups with a training base in the East, in the Northwest Turkish and Syrian Arab proxy forces occupied that area. Extremist groups have claimed a small region to the south, even China is reportedly trying to influence the region.

IDLBI: We've seen that in the last month China brokered a deal between Saudi and Iran in the absence of the United States. And while everyone was celebrating that deal, I think many of you in Washington was wondering where is the role of the United States?

BAIER: Republicans and Democrats have missteps when it comes to Syria. President Obama did say Assad's days are numbered. How do you see it?

MEEKS: Well, look, time could not elapse or erase the horrific acts that of Assad has done to his own people. Those things are still imminently clear in my head. He's got to stand and be held accountable.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

BAIER: The initial mission for the U.S. in Syria has changed in the past decade. a State Department official said during a trip to the Middle East this week, ISIS may no longer be a threat, but major humanitarian issues need to be addressed there. We'll take a look at what led to those problems. Tomorrow night. Trace, back to you,

GALLAGHER: Brett, thank you. Up next, President Biden and the British Prime Minister hold a news conference. We will get reaction from the panel. But as we go to break, Pat Robertson has died. Robertson turned a tiny Virginia television station into the far-reaching Christian Broadcasting Network. He hosted the flagship 700 Club program for a half century. He ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988. He spoke about Christianity and politics on Fox News Sunday in 2021.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PAT ROBERTSON, RELIGIOUS BROADCASTER: Well, I came to realize without question that God is not a Republican, that God loves everybody.

And the trouble with, you know, getting involved in partisan politics is that half the electorate you're going to make mad at you.

And I also realize that when I look at the work these people did and their lives when it was over really didn't amount to a whole lot. And, you know, you think we'll put into the legacy and there wasn't a legacy. What's next? There was no legacy. And I should be dealing with eternal matters and not secular politics.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GARDNER: Pat Robertson was 93.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I believe we'll have the funding necessary to support Ukraine. As long as it takes.

RISHI SUNAK, PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN: President Putin will be thinking that he can wait us out that the alliance will tire, will get fatigued and will give up.

GEN. MARK MILLEY, JOINT CHIEF CHAIRMAN: Russia is likely to remain a significant threat to peace in Europe for many years to come. And we the United States with our friends and allies, we will need to maintain a strong deterrence posture in order to prevent continent wide conflict.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: Let's bring in our panel. Guy Benson, political editor at townhall.com and host of The Guy Benson Show on Fox News Radio. The Five co-hosts Jessica Tarlov and syndicated radio host Hugh Hewitt. Welcome to you all. Guy, to you first, it was kind of interesting the comment that Rishi Sunak just made there saying you know, Putin thinks he can wait the alliance out. I think the alliance is strong right now, but it's not as if Sunak and Biden are Thatcher and Reagan, right?

The Washington Post writes the following here. "Sunak has yet to receive an invitation for a steak dinner after leaders of both France and South Korea were faded with such events. Later this month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also travel to Washington for a steak dinner." Your thoughts on this, Guy.

GUY BENSON, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, I think the Indian alliance is extremely important, especially vis-a-vis China. So that makes sense. But this special relationship I think is extremely important, our most important alliances in the world. So I think perhaps a steak dinner for U.K. Prime Minister would be a good idea.

And I know we tend to focus on American politics understandably here, but across the pond this visit, this trip is being watched pretty closely because Rishi Sunak his party, the conservatives, the Tories, they've been roiled with controversy and turmoil now for the last year plus they've been trailing consistently in the polls to labor a successful trip to America

They've been roiled with controversy and turmoil now for the last year, plus, they've been trailing consistently in the polls to labor, a successful trip to America could help them sort of claw back a little bit if the Prime Minister delivers. So, they're watching this very, very closely in London and beyond.

GALLAGHER: Yes. And Jessica, it's interesting, because we talked about the alliance, the Alliance holding together and

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Putin kind of waiting people out. But then you see in this country, you know, it's not as if President Biden and the Speaker of the House are actually on the same page when it comes to funding Ukraine.

JESSICA TARLOV, CO-HOST, THE FIVE: Well, I think they're on the same page, maybe today. But going forward, when you look at what has happened with the budgets, obviously, the Republicans have some concerns or some Republicans do if you listen to Mitch McConnell, who sounds exactly like President Biden. I believe that what they presented today, which was the United Front, and that they're in it, as long as it takes is what is going to happen here.

And I understand that as we approach 2024, it's going to become more and more of an issue. But I think that Biden will win out on that. What I was particularly struck by is how important this visit was for Sunak. In terms of having economic cooperation with us, since the U.K., or since England, Brexit did, there's been a lot of concern that they wouldn't be able to maintain the same kind of relationships specifically with us, but with other allies as well.

They've done a decent job with the E.U. So this was obviously the Atlantic declaration was a big step forward in that department. And they looked closer than they did when they were in Belfast a few weeks ago. A lot friendlier, more relaxed. So, I thought that that was a good thing for the relationship as well.

GALLAGHER: What about you, Hugh? Would you agree to that? They look friendly, they look more on the same page than you did a few weeks ago?

HUGH HEWITT, SYNDICATED RADIO HOST: Not really. And I'll tell you why. Trace I've been reading the telegraph The Financial Times this afternoon when they get past laughing at the president and promoting the Prime Minister to President calling in President Sunak and then reading from his notecards. Rishi Sunak had one big goal today at the White House, which was get the President Biden's full-throated endorsement of British Ministry of Defense Ben Wallace to replace John Stoltenberg as the General Secretary of NATO.

And President Biden fumbled that fall when it came to him. He got a question about it. Got asked about it. And he said, well, a little bit early I didn't know. That's what Sunak wanted. And Ben Wallace has been leading the minister -- Ministry of Defense through Boris Johnson through, Liz Truss now, through Rishi Sunak. He has been leaning forward on Ukraine. That was the big get and President Biden fumbled the ball.

No one's going to suggest that this is Churchill meeting with FDR. This was not mentioned to me today.

GALLAGHER: Yes. I just want to get your quick take, if I can, Guy in this whole Saudi-Israeli normalization thing. Here's the joint presser between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Saudi prince Al Saud. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FAISAL BIN FARHAN AL SAUD, SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER: It would bring Smith significant benefits to all but without finding a pathway to peace for the Palestinian people without addressing that challenge. Any normalization will have limited benefits. And therefore. I think you should continue to focus on finding a pathway towards a two-state solution or finding a pathway towards giving the Palestinians dignity and justice.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: So LIV and PGA have partnered up, Guy. But it doesn't look like Saudi Arabia and Israel are going to be fast friends anytime soon.

BENSON: Well, maybe not overtly fast friends, we've seen a lot of progress in terms of the Arab world in Israel with the Abraham accords. And behind the scenes, they actually have a decent relationship in some key ways. But there is the Palestinian issue that's at least publicly a big sticking point for some of the Gulf states and they will make those comments publicly. They'll probably make them privately as well.

But there are some alliances since we're talking about alliances in this segment. There are some purposes where the Saudi

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government and the Israeli government might actually have some common ground and some common interests more importantly, and that should not be forgotten and they certainly have not.

GALLAGHER: All right. Panel standby. Up next. The Republican presidential field. And later, coming back to the surface after 100 days underwater.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. KEVIN CRAMER (R-ND): If Donald Trump wasn't Donald Trump, and wasn't a candidate for president, the Department of Justice wouldn't care.

CHRIS CHRISTIE (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Not every victim is committed to the rule of law. And he is not a victim alone. He is a perpetrator.

MIKE PENCE (R) PRESIDENT CANDIDATE: No one who puts himself above the constitution should ever be present. And no one who asked someone else to put them above the constitution should ever be president.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Is Trump going to be joining the debaters in August?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I'm going to say I think he will. But, you know, it's going to be up to him.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: We are back now with our panel. And Hugh Hewitt, to you first, I want to bring in this was interesting. You have Mike Pence, you have -- you have that you have all the candidates kind of going after former President Trump now during interviews. But here's a Pence campaign ad that also goes after the former president. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: A weak man, a peace as a mob. A man of courage and character stands up to them. That day, one man failed the test of leadership. Well, another stood tall.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GALLAGHER: What do you think about that strategy, Hugh?

HEWITT: I think it's going to be generalized throughout the primary campaign from everyone. Chris Christie's, like the old World War I movie with a machine gun. He's feeding in the bullets, you know, repeatedly at the former president. But I had Senator Scott on the radio show this morning and he thinks it's very, very dangerous to see or feel the Department of Justice weaponizing against the candidate.

So, I think what we're going to come back to is when this indictment drops, you know, they've been on Niagara fall bleeps about this indictment. If it's a speaking indictment, it better be Daniel Webster and we'd better see it laid out because a lot of people. I think the field will divide on whether it's appropriate to be pursuing a former president of the United States on a documents case on obstruction and fair, I think it will separate.

GALLAGHER: Yes. On the indictment note, Jessica, The New York Times writes the following. It remained unclear when Mr. Trump's team was told that he was a target of the special counsel's inquiry. But the notice suggested that prosecutors working for Mr. Smith had largely completed their investigation. And we're moving toward bringing an indictment. We have reported the same thing. So far, this legal action really has kind of boosted the former president. What do you think, Jessica?

TARLOV: Well, it's boosted him amongst a certain set of people who are obviously exceptionally consequential in terms of

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the primary. But if you look at the general public, it hasn't boosted him at all. Let's say his reelection chances as they were in 2020, which were bleak that this would make it even bleaker. People were fed up with him that and then if you think that this is someone who will have been indicted twice, maybe a third time, if we see what happens in Georgia and found liable for sexual assault and defamation against E. Jean Carroll, that doesn't seem like the kind of person that you want on the top of the ticket, let alone leading the country.

I think that Chris Christie is doing a good job thus far in prosecuting the case. That is his background and something that he's been excellent at. And it'll just be interesting to see who can rise up of these other people who aren't Trump. And I think that you have to get down to one on one in order to be able to actually beat him in the primary. But who will be able to land real blows and I'm glad that Mike Pence is standing up for himself instead of just kind of being his lackey again.

GALLAGHER: Meantime, Guy, Republicans not taking a page out of the Democratic playbook here. Then RNC says the following, Fox digital, RNC launch campaign pushing Republicans to vote early in 2024. The RNC is rolling out a Bank Your Vote nationwide campaign, which is expected to encourage educate and activate Republican voters on when, where and how to lock in their votes as early as possible.

Though, in-person early voting, absentee voting and ballot harvesting were legal. Ballot harvesting a few years ago was heresy, Guy.

BENSON: Oh, yes, but where it's legal, you have to play the game. And I think Republicans have been a bit slow to come to this realization, but they've gotten there. And they've done actually a decent job of it in some key races out in California, you can rage against the rules and how unfair they are and how dangerous they are, and so on and so forth. Or you can play by the rules and adapt. And that's what they're doing. I think this is a no brainer.

Republicans need to make sure that every single one of their potential voters has the ability to vote and to bank that vote as reliably as possible. There's some work to be done there, obviously, with a trust gap. But I think the fact that the Republicans are already tackling this at the party level, this soon is probably a good thing. It's been a long time coming.

GALLAGHER: Yes. And it's actually a good comment there, Hugh, because the Republicans have been told to adapt now for a while, and they're just now beginning to take it seriously.

HEWITT: You know, bankyourvote.com is a huge step forward. Ronna McDaniel and David Bossie and the rest of the RNC doing a very good job and making sure that new technologies matter. When red got started after act a little bit caught up, now Bank Your vote is going to catch up. So, it used to be that the RNC led the DNC 25 years ago. The DNC got ahead. Now the RNC is coming back. It's the competitive world of American politics. No lead is permanent. And that's a good thing.

GALLAGHER: Yes. Jessica, your final thoughts on this.

TARLOV: Well, I don't like it, but it is smarter for Republicans to be doing it. And we'll see how much they can close the gap and that way, but it'll be nice for everybody to be playing by the same set of rules and acknowledge the fact that these votes are free and fair and legitimate, and then we can all have an election and get a winner and go home and not storm the Capitol.

GALLAGHER: Yes. We shall see. Jessica Tarlov, Hugh Hewitt, Guy Benson. Thank you all.

TARLOV: Thanks, Trace.

HEWITT: Thanks, Trace.

GALLAGHER: Well, finally tonight, a special day.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm totally going to miss this.

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GALLAGHER: A university professor and retired Navy Commander is set to reemerge from his underwater home tomorrow. Joe Dituri has earned the nickname Dr. Deep Sea. And get this, he has lived submerged 30 feet below the surface now for 100 days. He is monitoring his body changes, under water pressure and researching its potential benefits. He says that his cholesterol and inflammation are down.

He has lost a half inch in height and does not know whether it will come back. The effects of being 30 feet down for the better part of 100 days.

Tomorrow on SPECIAL REPORT, the second part of our series on serious civil war. We take a closer look at the humanitarian crisis and efforts to help millions who need assistance. And please remember, if you can't catch us live set your DVR 6:00 p.m. Eastern, 3:00 p.m. on the West Coast. Thanks for watching SPECIAL REPORT. I'm Trace Gallagher. Join me tonight.

END

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You Are No Longer Allowed To Question The Left's Cultural..., 2023 WLNR 19809477

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You Are No Longer Allowed To Question The Left's Cultural Marxism; Religious Freedom Doesn't Matter In MD County, WSJ: Instagram Algorithm Boosts...

You Are No Longer Allowed To Question The Left's Cultural Marxism; Religious Freedom Doesn't Matter In MD County, WSJ: Instagram Algorithm Boosts Pedophile Network; Radical Judge Blocks Florida From Protecting Kids; Radical Left Uses Wildfire Smoke As Climate Cudgel; Climate Cult Uses Canadian Fire To Co-opt Freedom

SEAN HANNITY, FOX NEWS HOST: If you want to be a part of our audience it's simple, just go to Hannity.com to sign up and gets tickets for free. Now please set your DVR so you never ever, ever, ever miss an episode of Hannity, news anytime all the time every time foxnews.com hannity.com. That's all the time we have left. In the meantime, let not your heart be troubled. Here's Laura with a killer show.

LAURA INGRAHAM, FOX NEWS HOST: Hey, Sean. How are you? Hi, guys.

HANNITY: Great to see you.

INGRAHAM: By the way, he's going to tell everybody like when they go to the wide shot of the audience, you can tell them they don't have to hide the shot glasses. OK, I can see them in the audience. They look fine. They look good. No wonder they're in such a good mood.

HANNITY: That's a secret. I am giving out Jell-O shots and every break. Jell-O shots and footballs.

INGRAHAM: All right. Well, Sean, it's great to see you tonight. And we'll continue where you left off.

HANNITY: Have a great, Laura.

INGRAHAM: I am Laura Ingraham. All right. This is The Ingraham Angle from Washington tonight. Vote Democrat or you're a racist. That's the focus of tonight's Angle. Now, have you noticed a growing trend in America? White supremacist organizations are popping up all over. North, South, East, West racist groups are gaining traction. Now, I'm talking about white supremacist book clubs, white supremacist bowling leagues, white supremacist garden clubs. Even edgy new fashion trends for white supremacist Spring Breakers.

There are white supremacist daycare centers where the snacks are obviously white rice, milk, yogurt, potatoes, you get the point. Now, if you believe any of that, turn off the TV, go to bed and call your doctor in the morning. Of course, all this is ridiculous. True white supremacist real racists have been thankfully shunted to the extreme fringes of society.

But to listen to the Democrats messaging heading into 2024, you think our nation is about to be taken over by men and white hoods. Even if there are no white hoods, and they suppose that racists are black and brown people.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Being Hispanic or being black, does not or being anything, does not make you immune from being racist, from being radicalized, from being a white supremacist.

PAOLA RAMOS: Part of understanding the Latino blog is understanding that we too can be racist. You too can fuel white supremacy.

JAKE TAPPER, CNN HOST: We've seen a number of individuals who are clearly Latino, or at least a Latino heritage who are white supremacists.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Well, of course, racial bias exists, it always will, sadly, and it does to this day. But what the press surrogates for the Democrats are getting at here it goes much deeper. This is an effort to inflate its prevalence or to excuse or deflect from the destruction brought by Democrat policies. Where? In our cities, our schools, the culture, the economy everywhere. So rather than offer real solutions, the left returns to its dog eared playbook. Racism is systemic.

It's structural. It's somehow explains why parents and students, even one, two or minorities themselves, are complaining about sexual propaganda in our schools. Now the speakers you're about to hear at the Montgomery County Maryland school board meeting are what the left considers the new white supremacist.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm here to testify on behalf of my elementary aged cousins. They are encouraged to wear pride clothing and rainbow wigs. That seems odd to me as I don't remember a Jewish day where we were all encouraged to wear a kippah or a Christian day where we all were we were encouraged to wear a cross or a Muslim day where all kids were encouraged - -

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thanks for your testimony.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's done.

(APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: His young Muslim former student. Now the new bullies are the racial and sexual propagandists who defame anyone who disagrees with their twist admission as white supremacist.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Over 40 kids that I know who don't want to learn this and really want to be here talking today but can't because they are being bullied. They are the ones being bullied when they say we don't want to learn this. They are the ones being bullied when they say this is wrong. They are the ones being bullied when they say this is against my religion.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Another young Muslim American. Now it's appalling that anyone has to go through this. Which brings us to TL, typical leftist Christian mink. Now this is the type of angry feminist who uses her county position as the ultimate power trip.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KRISTIN MINK, MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER: This issue has unfortunately put -- it does put some,

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not all of course but some Muslim families on the same side of an issue as white supremacists and outright bigots.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Now if you can stomach it, look in the mirror sweetie because you're the bigot, an anti-religious fanatic who has no business near our schools. Now who's more eloquent Ms. Mink or the students she'd prefer to silence?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The issue of gender and sexuality are influenced by our faith and we should not be caricatured as intolerant. And tolerance of the faith community threatens to erode support for religious freedom, therefore eroding the benefits it provides for everyone.

(END OF VIDEO)

INGRAHAM: Now remember, to question the left's Cultural Marxism is to be called white supremacist, pure and simple, or of course anti-gay. To question quotas, well, the same thing.

BEN COLLINS, NBC NEWS REPORTER: Does not mean DEI, it means black and gay people. Frankly, that's what it means. It's a -- it's a fear of the other.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Fear of the other. Well, by now, it's pretty obvious right that the Democrats knew once Biden was elected, America would be in for a lot of suffering and a lot of sacrifice. So what's the political party to do to stay in power at that point? Everything has gone down the tubes, we all know it. It's to smear anyone and everyone who gets in their way. Even if it means alienating some of their traditional supporters. Latinos, Muslims, even blacks. Now we see this in their attacks on Ron DeSantis, as well.

Last year, he was reelected with major support among Latinos in his state. Remember, he won by 20 points overall. So how to beat him in the presidential contests? Pretty popular guy, right. Well use the white out strategy. Focus on his laws against critical race theory and sexualized curricula. Use your press buddies then to frame it all as rank bigotry. On May 20, this headline blasted across the internet, the NAACP issues a travel advisory for Florida. Now, the obscene idea that the state is hostile to black Americans.

Yes, this is part of the plan. Then three days later, stick with me, a gay rights travel advisory, OK, just along with one warning immigrants not to head to the Sunshine State as well. Notice they left out the term illegal. Then came the crowning glory from that bunch of frauds over at the Southern Poverty Law Center. It's a leftist front group by the way that exists to smear conservatives. They put the benign group, Moms for Liberty in their extremism list.

Now, of course, if any group is extremist and should be on that list, it's the SPLC itself. So this is all coordinated. The Human Rights Campaign declared a state of emergency then, nationwide for LGBTQ people don't leave your homes. Then today, obviously, feeling left out of all the fear mongering The Associated Press of all places, runs with this story claiming that gay and black kids now feel less safe in schools. You see this right, don't you? This is all carefully orchestrated.

It's a disinformation campaign meant to intimidate good people from speaking out. And those same good people from trying to influence things like school boards or their local governments. If kids feel under siege, it's precisely because groups like Gilson and HRC have turned our educational institutions into their own sick playgrounds for left wing community organizing. And along the way, they've shown their own vicious intolerance against parents and students of faith, who just want a good education, not indoctrination.

But remember, go back to the original. This is all the Democrats have to offer in 2024. They're going to avoid addressing things like the invasion of our southern border, why the schools are so dangerous in the inner cities, why the kids aren't learning, why they fallen behind. And instead, they're going to keep fanning the fake white supremacy flames.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Domestic violent extremism is our greatest threat right now. And regrettably, we have seen a rise in white supremacy.

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: And the most dangerous terrorist threat to our homeland is White supremacy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: You know, the most dangerous threat to our homeland is? How about a guy who often can't think, can't walk or can't start a sentence being able to actually start a nuclear war? That's pretty scary. The party of FDR, the party of JFK has become a mockery of itself. Soon it will be up to the voters, they'll want it to see if they want to return to economic growth and prosperity or do they want more of this white out acid that the left is slinging? And that's The Angle.

Now, I just mentioned this disturbing allegation that Muslim parents and their children, former students who want to opt out of the sexualized curriculum in our schools are now akin to white supremacist. Joining me now is one of those parents, Kareem Monib. He's the president of Coalition of Virtue, an organizer of the rally over this issue.

Kareem, you and I were talking before the show, and us Catholics and other Christians, other people of faith had been waiting for the Muslims to step up on this issue in so many others and you really are doing it in your community what is your response to some of what we just shared in that Angle.

KAREEM MONIB, CONCERNED MUSLIM PARENT: Well, first of all, I want to thank all of the brave, heroic parents that came out to the rally. There's a lot of fear of standing up, as you've mentioned, and we want to break through that wall of fear and want people get motivated in power to -- to raise their voices for what everybody recognizes is reasonable.

And so I want to thank those parents, if you're watching Parents of family rights for religious freedom, as that's the local Montgomery county parent group, thank you so much. You're brave, and everybody's watching and your actions are having an effect.

INGRAHAM: And the young students who spoke out I was so impressed with them.

MONIB: Amazing.

INGRAHAM: I mean, they documented and recounted how they've been bullied for actually saying, well, wait, I'm a -- I'm a person of faith. I'm not perfect, but I'm a person of faith. And this offends my sensibility. Yes, they're the ones being targeted in the schools, yet they still spoke out.

MONIB: That's right. It drew crowds, a lot of bravery. One of the students I recall from their testimony said, isn't that why people came to this country for religious freedom. And, and now that's been taken away from us. And he had mentioned also that what is the meaning of freedom? Freedom is the ability to do what you want uninhibited. And that is clearly not the case.

INGRAHAM: Now, Kareem, I want to play more from this Montgomery county council member Kristin Mink from yesterday, watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MINK: The scientific and medical community has come to a clear consensus that LGBTQIA plus people exist. When we have children's books that represent, you know, a child who has you know, who is transgender, that is the reality. And so, MCPS has the responsibility to include and reflect that reality in our curriculum.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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INGRAHAM: Now, Kareem, this is a school district that we fought tooth and nail to open up those schools. One of the many left wing school districts that that really hurt kids during this COVID pandemic, they were never held accountable. In fact, they reelected their county executive. Mr. Elrich so what do you make of her -- This is all consensus. It's already established.

MONIB: It's absolutely right. You know, that's ridiculous. It's not a consensus. There's no scientific consensus that says a boy can become a girl simply by declaring something with his -- with his voice. And that's it's, it's rejected by science, it is rejected by every faith tradition. And so, you know, these kinds of arguments are silly. I want to say that what coalition of virtue, our vision is to bring together people of all faiths.

INGRAHAM: All faith which I love.

MONIB: And we want to restore the moral consensus that we had in this country since its inception. And we want to bring people of all faiths and even those who may not belong to any particular --

INGRAHAM: Traditionalist, perhaps.

MONIB: Traditional, reasonable people. I think that if we come together, we can become a political force in this country that can save -- save us from what's happening,

INGRAHAM: You, Kareem, and all of those kids who spoke out and former students, you all petrify the left. And so now they claim that you're the white supremacist, that's how low they have gone, but you don't seem too worried about it?

MONIB: It's absolutely ridiculous assertion. I mean, most of the people out there were like, as you said, brown or black. So it's offensive. It's only going to galvanize.

INGRAHAM: Impower, yes.

MONIB: Because more people know what's going on now.

INGRAHAM: Kareem, thank you for coming in. And thank you for doing what you're doing, and I'll help you in any way I can. OK.

MONIB: Thank you. Coalitionofvirtue.org if you want to join our -- Thank you very much.

INGRAHAM: Thank you. Great to see you. Now as the FBI and these activist groups seek to silence intimidate us cream said demonize these involve parents and students. They're turning a blind eye to the real threats to children's innocence and wellbeing. Threats that are right under the nose. According to the researchers at Stanford University and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Instagram is allowing users to search by hashtags related to child sex abuse, using graphic terms that we're not even going to state here on this show.

What's worse, though, is that the platform didn't just allow this. It encouraged it. Think of it this way Mark Zuckerberg the man who spent \$400 million tipping the last election of the Democrats made some of that money on the backs of these pedophiles. Joining me now Charlie Hurt, Washington Times Opinion Editor, Fox News Contributor.

Charlie, you and I've talked about the you know the -- the renaming of pedophilia into something that's more acceptable you know, minor attracted persons, the hashtag on that was on Twitter for the longest -- it might still be for all I know, but this is mainstreaming something which is sick and frankly, felonious.

CHARLIE HURT, WASHINGTON TIMES OPINION EDITOR: Yes, at some point, you have to stop and wonder if it's not all intentional, because it sure does seem like it's all intentional. And I think that the degree to which you have a lot of people on the left and these social media companies talking about white supremacy, and trying to promote this idea that they're all these white supremacists that are all over the internet and all over taking over our country.

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Meanwhile they're ignoring real criminal acts like in this case with Instagram and this study where you have child pedophilia, you have child pornography being distributed on their platform. And as you point out this, you know, imagine how much maybe Mark Zuckerberg might have been able to clean up his own website from peddling this crap, if instead of spending a half billion dollars to hijack the 2020 election, he had spent trying to clean it up.

But the other thing I think is interesting here is, you know, the reason Democrats don't care about this, and you went through all of that in your monologue brilliantly, the reason they don't care about it is because they can't weaponize it to their advantage. They want to talk about this stuff, they want to talk about the evils out there, only if they can create a boogeyman that not only silences as you point out, silences, their opponents, but also frightens their followers into thinking that the other side is out to get them.

INGRAHAM: I think, Charlie, you're making such a great point. And it reminds me, this is why they really get their -- their hair up on their backs, when you say you're trying to groom these kids. What else do you call this? What else is this -- You're telling six year old, no, you're not a boy, you're a girl. Good. Let's change your name. Get the skirt on. Everyone, you have to call this boy by the new -- it's ridiculous.

And it's and it's an attempt to get kids used to being sexual beings, before most of them can do basic math and reading. That's what this is all about. I am going to say it till I'm blue in the face. I don't care who the hell complains.

HURT: Yes, and forcing the children to participate in their fantasy charade. And what you know, one of the things that this study found on Instagram, was that before child abuse images would pop up, Instagram would provide a warning, saying that this search result could result with pictures of child abuse, but then gave the user the option to ignore it and go ahead and look at the at the child abuse photographs anyway. So my goodness, what are these people doing? They're not even pretending to care about this stuff.

INGRAHAM: And they use children as political pawns. That's in the end that's all they are to them. Now Meta, which of course owns Instagram, Facebook, they're claiming that they're taking action to try to stop this problem. They're forming, of course, they all stand by the task force to investigate how the app facilitates the spread and sale of child sexual abuse material.

Where's the Attorney General here, Charlie? Are they still worrying about you know, they're getting the next Grand Jury against Trump? Where's it -- where is our Attorney General? Who says that white supremacy is the biggest problem facing the country? We've got kids being trafficked.

HURT: You know, that's a great -- Yep. No, it's -- It's and it's just it's black and white. It's child abuse and it's bullying, and it's disgusting. But if they can't use it to benefit them, then politically, they do not care.

INGRAHAM: Yes, Charlie, if they can't use it to ballot harvest. It's not a problem for the day, right. We're going to put it off for the next -- next year. Charlie, thank you for this. We appreciate it. Now, why the latest 2024 entrance represent the last gasp of the old guard. Newt Gingrich will explain that. Plus a judge just stood on the side, well stood up for the side of child mutilators. We will tell you who that judge is. What do you need to know. Now.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

INGRAHAM: Now did you'll notice the last 36 hours while the Republican field for 2024 expanded to include candidates, little to no chance of winning the nomination? So we were wondering tonight what is motivating them? Pray tell. Well, Chris Christie threw his hat in the ring. And it's pretty obvious. He's just trying to be the flame thrower against Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He's a baby, whatever you want to criticize him. I mean, anyway, that's the way he responds. If we had a child who conducted themselves like that, we'd send them to the room. Yes, not to the White House.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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INGRAHAM: No dinner. Well, Pence centered today as well. And he thinks that he can surge and well in the categories for both populace and maybe the establishment.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MIKE PENCE: President Trump also demanded that I choose between him and the Constitution. Now voters will be faced with the same choice. I chose the Constitution. And I always will.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: And then there's Doug.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DOUG BURGUM: We need a leader who's clearly focused on three things, economy, energy, and national security. And that is why today I'm officially announcing I'm running for the president of the United States of America.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Joining me now is former Speaker of the House Fox News contributor Newt Gingrich. He's also the author of March to the Majority. All right, Newt, let's start with Mike Pence. What do you think is driving his entry into the race at this point?

NEWT GINGRICH, FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: Well, I mean, look, Pence has been a good congressman, a governor, a vice president. He's young, fit, smart. Has a nationwide base of people who admire his traditional conservatism. And I think he sort of thinks why not.

I mean, a lot of these guys are focused on the idea that somewhere down the road, whether it's in the Justice Department indictment that we were told today is about to occur, or it's the Atlanta indictment, or it's some other thing, that magically, Trump will disappear. And then there'll be a wide open race. And frankly, in a wide open race, Mike Pence is very attractive, just as governor DeSantis is very attractive.

INGRAHAM: I don't agree with you. I don't agree with that. I don't agree with that. I mean, I love, I love Mike Pence as a person. And I adore him as a person, actually. And I think he's done a lot of great things for the country. But Pence for some reason, still caught in the old establishment GOP wing, more of the kind of Bush wing of the party. I think he played populist with Trump. He's not really a populist.

I like -- I like him a lot. I mean, DeSantis, yes, because he's a populist. He's more of an America first conservative. But if Trump goes away, Trump's views are still going to be dominant in the party. Newt, that's my point. So all these guys can say everything they want about the rah rah Reagan days of the GOP, but that old coalition is gone. That coalition does not exist anymore.

GINGRICH: Well, you may be right. On the other hand, maybe you're not. The fact is, I'm not, I'm not sure the average voter, goes out there and says to themselves, gee, am I part of the Reagan coalition? What the average voter wants to know is, are you going to help fix inflation? Are you going to help fix the economy? Are you going to control the border? Are you going to fix our schools? Are you going to knock down the weird left wing woke ism?

I mean, they have a series of things they want. And any of these candidates potentially, could make a case we're including the governor of North Dakota, who is a self-funding billionaire, and an interesting guy. And again, your -- your environment --

INGRAHAM: He's a globalist. And he's a globalist. I mean, I think, again, he's interesting. But, Newt, you come on this show week after week, which we love. And we've pointed out on the border, on trade, on China, on all these issues that the establishment GOP got so screwed up for this country, ushering in Obama and all the disasters that he brought from the wars

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on out, they're still clinging to those. If they could, they'd do another surge in Iraq, I'm telling you.

So I think that clinging to that old vision of it, not Reagan, but the old vision of, you know, wars of choice, of massive immigration amnesty, that's just not going to play. I think that blows up the Republican coalition as it currently exists, if that's the way we go, and I think we lose if that's the way we go.

GINGRICH: But Laura, I think if candidates stupid enough to take the positions you just described, has no hope. Now all of them can do polling, all of them can look at the information, all and go out on the stump. Very few people are going to run out and say hi, I'm a globalist.

INGRAHAM: They are not going to say that.

GINGRICH: They are not going to say, I really love having an open border. But -- but the -- to me, the interesting thing is, look, I have a two Lake theory of what's going on. There's a very large lake that has all the Trump voters. There's a much smaller lake that has the non-Trump voters, all of these candidates, including DeSantis, who's failed to sort of make the cut. All these candidates are in the non-Trump Lake fighting for about 40 percent of the party.

Trump, I suspect, is popping champagne corks at Mar-a-Lago every time there's a new candidate, me what he wants, is 15 or 20 candidates out there making a whole range of noise and one person that the country identifies with. And if he gets that. He could be the nominee by March.

INGRAHAM: Well, I think that you're right about that. I mean, the bigger the field, the bigger the gift to President Trump and he will be popping champagne corks. And all of those people are better than any Democrat. We know that, Newt. I love your analysis. I'm going to have to debate you sometimes. Otherwise, I just agree with everything you say. And it's just like nodding.

GINGRICH: I don't mind.

INGRAHAM: I know, Newt. It's great to see you. I know. It's great to see you. See you at the diner. All right, good to see you. All right, while Florida is trying to protect children, one radical judge there is making it easier for kids to get a sex change. Federal Judge Robert Hinkle, a Clinton appointee temporarily blocked parts of Ron DeSantis' law that bans minors from receiving puberty blockers and other cross sex hormones. Now, the ruling is focused on three cases, two 11 year olds and one eight year old. Let that sink in for a moment.

Now the judge who has no medical background, of course that we could find, went so far as to write in this ruling that quote, "gender identity is real". Joining me now Carrie Severino, President of the Judicial Crisis Network. Carrie, this is the old playbook right they did it on same sex marriage. They went to the court, sidestepped the state legislatures regardless of what certain state legislatures thought. And they won this ultimately in the courtrooms across this country all the way to the Supreme Court. It seems like the same thing is happening here.

CARRIE SERERINO, JUDICIAL CRISIS NETWORK PRESIDENT: Yes, and we're about to celebrate the anniversary of the demise of Roe vs. Wade, same thing. Inventing a new constitutional right out of out of whole cloth. And, you know, I thought we were out of the business of unelected judges being a de facto medical board. But here now this guy again no medical training is trying to substitute himself for the Florida Medical Board which has real concerns about the use of these hormones in not -- not even everyone but just minors need we need to look at this.

Great Britain, Finland, Sweden have all gone back on the saying actually the -- the -- the ProCon evidence is not convincing on this, we need to start pulling back because there are serious consequences. But above and beyond like the intended consequences of sterility, and removing healthy body parts for -- for children using this. So -- so this is a medical judgment the judge has overruled.

INGRAHAM: Now, the judge for all of you non lawyers out there to get an emergency order from the court, you have to show irreparable harm. That's one of the things you have to show. This judge found irreparable -- irreparable harm. Let me quote this from The Opinion, the plaintiffs' adolescent children will suffer irreparable harm, the unwanted and irreversible

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onset and progression of puberty in their natal sex, etc, etc. So what's irreparable harm is being the person that you were born as, that's the irreparable harm that is wild.

SERERINO: This opinion is -- is really absolutely nuts to read, because I'm reading and going, this one is kind of sounding like a ham handed attempt at an argument in the plaintiff's briefs. It -- I would I would kind of be a little embarrassed to submit that as a plaintiff briefs, but this is the judge writing some of this stuff. Even his gender is real stuff. Like that's a heading in a court case. No one's arguing is gender identity, real or not. That's not the question.

The question is, are these drugs? Should these be being used? What's really experimental treatment being used on minors. And is the state of Florida free to say, let's -- let's hold off on that until we actually understand this more. And this judge is like, nope, nope, I'm all in for this.

INGRAHAM: Which is, which is the irreparable harm.

SERERINO: Right. They are worried about irreparable harm. That's why it's a problem.

INGRAHAM: Carrie, we featured so many former transgendered persons on this show over the last few years, especially since if I could do anything, I would turn -- I would turn the clock back. I've done permanent damage to my -- to myself in my body, my psyche. I mean, it is a heartbreak. And for this judge, this will be repeated across the country, though, right. I mean, the Republicans have to win more seats on these federal district courts.

SERERINO: Well, yes, the good news is, there's a lot of great judges in the 11th circuit. We had some really good nominees in that circuit. So the next this next step, I'm certainly optimistic the 11th circuit is going to get this right. But you know, it absolutely is going to be repeated across the country, because there's a lot of states who have this concern. I think 19 states have laws like this. Again, just like places who, you know, real right wing strongholds like Sweden, right, who, again, are questioning this.

INGRAHAM: Europe.

SERERINO: So I mean --

INGRAHAM: Most of Europe.

SERERINO: So -- so this is something we're we need to get again; the judges need to get out of the medical business. Let that let -- let the doctor's kind of figured this out.

INGRAHAM: People who are thinking about the election next year have to think about what they're going to be voting for if they vote for the Democrats. This is what they are voting for.

SERERINO: This kind of judge. Exactly.

INGRAHAM: Carrie, great to see you as always. All right, Prince Harry Reimagined, plus, could your next flight include someone's derriere in your face? Raymond Arroyo has it all. Unfortunately, it's Seen and Unseen, next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

INGRAHAM: It's time for our Seen and Unseen segment where we reveal the cultural stories of the week. And for that we turn to Fox News Contributor Raymond Arroyo. All right, Raymond, I know you're excited about this. But Prince Harry, he's appearing in court this week. Wow.

RAYMOND ARROYO: Laura, he -- he already is locked in a legal dispute with a tabloid that he claims tapped his phone between 1996 and 2011. Now, the tabloid denies those claims. Well, this week, Harry became the first royal to appear in court, Laura, since 1891. Only cameras weren't allowed. So a British news network hired an actor to recreate his testimony.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I believe that again, as a child, every single one of these articles played an important role. Destructive role in my growing up. Unfortunately, stories that you've only -- that I've only shared with one or two people within my inner circle, ends up front page of newspaper or any page. Your circle of friends starts to shrink and diminish rather rapidly.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: That's bad acting.

ARROYO: Court sketches and voice over, Laura. I mean, though with Prince Harry, I'm surprised they didn't hire Nicholas Hoult or some A lister to play him.

INGRAHAM: Yes, that wasn't a very convincing acting job there, Raymond. I mean, he had the hair kind of right but he -- he kind of looked like that actor from Modern Family a little bit. He didn't -- I am not buying that.

ARROYO: But -- but -- but Laura if -- if Prince Harry is so concerned about public exposure, stop writing books about your family and doing Netflix documentaries. I mean, that's one way to stop it. You know, this is like the stripper who complains about public exposure. That's what you do. So I mean --

INGRAHAM: He's not writing anymore books. Yes, they said no more books about the family. No more books.

ARROYO: OK. Anyway, speaking of books, there's is a bestselling book by a former child actress, Laura, it's called, I'm glad my mom died. Well, in the New York Magazine interview, talk show host and child actress Drew Barrymore seems to agree with the sentiment of that book. She says of her friends, quote, all their moms are gone. And my mom's not. And I'm like, well, I don't have that luxury. But I cannot wait. Now --

INGRAHAM: What!

ARROYO: Now brace yourself. Drew Barrymore took to Instagram this week to try to clear things up.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DREW BARRYMORE: To all you tabloids out there, you have been (BEEP) with my life since I was 13 years old. I have never said that I wished my mother was dead. How dare you put those words in my mouth? I have been vulnerable, and tried to figure out a very difficult, painful relationship, while admitting it is difficult to do while a parent is alive.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ARROYO: Are you following that, Laura?

INGRAHAM: I didn't even know that was Drew Barrymore. She didn't -- I didn't even know that was she. But I prefer when she's --

ARROYO: Yes, that's the at Home Edition.

INGRAHAM: Yes, well, she has her hands above her head and she was screaming for ET. I prefer that Drew Barrymore, she was adorable.

ARROYO: The problem with this is I mean, she clearly is saying until a parent is dead when you have this kind of complex relationship, you can't heal. But it sounds like you're -- you're begging for the death of your mother. And I'm sorry, therapy should be confined to the therapist's room, not broadcast for everybody to see and hear. And I realized she's had a lot of trauma. She and her mother, her mother was taking her to clubs at eight years old. She was in rehab at 13.

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So I get it, but this is not the way to deal with these issues. And certainly it's not a broadly held experience. Anyway, finally, Laura, I have another Ray's Rule for travel. Be aware of novel redesigns of Aircraft Interiors. I give you the in-flight Double Decker.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You put your legs up and reclaim, stretching your legs fully forward. Taking advantage of the double decker and allowing for the passenger on top of recline and not advantageous, dangerous.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ARROYO: Now, Laura, I want to point out, a stranger's butt is in your face. Now imagine that it's that lady we talked about a few weeks ago who was asking the airlines to accommodate her. You remember her? She said the aisles were too small. If you hit turbulence, this flight could be all over. I mean, you could take out several rows behind you. I also hate the idea of having that wall in front of you in this design. It's like flying in the toilet with a low roof. I don't want this

INGRAHAM: But, Raymond, speaking of the air -- speaking of the airline toilets, have you noticed that they're now so small, the sink is kind of a little tiny triangle. Like you can't -- I can't even get one digit into the sink to wash it up. They're so tiny. I don't know how people even fit; I can barely fit in there.

ARROYO: Well, they're getting so small, pretty soon the commode will be the only place to do your business and wash your hands, there'll be nowhere else. I don't know what they're trying to do. They're very uncomfortable.

INGRAHAM: Well, it'll be an interesting summer, Raymond. Invariably we will have to travel for this show. And we will have more travel nightmares and horror stories to share with the audience at large. Raymond, great to see you.

ARROYO: No double deckers for us.

INGRAHAM: Not for us. Good to see you. No double deckers. Now, how the climate crazies are trying to use a Canadian forest fire as yet another excuse to take your freedom, take your power and take your money. The video next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

INGRAHAM: Breaking news. The air quality is bad. Places like Washington, Philly Wilmington. Watch out, Joe. And it's really bad in New York. It is bad, look at it. But is this really a novel occurrence for our country or is it only getting coverage the type it's getting because it's happening along the east coast where all the elites live?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KATY TUR, MSNBC HOST: Don't breathe the air, the air is bad.

DEREK VAN DAM, CNN HOST: Looks like to me a dystopian climate change movie.

GOV. KATHY HOCHUL (D-NY): I'm calling it an environmental health crisis.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Let's not forget the climate crisis and climate change which is bringing all this to us.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Everything is amped up a little bit everything's on steroids because of what we've done to our planet.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Looks like the marijuana corner is in New York. Obviously that hazy. Well beyond that the apocalyptic

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coverage in the New York Times today was just absolutely nice laughingly hilarious, needs its own underscore music, but this will have to do. "As smoke darkens the sky, the future becomes clear. A month ago I wrote about one of the scariest revelations of the new wildfires science: There's nowhere to escape the smoke."

CNN's Bill Weir, no stranger to hyperbole himself, used the event to call for action to electrify every car in the United States for humanity's sake.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL WEIR, CNN CHIEF CLIMATE CORRESPONDENT: Just by eliminating the kind of pollution that comes out of tailpipes and dirty fuel power plants would save over 80,000 lives almost 90,000 lives. It would prevent 2.2 million asthma attacks. Or by 2050 it would save almost 11 million lost workdays. This also affects folks' communities of color disproportionately around the country.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: Oh, there it is going back to the beginning of the show, right? The inevitable intersection of climate and race. If you don't agree with Bill, at some point they are going to call you a white supremacist. Joining me now Steve Milloy, Senior Legal Fellow at the Energy and Environment Legal Institute and Trump Era Transition team member. Steve, no one's denying it is unpleasant. My eyes are pretty itchy and watery, yesterday and a little bit today and it might go on for a couple more days. But is this wholly out of the ordinary?

STEVE MILLOY, ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT LEGAL INST: No, this happens anytime there's a wildfire in the west and it's unusual in the east, but the air is ugly, it's unpleasant to breathe. And for a lot of people, they get anxiety over it. But the reality is there's no health risk. OK, there's EPA research.

They've done lots of clinical research on asthmatics, on elderly, asthmatics, on children, on elderly with heart disease, not a cough or wheeze from any of them. We have this kind of air in India and China all the time. No public health emergency.

INGRAHAM: Speaking of -- do you notice like an all the coverage of you know, Bill Weir, the tailpipes all this? They never ever mentioned the fact at the top that China is the number one polluter in the world. Never.

MILLOY: Yes, this is like clean air in China. I mean, it's really bad. You know, they in the winter, they never turn on their scrubbers for the air pollution because they don't care. Weir has no idea what he's talking about. This doesn't kill anybody. This doesn't make anybody cough. This is not a health event. This has got nothing to do with climate. First off, these are this is wildfire smoke, this is natural. This is not because of climate change.

INGRAHAM: Amazing!

MILLOY -- Fossil fuel, you know, internal combustion engines. He just has no idea what he's talking about.

INGRAHAM: All day by the way, it seemed like the media figures that we've become accustomed to seeing on television during this crisis, they seemed like they were back in their element in kind of almost enjoying the moment of wearing masks -- masks again. Didn't they? They seemed to have a little pep in their step for those masks? Now, they talked about the dangers of something called particulate matter from the smoke. Here's CNN earlier.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ATHENA JONES, CNN NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Consider wearing a mask and that is because of the particulate matter in the air. This is among the tiniest, most dangerous kind of pollutants and it's the kind of thing found in this wildfire smoke. These are -- these particular -- these particles are so small they can get into the lungs when you breathe them in, get into the bloodstream and cause all kinds of health issues.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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INGRAHAM: Steve, we're back at the masks. Romaine Ossuary is watching from heaven by the way. Romaine, I know you are. Go ahead.

MILLOY: Yes, this is crazy. This is all particulate matter but particularly better was not a concern until EPA invented it as one in the 1990's and they've been writing and the Obama administration, now the Biden administration --

INGRAHAM: What is it? Is it a health concern?

MILLOY: Part -- no particulate matter, it is very fine soot --

INGRAHAM: We don't want to be breathing that --

MILLOY: Well, it's just carbon particles, very innocuous. OK but they're innocuous. There's nothing in them. They have no effect. EPA has all this testing on real life human beings, it shows no effect. This was total junk science to claim this is hurting anybody, it's ugly. You don't want to breathe, it causes --

INGRAHAM: But didn't they seem a little giddy to be back in the mask?

MILLOY: They love it.

INGRAHAM: They love the mask.

MILLOY: They love it. Well, they love all panic, right.

INGRAHAM: Yes, panic porn --

MILLOY: They love -- some say --

INGRAHAM: By the way, another moment of panic porn always comes when you see those very dramatic and sad pictures. Not of the polar bears, but of the ice coming off Antarctica, like crashing into the ocean. Is that real?

MILLOY: No. No. So this week, there was a study. You know, if you use the climate models, they say by now we should have lost 20 trillion tons of ice in Antarctica between 2009 and 2018. But we've actually gained ice. And this is like, you know, they're always wrong. All climate upon --

INGRAHAM: That came out. Did it not?

MILLOY: Yes. They've never been right. They're never going to be right.

INGRAHAM: Well, Steve, from ice to particulate matter only on Ingraham Angle. Steve, thank you. Now why you shouldn't leave dog food in your car. Last bite explained.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

INGRAHAM: OK, what happens when you have a hungry bear, a pickup truck and some dog food? A big problem.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Give it a try. Get out of here. Get, get, get --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

INGRAHAM: My question is, did he actually buckle up? Or was he (inaudible) - can't leave anything in your car out there.

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That's it for us tonight. Greg Gutfeld and the whole gang, they take it all from here.

END

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June 8, 2023

”Moms for Liberty” : de mères américaines en colère à groupe extrémiste

Sébastien SEIBT

Les “Moms for Liberty” sont devenues mardi le premier mouvement de parents d’élèves à être inscrit sur la liste des groupes haineux aux États-Unis par le Southern Poverty Law Center. Comment ce groupe a-t-il opéré une ascension aussi fulgurante que surprenante au sein de la galaxie des mouvements ultra-conservateurs ?

Une sacrée prouesse. Un peu plus de deux ans seulement après sa création, le mouvement “Moms for Liberty” a été ajouté mardi 6 juin à la liste des groupes haineux aux États-Unis, établie par le Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), la principale ONG nord-américaine de lutte contre l’extrémisme. Ce rapport annuel sur la haine aux États-Unis est devenu le document de référence sur le sujet, souligne le quotidien USA Today.

C’est la première fois aux États-Unis qu’un regroupement de parents d’élèves se retrouve ainsi désigné dangereux mouvement extrémiste, au même titre que des groupes suprématistes comme le Ku Klux Klan ou les Proud Boys.

Des méthodes brutales

”Ce sont des guerrières qui se battent contre l’éducation inclusive et sont devenues célèbres pour leurs méthodes de harcèlement et d’intimidation systématique”, soulignent les auteurs du rapport du Southern Poverty Center .

À l’origine, pourtant, les “Moms for Liberty” n’étaient qu’un groupe de trois mères ultra-conservatrices très remontées contre une femme : Jennifer Jenkins, qui avait battu l’une des fondatrices du groupe lors d’une élection au conseil d’éducation d’une école en Floride.

Elles lui ont ensuite fait vivre un véritable enfer, comme elle l’a raconté au site Vice . Les “Moms for Liberty” sont soupçonnées d’avoir déposé une fausse plainte auprès des services de défense de la petite enfance, soutenant que Jennifer Jenkins était une droguée et frappait sa fille. Des proches du groupe ont plusieurs fois interpellé l’enfant en lui disant de “faire attention [car] ta maman fait mal aux enfants”. D’autres sympathisants faisaient le pied de grue devant la maison de Jennifer Jenkins pour l’insulter dès qu’elle mettait un nez dehors.

Les bases de la méthode “Moms for Liberty” étaient alors jetées, et ces femmes allaient bientôt en faire profiter tout le pays. En deux ans, plus de 110 000 mères en colère dans 42 États sont venues grossir les rangs de cette armée s’élevant contre tout ce qui “est woke dans l’éducation”, d’après leur site Internet.

Pandémie oblige, elles ont commencé par protester contre le port du masque à l’école et les mesures de distanciation sociales. Leur mission ? “Raviver les flammes de la liberté” dans des établissements accusés de vouloir priver les enfants de cette sacro-sainte liberté sous couvert de lutte contre le coronavirus.

Croisées contre les livres “impies” et la communauté LGBT+

Lorsque la crise sanitaire a touché à sa fin, ces “Moms for Liberty” ont rebondi en devenant des croisées contre les livres

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“impies”. Un livre dans lequel on évoquait la reproduction des hippocampes ? À bannir. Une BD dans laquelle deux adolescents dorment dans le même lit ? Trop “explicite”, et donc à faire disparaître aussi .

En revanche, le livre controversé “The Making of America “ est tout en haut de la liste des ouvrages recommandés par les “Moms for Liberty”. Ce précis d’histoire des années 1980 prétend notamment que les propriétaires des champs de coton du sud des États-Unis étaient les “plus grandes victimes de l’esclavage”.

Leur haine du système éducatif actuel, qu’elles qualifient de “marxiste”, les a conduites à réclamer le démantèlement du ministère de l’Éducation, mais aussi que les syndicats d’enseignants soient traités comme des organisations terroristes.

Mais ce groupe de mères ultra-conservatrices s’est aussi trouvé un autre cheval de bataille : chasser tout ce qui est pro-LGBT. Elles dénoncent, par exemple, tous les profs soupçonnés de quelques sympathies que ce soit à la cause des homosexuels comme de “dangereux prédateurs qui veulent ‘sexualiser’ les enfants”, souligne le Southern Poverty Law Center.

Leur traque des minorités sexuelles ne se limite pas aux salles de classes. Elles qualifient de “maladie mentale normalisée par les prédateurs sexuels” tout ce qui s’écarterait de leur sacro-saint modèle hétérosexuel. Twitter a même fermé temporairement le compte des “Moms for Liberty” en 2022 pour homophobie.

Un succès fulgurant à l’extrême droite

Au-delà de l’idéologie prônée par ces femmes, le SPLC s’inquiète surtout de la rapidité avec laquelle les “Moms for Liberty” ont gagné en influence dans les milieux conservateurs. “Elles sont souvent comparées aux mouvements de la ‘Majorité morale’ des années 1980 [très influent sous la présidence de Ronald Reagan , NDLR] et du Tea Party [mouvement libertarien anti-Obama, NDLR]”, signale le Washington Post.

Elles ont déjà réussi à faire de leur convention nationale - qui n’en est pourtant qu’à sa deuxième édition - l’un des passages obligés des poids lourds du Parti républicain. L’ensemble des candidats conservateurs à l’élection présidentielle de 2024 - à commencer par Ron DeSantis et Donald Trump - vont prendre la parole à l’occasion de la grand-messe des “Moms for Liberty” qui se tiendra à Philadelphie du 29 juin au 2 juillet.

Cette ascension du groupe dans la galaxie conservatrice, “fulgurante” selon le magazine The New Yorker , doit beaucoup à un soutien de la première heure de certaines figures historiques de l’extrême droite américaine.

En effet, en janvier 2021 , alors que le groupe n’existe que depuis quelques semaines et ne compte qu’une poignée de membres en Floride, les fondatrices des “Moms for Liberty” étaient les invitées d’honneur de l’émission radio de Rush Limbaugh, l’une des voix les plus influentes à la droite du Parti républicain. Un mois plus tard, c’est le présentateur vedette de Fox News, Tucker Carlson, qui parle de ces “mères en colère”.

La droite ultra-conservatrice américaine avait tout à gagner à voir ce mouvement grandir. L’activisme de ces femmes dans les conseils scolaires est de la plus haute importance pour les républicains. Il s’agit, d’une part, de démontrer qu’on peut être une femme tout en étant très à droite : Donald Trump, tout comme son principal rival à droite Ron DeSantis, “ont toujours eu du mal à séduire l’électorat féminin”, rappelle le magazine The New Republic .

D’autre part, “on a souvent eu tendance à sous-estimer le rôle des questions d’éducation dans le processus de mobilisation des électeurs conservateurs dans l’Amérique moderne”, expliquait à France 24, en avril 2023 Robert Mason, spécialiste de la politique américaine et de l’histoire du Parti républicain à l’université d’Édimbourg . Ces conseils scolaires “sont des lieux de politisation très importants pour les conservateurs”, ajoutait alors Tamara Boussac, spécialiste des États-Unis à l’université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. Le parti républicain espère que ces “Moms for Liberty” deviendront une arme de recrutement massive.

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June 8, 2023

Moms for Liberty, with foothold in Livingston County, named ‘extremist group’
The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several “parents’ rights”
groups as extremist, including one group with a member l...

Will Carless and Sarah Leach, Livingston Daily

The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several “parents’ rights” groups as extremist, including one group with a member leading the Livingston County GOP.

LIVINGSTON COUNTY — The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several “parents’ rights” groups as extremist, including one group with a member leading the Livingston County GOP.

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing “parents’ rights” groups received the “extremist” designation in the SPLC’s annual report released Tuesday, June 6.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as “anti-government extremist groups” based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA TODAY. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they’re drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

”[The movement] is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools,” Corke said. “We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level.”

Jennifer Smith, who heads the Livingston County Chapter of Moms for Liberty, was elected chair of the Livingston County GOP in December to serve through 2023.

Smith has been a vocal opponent of quarantines, mask mandates and other public health policies discussed by school boards over the course of the pandemic.

More: Livingston County GOP selects new leadership

The 12 new groups brought the total number of active extremist groups to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the SPLC designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That’s almost unchanged from 2021, when the SPLC counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to

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self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate groups. The SPLC has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

But the SPLC has also been criticized for designating as extremist some groups that argue they simply take a political position, and has defended itself in lawsuits, including from immigration policy groups it has designated as anti-immigrant hate groups. (The organization is also currently fighting a lawsuit from Gavin McInnes, who founded the Proud Boys and who has argued the SPLC's hate group designation harmed his career.)

Moms for Liberty did not respond to USA TODAY's request for comment Tuesday. Smith did not respond to a request for comment from The Daily.

The report also has other findings, including that the so-called "militia movement" declined significantly last year, that antisemitism continues to be a major force animating the extreme far-right and that alternative tech sites aren't as niche as perhaps might be expected.

Moms for Liberty

Moms for Liberty has made headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The SPLC study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the "social-welfare" nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

The group pitched itself as a potent grassroots movement of outraged parents, many of whom weren't active in school politics until COVID-19 restrictions forced them to pay attention. It's sprouted local chapters in at least 40 states, claims more than 100,000 members and has the ear of the Republican establishment: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has championed their efforts to restrict teaching about race in schools and universities. Critics in Florida slam the group for turning schools into a political battlefield.

That influence solidified the group's position in national politics. At the end of this month, barely two years after the group came into existence, both DeSantis and former President Donald Trump will speak at Moms for Liberty's National Summit in Philadelphia and may now compete to win the Moms for Liberty vote.

Despite the national profile, these organizations spread conspiracy theories and operate on the myth that educators are engaged in "Marxist indoctrination" of the nation's children by imbuing them with dangerous ideas about equality and sexuality, the SPLC said.

Smith in Livingston County has been vocal since the onset of the pandemic.

In December 2021, she filed lawsuits against some members of the Brighton Area Schools Board of Education, alleging a school board subcommittee in charge of public health policies violated the Open Meetings Act. She later dropped the suits.

She's faced backlash in the news and on social media for comments made during BAS board meetings — which some found threatening.

Brighton resident Sarah Cross was granted a temporary personal protection order against Smith in late November after Cross advocated for tougher COVID-19 protocols in the district. When she believed a pair of school board members disparaged her, coughed in her direction and dismissed COVID-19 safety, she sought recalls against them.

More: PPO against Livingston County GOP chair terminated by judge

Because of her COVID-19 stance and the recalls, Cross said Smith harassed her. She alleged Smith posted on social media that Cross was often alone while she collected recall signatures and that Smith and her husband allegedly drove by and made crude gestures to Cross while screaming insults at her.

The PPO was terminated in March after a judge said, although the harassment ended once the PPO was granted, there was no direct evidence to prove Smith was orchestrating the acts.

While the Moms for Liberty movement may be reasonably new, it's founded on the same traditional racist, misogynist and homophobic views that brought people out to protest the desegregation of schools in the 1950s and '60s, the SPLC argues.

"Over the past two years, reactionary anti-student inclusion groups have been popping up from coast to coast, claiming to battle for parents' rights. Just like their predecessors, their rhetoric takes on marked anti-LGBTQ, racist and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographic segments of American society," the report states.

"These groups publicize their fight for alleged parents' rights while simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they oppose."

The primary focus of these groups has been twofold: They've fought against curriculums that teach about America's racist and violent history and have more recently taken aim at any educational efforts to teach children about LGBTQ issues. To attract attention and seek new followers, groups like Moms for Liberty promote the false claim that left-wing teachers and educators are engaged in a conspiracy to "sexualize" or even "groom" the schoolchildren under their care.

It's a narrative that's had significant success, the SPLC notes.

Moms for Liberty alone claims to have "flipped" 17 school boards nationwide to parental-rights supportive majorities, the report states. "Almost immediately following elections, many of these boards began making sweeping changes at school board meetings, such as firing superintendents and making curriculum changes," the researchers found.

"They have just been really successful in leveraging their relationships with school officials, and extremist groups, to put them kind of in a place where they can make sweeping changes for the majority of people, when they're actually in the minority," said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst at SPLC.

The SPLC's standard criteria for determining if a group is anti-government is spelled out on its website:

"An anti-government group is an organization or collection of individuals that — based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities — believes the federal government is tyrannical and traffics in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government of leftist elites seeking a 'New World Order.'"

The SPLC report notes that, at the group's first national conference, former U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said, "I personally think that the Department of Education should not exist," a quote the group then used on its website.

Moms for Liberty joins the ranks of the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the United Constitutional Patriots, a self-styled militia that "patrols" the U.S.-Mexico border.

The 12 "parents' rights" groups labeled by the SPLC as extremist groups include: Moms for Liberty; Moms for America; Army of Parents; Courage is a Habit; Education First Alliance; Education Veritas; No Left Turn in Education; Parents Against CRT (PACT); Parents Defending Education; Parents Rights in Education; Purple for Parents Indiana and Parents Involved in Education.

Other findings

The comprehensive annual SPLC report has a number of additional findings, including:

Extremist flyering and propaganda incidents continued to increase in 2022 : The SPLC counted 155 incidents on campuses, 4,739 public propaganda incidents and 169 "banner drops" where groups hung hateful messages on banners in public spaces. Flyering incidents have increased 291 percent since 2018, the report found. Hate at public events: As USA TODAY has reported, the SPLC found that hate groups have increasingly descended on public events, primarily targeting drag shows and school board meetings to protest against LGBTQ-inclusive programming. The so-called "constitutional sheriffs" movement

Moms for Liberty, with foothold in Livingston County, named..., 2023 WLNR 19809798

continues: In 2022, members of the group, who believe that local sheriffs are the highest authority in the country and are not beholden to state or federal law enforcement, began interfering with elections, the SPLC said. “Members melded their extremist positions with their law enforcement authority to investigate rogue, conspiratorial allegations of fraud in the 2020 presidential election and brought doubt into the legitimacy of the 2022 midterm elections,” the report states. The movement has also been used to react to gun laws. Livingston County joined the fray in April in reaction to newly passed and proposed gun control laws in Michigan. Although such resolutions are symbolic and have no legal basis, they establish county officials’ mindsets when it comes to enforcing and funding gun control measures passed by a higher legislative body. Antisemitism continues to motivate the extremist far-right : “In 2022, Jewish people and spaces were regularly harassed, assaulted, vandalized and threatened,” the report found.

— Contact executive editor Sarah Leach at sleach@livingstondaily.com. Follow her on Twitter @SentinelLeach.

This article originally appeared on Livingston Daily: Moms for Liberty, with foothold in Livingston County, named ‘extremist group’

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; U.S. Department of Education

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

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NewsRoom

'People are frightened.' Florida's book rules cause a chilling..., 2023 WLNR 19896270

NewsRoom

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Miami Herald (FL)

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June 8, 2023

'People are frightened.' Florida's book rules cause a chilling effect in Miami-Dade schools

By Sommer Brugal, Miami Herald

iPrep Academy in downtown Miami was established to close the digital and cultural divide and ensure every child had access to technology.

Founded by former Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, one thing that made it distinct was the absence of a physical library; everything was digital. And the model worked.

It wasn't until the onset of this school year that a group of parents agreed it would be good for students, particularly young children, to have a space to gather and experience books away from another screen. By October, a group of parents, including Elizabeth Casal, had built shelves for the school's new media center.

They named it Starbooks.

At the time, it was Casal's understanding that around 500 books would be displayed; more importantly, she understood the books had been ordered. But as the final week of the 2022-23 school year wraps up, the shelves at Starbooks remain empty, she said.

District officials said the books were at the school, just not yet available because the media specialist and iPrep staff need to ensure the books align with the appropriate grade level — elementary, middle or high — before placing the books on the shelves. Moreover, the media specialist was just recently awarded full certification. Officials assured the delay was not another example of book restrictions or regulations stemming from new state laws.

For Casal, though, the empty bookshelves appear to be just that.

The apparent misunderstanding — and delay in ensuring the books were available — between the parents and the district points to the ongoing confusion surrounding book restrictions in Florida. It also underscores how, in some instances, the new laws are causing a chilling effect and allow for what some say are the behind-the-scenes decisions being made regarding books.

"What I've seen at our school is that there is an effort to have these books and to lift up diverse voices and have diverse people in the classrooms. I've seen that effort," she told the Herald. "But I also see this force coming from the state that is making it harder for everyone trying to get these things done."

Starbooks is scheduled to open for the 2023-24 school year.

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READ MORE: Miami-Dade K-8 bars elementary students from 4 library titles following parent complaint

'Far reaching' laws

Brooke Sussman, a parent of two in the district, including one at iPrep, was confused when she received a consent form for the Scholastic Book Fair last month.

The consent form to attend the popup book store inside the school included a provision to hold the district harmless should their child return home with a book they didn't approve of.

"My first thought was disappointment. Not for my child, but for this community," Sussman said. For many families, a financial barrier for participation already exists, she said. "With the addition of a permission slip, I think some families will miss it and others will think maybe there is something I should be concerned about and choose not to sign it."

She understands the fear many educators are experiencing amid new laws and debates around what is or isn't age-appropriate. But the permission slip, she said, "illuminated how far reaching these movements to have content restricted" have gone.

District staff did not respond to a question regarding why the forms were being required toward the end of the semester. Previous fairs had already occurred this school year without requiring parental consent for participation, parents said. However, the forms were distributed because the list of books sent to each school is not always made available prior to the fair, staff said.

Nevertheless, the consent form "was kind of bringing political rhetoric in [the school] and making it real for the first time," said Casal.

Teachers, too, are facing new protocols for determining what can or can't be used in their classrooms — a move some argue is the result of misinformed decisions made by lawmakers.

Ramon Veunes, a teacher at Dr. Rolando Espinosa K-8 Center in Doral, said after the new laws went into place, he was told that any book outside of the district's curriculum would require a more tedious approval process, regardless if a teacher already had it in class, such as a vocabulary book he's used for years that he said correlated with state standards.

"We are professionals and we're the most qualified in determining what to teach our students," he said. When these laws are passed, teachers' professional opinions are often not solicited, he said, and in some cases, this can "enable a single parent to affect what an entire school learns or doesn't learn."

Veunes said he will abide by the law, but argued it is "cumbersome and makes our job harder, [and] is wrongheaded."

READ MORE: 'Teach the truth.' Teachers angry over Florida deleting race, social justice from textbooks

At George Washington Carver Elementary in Coral Gables, teachers recently were notified they'd have to catalog their classroom libraries to then be made public on the school's website.

The email, obtained by the Herald, said the move is the result of a law passed last year — HB 1467 — that requires more transparency for the public when selecting instructional materials, including library and reading materials. (Florida teachers unions and other groups sued the state education department, arguing officials overstepped the intent of the new law by including classroom libraries.)

The email said the effort was a "fantastic time" to go through classroom libraries and "weed or remove any damaged or old books, as well as audit for 'age appropriateness.'"

The district did not respond to questions inquiring whether teachers were given a rubric or a definition to determine what was considered age appropriate.

'People are frightened.' Florida's book rules cause a chilling..., 2023 WLNR 19896270

karla.jpgKarla Hernandez-Mats, president of United Teachers of Dade, spoke at an event on June 6, 2023 to raise awareness about censorship and to offer a stark rebuttal to the recent decision to restrict four titles from elementary students in one Miami-Dade County school.

Karla Hernandez-Mats, president of United Teachers of Dade, told the Herald she instructed her members not to comply with the request. The process, she said, highlights what she argues is an attack on public education and underscores the confusion many teachers are facing amid vaguely-written laws.

If a teacher is unsure if a title is acceptable, many may opt to remove it from their shelves to avoid any trouble later on, she said.

"That's the state of education," Marvin Dunn, historian and professor emeritus at Florida International University, told the Herald late last month. "People are frightened. They aren't sure and are being overly cautious" about the materials they use, which has a chilling effect on what is being taught, he said.

One parent's complaint

The act of removing a book from school shelves — and the outrage about how it was done — isn't new for Miami-Dade Public Schools.

In 2006, the father of a 10-year-old student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Elementary complained a book his daughter brought home painted an inaccurate depiction of life in Cuba. The school board voted to remove the book, "Vamos a Cuba," from school shelves, despite two academic advisory committees at the time suggesting leaving it. The ACLU filed a lawsuit claiming the board's decision violated the Constitution, according to a 2009 Herald story.

The issue went up to the Supreme Court, but was denied a hearing. The book remained off the shelves, following the ruling of an 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta that said the School Board had not breached the First Amendment and supported its authority to set educational standards in Miami-Dade.

Nearly 20 years later, the district is again in the spotlight after just one parent complained about five titles.

READ MORE: The 2023 Silver Knights were honored. They will definitely make the world a better place

Daily Salinas, a parent of two at Bob Graham Education Center, a K-8 school in Miami Lakes, claimed the titles included what she said were references to critical race theory, "indirect hate messages," gender ideology and indoctrination. Four of them, including Amanda Gorman's poem, "The Hill We Climb," which she recited at President Joe Biden's inauguration, were moved to the middle school shelves.

Salinas has denied any affiliation with Moms for Liberty, a self-proclaimed parents-rights organization that was recently labeled an extremist group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, despite appearing in multiple photos with local chapter leadership. The group is behind many book removal efforts nationally, according to an analysis by the Washington Post. A representative from the national chapter said Salinas was not affiliated with the group, but did not respond to a question about the perceived relationship between the parent and local leadership.

The district has maintained the titles were not banned but simply moved. Reading and education advocates, however, say it's still a restriction to younger students. (Dunn and Hernandez-Mats, along with other prominent Miami educators and literary and civil rights organizations, spoke on Tuesday at a book giveaway and celebration to push back on the decision made at Bob Graham.)

For Stephen Hunter Johnson, a district parent, Miami lawyer and member of the Miami-Dade County's Black Affairs Advisory Board, the ease with which one parent's challenge can result in less access for all students is "incredibly concerning and alarming."

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"What was done here was nothing short of a travesty," he told the Herald after the restrictions were made public. "The school district is dead wrong on this, for allowing this ad-hoc review process [and] doing these things under the cover of darkness."

MIA_EDUMDCPSFIRSTDAYOFSCHOOL-Local0698JAI.JPG Superintendent José Dotres, pictured on August 17, 2022, the first day of the 2022-23 school year, said the review committee's decision followed district policy.

At a news conference Wednesday, Superintendent Jose Dotres defended the committee's actions, saying it "followed proper procedures" but added "there's always room for improvement." Perhaps officials should raise more awareness about existing policies, he said.

Nevertheless, Johnson argued, if one parent has a right to complain, other parents should have the right to push back. The purpose and effect of laws like this is to chill what otherwise would be normal expression, he said; it's easier to come up with these absurd solutions than it is to push back.

Stephana Ferrell, director of research and insight at Florida Freedom to Read Project, agreed. The organization, which obtained records of the decision at Bob Graham and shared them with the Herald, is arguing for more transparency surrounding the initial school-level review process.

In many districts, including Miami-Dade schools, a school-level review committee is the first and sometimes only step in determining whether a book should remain on shelves; policies don't require complaints to be made public. As a result, those school-level discussions are often kept quiet and most of the discussions go "under the radar" unless a decision is appealed, Ferrell said.

"We don't want to see the school-level step disappear," she said. Instead, what organizations like hers are arguing for "is that every parent knows when a book is challenged."

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Book Publishing (1BO18); Books (1BO26); Library & Information Science (1LI40); Publishing (1PU26); Traditional Media (1TR30))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); Caribbean (1CA06); Cuba (1CU43); Florida (1FL79); Latin America (1LA15); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (11th Circuit Court of Appeals; iPrep Academy; George Washington Carver Elementary; United Teachers of Dade; Marjory Stoneman Douglas Elementary; ACLU; Supreme Court; Bob Graham Education Center; Moms for Liberty; Miami-Dade County; Southern Poverty Law Center; Florida International University)

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June 8, 2023

MSNBC Ignores Soros Connection to Extremist Group Smearing Moms as Bigots

Tom Olohan

Jun 08, 2023

A group funded by radical billionaire George Soros is smearing a group of concerned mothers as being somehow filled with hate and MSNBC was just tickled pink over it.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) repeated on Tuesday its pathetic tradition of smearing groups that speak out against the left's preferred narrative by placing the pro-parent education group Moms for Liberty on the same "hate map" as violent and racist groups, such as neo-Nazis and the Klu Klux Klan. MSNBC's host Nicole Wallace invited SPLC President and CEO Margaret Huang on to the June 6 edition of *Deadline: White House* where Huang and Wallace both spewed propaganda at Moms for Liberty. Wallace referred to Moms for Liberty as "reactionary," while Huang called them "right wing-ideologues." But what was missing from MSNBC's coverage was any mention that the leftist SPLC was connected to Soros, who has a sordid history of supporting anti-family initiatives.

The Soros-funded SPLC website claims that Moms for Liberty "spread[s] hateful imagery and rhetoric against the LGBTQ community." The SPLC engages in guilt by association to smear Moms for Liberty, while downplaying the insane leftist political agendas the group opposes, such as critical race theory and radicalized gender ideological indoctrination of children. Soros' Open Society Foundations gave SPLC a \$75,000 grant in 2016, while Foundation Directory Online data suggest the Soros Fund Charitable Foundation gave another \$90,000 between 2017 and 2019, totaling \$160,000 in funding collectively between the two Soros groups.

The SPLC being anti-parent and anti-family falls right in line with Soros' distorted vision of open society. Soros doesn't mince words about the insane "open society" world he envisions when taken to its logical conclusion: "[I]n a perfectly open society none of the existing ties are final, and people's relation to nation, family, and their fellows depends entirely on their own decisions." What his absurd vision means, however, is that "the permanence of social relationships has disappeared; the organic structure of society has disintegrated to the point where its atoms, the individuals, float around without any roots," Soros wrote in *Underwriting Democracy*.

But that's not all. Soros-funded global media outlet openDemocracy published an op-ed from a "queer communism" activist who said the COVID-19 crisis "shows it's time to abolish the [nuclear] family." Specifically, according to that article, "the pandemic is an acutely important time to provision, evacuate and generally empower survivors of — and refugees from — the nuclear household." Soros fueled at least \$1,633,457 into openDemocracy between 2016 and 2020 alone.

SPLC appears to be helping to further Soros' vision.

MSNBC Ignores Soros Connection to Extremist Group..., 2023 WLNR 19901134

Moms for Liberty responded to the SPLC on twitter, calling their inclusion on the “hate map” part of a “coordinated attempt to silence and suppress us.” SPLC is in no position to be throwing the word “hate” around. Recently, SPLC attorney Thomas Webb Jurgens was charged with domestic terrorism after being arrested at an event where protestors threw Molotov cocktails at a law enforcement training facility in Georgia, according to the New York Post . SPLC, of course, downplayed the arrest by claiming they will continue to push back against “violence and police use of force against Black, Brown and Indigenous communities.” Wallace didn’t bother bringing this scandal up while it propped up the SPLC’s smear campaign.

Twitter revolted against the Soros-tied SPLC for targeting mothers.

Among those defending Moms for Liberty were Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Christopher Rufo, who tweeted, “The SPLC is a left-wing activist organization that manipulates historical guilt in order to smear its political opponents. The women who lead Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education are good-hearted patriots who should file suit against the SPLC.”

Echoing Rufo’s defense, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) called the SPLC “a corrupt slush fund devoted to defamation.” Christina Pushaw, the Rapid Response Director for Ron DeSantis’s presidential campaign, responded to the news by tweeting: “Unreal that being a mom who cares about her kids’ education and well-being is now considered ‘hate.’ I think the real hate group here is SPLC!”

Past smear campaigns by the SPLC have not ended well, which apparently didn’t faze MSNBC. In 2012, a man shot a guard and attempted to murder employees of the Family Research Council (FRC) and smear Chick-fil-A sandwiches on their faces, reportedly after finding the group on the SPLC “hate map.”

FRC President Tony Perkins said that this unhinged man “was given a license to perpetrate this act of violence by groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center which has systematically and recklessly labeled every organization with which they disagree as a ‘hate group.’” Wallace also conveniently ignored mentioning this incident too.

Conservatives are under attack. Call MSNBC at (800) 952-5210 and demand that the network stop giving a platform to the SPLC’s smearing of mothers for caring about the development and education of their children!

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---- Index References ----

Company: NEWSTEX, LLC; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; NEW YORK POST CORPORATION

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Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); New York (1NE72); North America (1NO39); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

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June 8, 2023

MSNBC Deems Parent Organizations Hate Groups

Cassandra DeVries

Jun 08, 2023

MSNBC's Deadline: White House , one of the network's top-rated shows, fully leaned into its divisive view of conservatives Tuesday by touting as fact a report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) which proclaimed without evidence that parental rights groups are hate groups.

Host Nicolle Wallace huffed through multiple readings of the report, calling parents concerned about racially divisive and sexually explicit content presented to young children as "reactionary anti-student inclusion groups" and akin to January 6 rioters. She added at another point that such groups and women speaking out against biological men in sports as "target[ing]," "malign[ing] and threaten[ing] kids."

For good measure, the head of SPLC added her own thoughts about these "terrifying individuals" while former FBI official and MSNBC contributor Frank Figliuzzi called parental rights and female sports advocates reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

The SPLC's report attacked Mom's for Liberty and Parents Defending Education, coalitions of parents seeking to review their children's education, and referred to them as anti-government, extremist, inciters of domestic violence, and a hate group. Host Nicolle Wallace said the report was "rooted on research and data" and portrayed its contents as fact, including this excerpt.

Reactionary anti-student inclusion groups such as Moms for Liberty, Moms for America, Parents Defending Education that the Southern Poverty Law Center lists as extremist groups are, by their very nature, responding to social progress that they dislike and have no control over. Like many other hard-right groups, these reactionary anti-student inclusion groups are constantly painting themselves as an oppressed class, while vilifying those discriminated against.

Wallace welcomed SPLC President and CEO Margret Huang as a hero for her work on the report. Huang rebuked Moms for Liberty for, "pushing to ban certain books, ban curricula, punish teachers who talk about inclusive education, and generally make our school boards miserable in seeking to provide an inclusive education for all." She described their efforts as "terrifying" to children and "detrimental to their well-being." As she spoke, the headline "Breaking News; Report: Schools Are Primary Target for Locally Driven Extremist Mobilization" ran across the screen.

MSNBC continued their portrayal of concerned parents as hate-filled extremists by describing the alleged harm these groups caused students. Wallace read from the SPLC's report that, "The fear and pain experienced by Black, brown, and LGBTQ communities went far beyond any individual incident, deeply disrupting their ability to participate in an inclusive

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democracy.”

Frank Figliuzzi even compared groups on SPLC’s hate list to the KKK. He claimed that these groups adopted the KKK’s tactics to infiltrate schools and force their hate-filled agenda on unsuspecting citizens. He said:

But I harken back to decades ago when the FBI and DOJ really aggressively targeted and successfully went after criminally the KKK. And what happened there was they took off their hoods and their sheets, they put on suits and ties, they went local, and they ran for office. So, this isn’t the first time we’ve seen this going local mainstreaming of hatred. We’ve seen it before. And we see it now with people who truly are driven by hate and deception running for school board and elective office.

Figliuzzi rejected parents’ concern about the curriculum, viewing such attempts at influence as manipulative tactics to promote hate.

”Activists have made a concerted effort to organize in the local arena, pursuing their agenda in venues where it is easier to gain power.” Wallace read from the report. “In 2022, the hard-right movement succeeded in burrowing deeper in peoples’ lives in visible and material ways, even if it did not have widespread electoral success. Its fingerprints are everywhere: people’s homes, schools, doctors’ offices, libraries, bars, restaurants, churches, and other community spaces.”

At no point did MSNBC offer a counterpoint to Huang and its panel’s accusations against conservative parental groups. Instead, they presented the SPLC’s harsh accusations as objective and factual. They willingly labeled involved parents as members of a hate group and reminiscent of the KKK. Unfortunately, there seems to be no bottom at MSNBC.

MNSBC’s biased news coverage was brought to you by Walgreens. Their contact information is linked.

The transcript is here to read.

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Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

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NewsRoom

Attacked for defending kids SPLC slanders moms as 'hate group', 2023 WLNR 19843811

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June 8, 2023

Section: News

Attacked for defending kids SPLC slanders moms as 'hate group'

RIKKI SCHLOTT

'BEING labeled a hate group . . . I mean, it's just shocking,' Tiffany Justice told The Post.

On Tuesday, she learned that the Southern Poverty Law Center had added Moms for Liberty, the parental-rights activist group she co-founded, to their list of "hate and antigovernment extremist groups."

"I completely reject that label. It's ridiculous," the 44-year-old Florida mom of four said. "I think the Southern Poverty Law Center has become a complete joke.

"You have to stop and think to yourself, what is the threat here? Why are parents asking questions and advocating for their fundamental parental rights such a threat?"

Justice co-founded Moms for Liberty with fellow Florida mom Tina Descovich in January 2021. Both had served as local school board members and were fed up with what they saw as encroachments of parental rights — from, Justice explained, excessive COVID closures to a lack of transparency about curriculum.

'That's not America'

"We both came to understand that government schools think they know better than you what's good for your child. And that's not America," said Justice, whose kids are 18, 15, 13 and 11 years old.

And so the pair opened two chapters of the Moms for Liberty organization, adopting the mission of "unifying, educating, and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

Within a matter of weeks, Justice said, the movement began to spread "like wildfire."

"We very quickly saw that this wasn't ours to keep to ourselves," she said. "This was something that many American parents wanted to be a part of."

Today, the group has 285 chapters in 44 states and more than 120,000 members. Moms for Liberty vets and endorses school board candidates, facilitates curriculum adoption committees and hosts rallies for concerned parents.

"Our members love their kids, love their family, love their country, and are concerned about the future that their children will inherit," Justice told The Post.

Attacked for defending kids SPLC slanders moms as 'hate group', 2023 WLNR 19843811

'Let it come in my time'

She says a particular Thomas Paine quote gets to the essence of their mission: "I prefer peace. But if trouble must come, let it come in my time, so that my children can live in peace."

While Justice said the members of her organization are "just moms first and foremost," the Southern Poverty Law Center has characterized them as extremists.

"Moms for Liberty is a far-right organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and self-identifies as part of the modern parental rights movement," the group declared. "They can be spotted at school board meetings across the country wearing shirts and carrying signs that declare, 'We do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT.'" "

The organization is now listed on the Southern Poverty Law Center's map of hate organizations.

But Justice said the designation isn't all that surprising. Since founding Moms for Liberty, she claimed, she has received death threats, had fake feces sent to her house and regularly gets messages like "we hope your children die from anal cancer" and "we've cut your brakes, enjoy the ride."

But none of this has deterred her, nor her thousands of chapter members. In fact, Justice said, many have reached out this week to tell her that the "ridiculous" label from the Southern Poverty Law Center has invigorated them to keep their fight up.

"They're trying to discredit us. They're trying to tarnish our reputation. But our moms and dads aren't going to stop," Justice said. "They're gonna wear it like a badge of honor. They will not be deterred."

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

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Section: OpEd

Feeding, Not Fighting, Hate

Editorial

For all its claims to profile “hate and antigovernment extremist” outfits, the Southern Poverty Law Center has become nothing more than a hate group itself.

Once it targeted true scum like the Ku Klux Klan. Now it lists 1,225 “threats,” some of which are “extreme” because they stand for conservative causes.

Or, in one case, a group of moms who just happen to care about their kids. Yes, Florida-based Moms for Liberty (a nonprofit with 280 chapters) is, per SPLC, is “at the forefront” of groups targeting “any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.”

These groups — brace yourself! — wear shirts and carry signs that say, “We do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT.”

Dangerous terrorists, clearly.

Oh, they also “hijack meetings” (read: speak up) and “make the world a less comfortable or safe place for certain students — primarily those who are Black, LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ families.”

Reality check: They contest radical agendas on these issues — the lie that America was founded to protect slavery; that we need to teach toddlers about masturbation and anal sex; that life-altering surgery is the best medicine for sexually confused kids, etc.

But validating progressive poppycock keeps the donations rolling in.

Per SPLC boss Margeret Huang, the groups try “to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary” — which actually translates to trying to (gasp) elect sympathetic officials.

”Terrorize,” per the SPLC, is voting in elections, running for office and speaking up at public meetings. That is, democracy!

But the SPLC’s been a menace long before this latest turn. It’s been sued repeatedly for defamation and even made at least one seven-figure payout to settle such a suit.

In 2012, a real terrorist opened fire at a pro-family group’s HQ, later admitting that an SPLC listing inspired his choice of target.

Feeding, Not Fighting, Hate, 2023 WLNR 19843902

And just this year, one of its attorneys was among 23 “protesters” charged with actual domestic terrorism for hurling a Molotov cocktail at a future Atlanta police-training facility.

This once-venerable nonprofit no longer fights hate and violence, it feeds both. And anyone giving it a dime is either a dupe or a extremist themselves. SPLC is the biggest hate group there is.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Defamation, Libel & Slander (1DE07); Hate Crimes (1HA65); International Terrorism (1IN37); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Ku Klux Klan; Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 20496832

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Orlando Sentinel
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June 8, 2023

Section: Main

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Are we living in a dystopian novel?

I can't believe what's happening to America. Are we the "land of the free" or are we becoming societies portrayed in books such as "Brave New World," "1984" or "Fahrenheit 451"?

The banning of books because one person objects? History being altered, words replaced or ideas eliminated. Legislatures enacting laws to how educators should teach. Wanting to take AP classes from high schools and demanding their say in state college curriculum or they will withhold funding. Criticizing great masterpieces as pornography!

Why am I so angry? I'm a 91-year-old retired educator. What wonderful minds and abilities I encountered with my students! Young minds wanting to know the whats, whys and hows. These are our future leaders in this crazy world. They want, and should be able, to know.

Rosemary Georganna Orlando

Moms for Liberty not for liberty at all

This week, the Southern Poverty Law Center officially designated the Moms for Liberty as a hate group. In other news of the obvious, the sky is blue. It's hard to see them as anything other than hateful, despite their tongue-in-cheek "Joyful Warrior" catchphrase. Yes, they're joyful - about excluding and dehumanizing people who aren't like them. They're warriors -for white patriarchy and christofascism. They may be moms, but what they aren't is "for liberty."

Liberty would look like respecting every student in every school. Liberty would let teachers teach accurate history. Liberty would look like a library full of books - not empty shelves. Liberty would be keeping one's bigotry to oneself and letting others live their lives.

This mom is for actual liberty - for teachers to teach however they see fit. For students to have the freedom to learn. For transgender people to have the dignity to use whatever restroom they prefer. For people with disabilities to exist in public spaces. For everyone to be who they are, to love who they love, to wear what they want, to go where they want to go. That is liberty.

Judi Hayes Orlando

Transporting migrants is pure meanness

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2023 WLNR 20496832

The Florida government Tuesday admitted responsibility for flying two groups of migrants from Texas to Sacramento ("Florida takes credit for California migrant flights," June 7). Obviously another cruel political stunt from the governor who wishes to be president, but the first question that has to be asked is why our tax money is being spent flying individuals from Texas to California? How does this benefit Florida?

But more concerning is the moral issue. Migrants are human beings, and they are being shipped like cargo and dumped in the streets of major cities. I have never been so embarrassed to be from the state of Florida and am appalled by how low the current occupant of the governor's office will go to curry favor among the far right. This is simple meanness. It is not what a good person does.

James Driskell New Smyrna Beach

--- Index References ---

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Higher Education (1HI55); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Southern Poverty Law Center)

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Museum staff upset at Moms of Liberty event, 2023 WLNR 19836725

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2023 WLNR 19836725

Philadelphia Inquirer (PA)
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June 8, 2023

Section: Region

Museum staff upset at Moms of Liberty event Some Museum of the American Revolution employees want to see the reception by the pro-book ban group canceled.

Juliana Feliciano Reyes (Staff Writer)

Nearly 40 staffers at the Museum of the American Revolution are demanding that museum leadership cancel a scheduled event hosted by Moms for Liberty, a “parents’ rights” group recently classified as an “antigovernment extremist organization” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Museum, located in Old City, has sought to diversify the stories it tells about American history - its current special exhibition, “Black Founders,” is a first-of-its-kind spotlight on James Forten, a prominent Black Revolutionary War-era abolitionist - and staffers said allowing such a group to rent its space undermines the progress the museum has made.

”We do not feel that any dollar amount is worth endangering the safety of the museum staff members in the building on the day of the event, serving as a host to a group that does not stand with our values, and damaging the museum’s reputation that we have all worked so hard to build,” a petition signed by 39 staffers reads. The museum employs 75 people full time and 37 part time.

Moms for Liberty, an organization that sought control over public education by banning books and removing curriculum related to race, gender, and sexuality, is hosting its national summit in Philadelphia at the end of this month. Featured speakers are to include GOP presidential candidates Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley. The site of the summit - the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown - has already been protested by queer and trans-led groups.

Moms for Liberty is hosting its “Welcome to Philadelphia” reception at the Museum on June 29. The event has not been canceled, a museum spokesperson said. The group’s meeting in Philadelphia is scheduled to run through July 2.

”The museum’s mission is to share diverse and inclusive stories about our nation’s history with the broadest audience possible,” the spokesperson said in a statement. “We welcome any opportunity to introduce visitors to these stories. In these polarizing times, our best hope to strengthen democracy is through dialogue. We understand that this can be difficult.”

Morris Offit, chair of the museum’s board, called the matter “sensitive” and directed a reporter to the museum’s official statement.

Moms for Liberty cofounders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich said in a statement: “Name calling parents who want to be a part of their child’s education as ‘hate groups’ or ‘bigoted’ just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who

Museum staff upset at Moms of Liberty event, 2023 WLNR 19836725

fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school - parents or government employees? We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.”

When staffers realized that the museum was renting to Moms for Liberty, they shared the information with colleagues, including on a Microsoft Teams group chat for LGBTQ staff. Several expressed their disappointment to leadership.

”Over the course of six years, literally hundreds of hands have been involved in building this reputation as a source where we are trying to tell the full story,” said Bee Reed, an email marketing manager who is nonbinary and sent a letter to CEO R. Scott Stephenson. “We’re trying to include stories about Black history and women’s history and queer history. [This event] would compromise all of the work that we’ve done trying to build connections ... with these institutions that are being directly targeted by Moms for Liberty.”

As exhibit specialist Xander Karkruff, who is queer, put it: “Everything they stand for is in conflict with our mission.”

In response, Stephenson held an emergency town hall meeting and a subsequent all-staff meeting last week at which the matter was discussed, according to interviews with five employees. The meetings were emotional and tense, with some staffers openly crying.

During the meetings, employees asked, when it came to renting event space, where’s the line? Would the museum rent to the Proud Boys? The answer was an emphatic no. (A museum spokesperson confirmed this, saying, “We make available after-hours and private rentals to groups that organize legally and safely, including federally recognized 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations.”)

Stephenson said the museum did not discriminate on the basis of politics. Perhaps, he suggested, Moms for Liberty would learn something at the museum.

A museum spokesperson said, “Because fostering understanding within a democratic society is so central to our mission, rejecting visitors on the basis of ideology would be antithetical to our purpose.”

Stephenson said no employees were required to work that night if they didn’t feel safe.

But for some employees, the damage has already been done.

”I don’t feel appreciated nor safe anymore,” said assistant curator Trish Norman, who is nonbinary. “I don’t feel the museum necessarily has my back.”

A protest is scheduled for June 9 at 6 p.m. outside the museum.

Last year, facility rentals made up less than 1% of the museum’s total revenue, according to a tax filing.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Art (1AR38); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Architecture (1AR60); Construction (1CO11); Engineering & Architectural Services (1EN06); Entertainment (1EN08))

Museum staff upset at Moms of Liberty event, 2023 WLNR 19836725

Region: (Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73))

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Tampa Bay Times (FL)
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June 8, 2023

Can Florida credit DeSantis for its No. 1 education ranking? A closer look.

Marlene Sokol; Tampa Bay Times

As Gov. Ron DeSantis seeks the Republican nomination for president, one of his key selling points is Florida's record on education.

"Florida is taking a stand for empowering students, parents and educators to focus on creating opportunities for our younger generations," the governor said on May 15 at a bill-signing event in Sarasota.

Supporting his case is the state's No. 1 ranking in education by U.S. News & World Report, released last month and now a talking point on the "DeSantis for President" website.

The publication rated Florida the top state for higher education and 14th-best for grades pre-K-12. Combined, the two components gave Florida the top ranking overall, based on a U.S. News scoring system that considers such factors as graduation rates, test scores, costs and student debt.

How much of that success can be attributed to DeSantis' policies during his 53 months as governor? It's a mixed bag.

University tuition, for example, has stayed constant under DeSantis. His office said in a news release last year that he had "held the line" on college costs.

But the trend began in 2013 under then-Gov. Rick Scott, whose push to stop automatic annual tuition increases had helped keep costs down.

On another front, DeSantis and his supporters often credit the state's push to reopen schools early during the pandemic. They say that by being quicker to recognize the drawbacks in distance learning and the advantages of in-person schooling, Florida gave its students an edge in recovering from learning losses.

But a closer look at the ranking and its methodology shows Florida's relatively high marks stem partly from actions that predate the pandemic — or even DeSantis as governor. And by key national measures in reading and math, some of the state's pre-K-12 students are doing better than their peers in the post-COVID era, while some are doing worse.

Affordable colleges, universities

In the case of higher education, a major reason for Florida's top ranking is affordability, a characteristic of the system for many years.

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Florida graduates — including those leaving private schools in the state — owed an average of \$24,454, among the lowest in the nation, according to a 2020 report by the Institute for College Access and Success, a nonprofit that promotes affordability. Fewer than half of graduates were in debt, compared with 60% in Delaware and 73% in New Hampshire.

Aided by lower costs, students at Florida's two-year colleges completed degrees within three years 56% of the time — 20 percentage points higher than the national average.

Average tuition and fees at the state's 12 public universities have hovered around \$200 per credit hour since 2013. That's in part due to Scott's push to end automatic increases, which had previously been in place to keep up with inflation. It's a fact that even DeSantis has acknowledged.

"Florida has ranked No. 1 in higher education for seven years in a row," he told the audience in Sarasota last month.

Overall, the numbers show Florida as a place of almost unrivaled opportunity in post-secondary education.

The seeds for this success go back even further, said Bill Montford, a former Democratic state senator and now chief executive of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. He cited programs such as Florida's establishment of a prepaid tuition plan and its Bright Futures scholarships, both of which have encouraged many K-12 students to stay in the state for college.

James Murphy, who has studied the Florida higher education system in his position as a deputy director at Education Reform Now in Washington, D.C., said a closer look reveals lower percentages of minority and economically disadvantaged at its more prestigious institutions, such as University of Florida and Florida State University.

"We should celebrate the affordability," Murphy said. "Florida is a happy story at 30,000 feet. But I think when you start looking at the level of segregation, who's going to the UF? That's an issue of concern."

Test scores after COVID

DeSantis needs little prompting when discussing COVID-19 and schools, often highlighting the pandemic as a period when he showed foresight and strong leadership by reopening public schools in the fall of 2020, ahead of many Democratic-led states.

"When other states were locking people down and keeping their kids out of school, we made sure kids were in school because we put their well-being before politics," he said at a Heritage Foundation event in September.

His claim is supported by a 2022 study led by Harvard University, which showed states that continued remote learning suffered widening gaps in achievement by race and school poverty. Locally, school district leaders also noted that students with affluent, highly educated parents typically excelled in remote learning while those without such advantages regressed.

"Looking back in hindsight, when you look at student achievement, getting young people back in school was a good move," said Montford, the former Democratic senator.

Yet an early return to in-person lessons didn't always translate to success on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a key metric in the U.S. News ranking that measures the performance of fourth and eighth graders in reading and math.

While Florida's fourth graders scored higher than peers in both subjects during last year's tests, the state's eighth graders — who were considered for the U.S. News report — did not.

In both grades, the publication looked at 2022 reading and math test scores, comparing them to those recorded in 2019.

The average eighth grade math test score of 271 was slightly below the national average of 273, and lower than the 279 scored in 2019.

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Those trend lines closely mirrored the rest of the nation, as well as California, where schools remained closed for a full year.

Similar to the math example, Florida was consistent with most of the nation in its deterioration of reading skills in eighth grade. Thirty-three states, including Florida, showed lower scores in 2022 than in 2019. The state saw a three-point drop to an average reading score of 260 — one point higher than the national average.

Even as U.S. News ranked Florida 14th in pre-K-12 education, student performance lagged. The state placed much lower when it came to test scores — 32nd in math and 21st in reading.

Graduation rates and more

High school graduation rates are often met with skepticism as school leaders can manipulate outcomes with lenient grading and questionable programs that allow students to quickly recoup class credits.

Nevertheless, U.S. News considered a 2019-20 report by the National Center for Education Statistics that looked at those results, state by state.

Florida landed in the top nine, tied with Wisconsin and Tennessee at 90%. Ahead of Florida were Iowa and West Virginia, at 92%, along with Kentucky, Indiana, New Jersey and Alabama, all at 91%.

But the publication cited rates for 2019-20, making it difficult to attribute the relatively high marks to DeSantis. He took office in January 2019, when the Class of 2020 was most of the way through high school.

The state ranks 15th in “college readiness,” with students taking college preparatory tests such as the SAT and ACT in higher numbers, although in some cases those high numbers come with lower average scores.

Enrollment in preschool, which helps kids later in their academic careers, is 3.5 percentage points above the national average.

Murphy, at Education Reform Now, said it is important to be careful when relying on ratings such as those published by U.S. News. Critics sometimes decry them for using “very, very thin” sets of data.

”Ratings are a statement of values,” he said. “They are your argument about what matters in education.”

Longtime Florida educators offered diverse views when asked if the state deserves top honors.

Johnny Bush, the former principal of Tampa’s Plant and Robinson high schools and now executive director of a school administrators’ organization, has seen his graduates benefit from an expansive menu of Advanced Placement courses.

He said that’s a winning formula for students he calls “the haves,” and noted that many affluent families are moving to Florida from states such as New York.

”The haves can take advantage of these things,” he said. “If you would ask me, ‘Does Florida take care of Black and brown children?’ I don’t know. ‘Generational poverty?’ I would say not. But the haves have more options than the have-nots.”

In the two years since COVID-19 has receded as a major concern, DeSantis has become more widely known for social initiatives he has championed in the schools. On his watch, the state imposed controls on classroom conversations about LGBTQ+ issues and race, and backed activist groups such as Moms for Liberty that are seeking to ban school library books that they view as inappropriate for children.

The state has also shut down programs that promoted diversity, equity and inclusion at colleges and universities.

With many of those measures set to take full effect this fall, it is too early to predict whether a better or worse educational system will result — or by what measure.

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Murphy said he fears the culture wars will drive away educators at all age levels; especially higher education, where professors will not want to work in a place that is seen as hostile to faculty.

Others say the question is too subjective.

”What does better mean?” Montford asked. “To some people, they say it will absolutely be better. If you are one of the other groups on the other side of the issue, they’ll say no. Those are the kinds of issues that are very, very personal.”

---- Index References ----

Company: Florida State University; DESANTIS BREINDEL INC.; The Institute for College Access & Success; U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, L.P.; Education Reform Now; National Center for Education Statistics

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Forecasts (1FO11); Health & Family (1HE30); Higher Education (1HI55); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Population Demographics (1PO77))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Florida Association of District School Superintendents; University of Florida; Harvard University; Moms for Liberty; Florida State University; DeSantis; Institute for College Access and Success; U.S. News & World Report; Education Reform Now; National Center for Education Statistics)

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty are 'extremists,' but we knew that already, 2023 WLNR 19764388

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 19764388

Arkansas Times
Copyright (c) 2023 Arkansas Times

June 7, 2023

Moms for Liberty are 'extremists,' but we knew that already

Austin Bailey

Jun 07, 2023

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights watchdog group that keeps tabs on the most rabid racists, segregationists and hate groups in Dixie, is adding Moms for Liberty to the list.

The SPLC included Moms for Liberty in its new report, "Year in Hate & Extremism 2022." The authors note the group's precipitous rise was fueled by pandemic-era shutdowns and mask requirements:

Schools, especially, have been on the receiving end of ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks, frequently through the guise of "parents' rights" groups. These groups were, in part, spurred by the right-wing backlash to COVID-19 public safety measures in schools. But they have grown into an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.

At the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group with vast connections to the GOP that this year the SPLC designated as an extremist group. They can be spotted at school board meetings across the country wearing shirts and carrying signs that declare, "We do NOT CO-PARENT with the GOVERNMENT." The group hijacks meetings, preventing officials and parents from conducting their normal proceedings. "I can be sitting in a meeting minding my own business, and they turn around and scream at me that I am a commie and teachers want to see all kids fail," a teacher's union president in Brevard County, Florida, explained to a Washington Post reporter.

Arkansas is home to a lively Moms for Liberty contingent. Most famously, Missy Bosch faced a barrage of complaints after making problematic comments about shooting a school librarian at a 2022 Moms for Liberty meeting in Cabot.

The group claims members in Central and Northwest and East Arkansas. Those members were vocal in the successful push to bar transgender public school students from bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity.

On AR Watch, a state government watchdog group, looked into Arkansas's Moms for Liberty this week. Here's their story.

You can't wade far into the culture wars of our time without learning a bit about the Moms for Liberty.

The stated mission of the organization is "fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

"Parental rights" has become the battle cry of this organization and the far-right politicians who enjoy their support. Founded

Moms for Liberty are 'extremists,' but we knew that already, 2023 WLNR 19764388

in early 2021, Moms for Liberty is quite young for its growth in profile.

Moms for Liberty recently found their way to Arkansas, with chapters in Benton, Washington, Craighead, Lonoke and Pulaski Counties. It's important that we know what they bring to communities where they organize. Here are just a few points to consider as we watch this group attempt to expand in Arkansas.

Moms for Liberty presents itself as nonpartisan, but it endorses far-right candidates and was founded by the wife of the vice chair of the Florida Republican Party. Moms for Liberty is at the forefront of book bans in our state and country. Arkansas leaders of the group's chapters have made threats to library personnel in their communities. School districts in Arkansas had Moms for Liberty candidates in school board races over the last few election cycles. Since its founding, a core tactic of Moms for Liberty has been intimidation, which has sometimes led to harassment of those who disagree with them.

As the group gains notoriety, more information is coming out each week that reveal questionable political relationships, blatantly racist messaging tactics, and ruthless intolerance for any measure of diversity in the communities where they organize.

Arkansans are fiercely protective of the children in our state, so it would be easy to see their supposed priority of "protect the children" and "parental rights" and think they are aligned with our values. However, it's important that we approach this organization with a critical lens, asking questions about the harm they continue to cause, and when necessary, protecting our communities from their influence.

The post Moms for Liberty are 'extremists,' but we knew that already appeared first on Arkansas Times.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; GOP; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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Moms for Liberty are 'extremists,' but we knew that already, 2023 WLNR 19764388

NewsRoom

Wednesday News: "Ukraine Dam Disaster: What Does It..., 2023 WLNR 19712024

NewsRoom

6/7/23 Blue Va. (Blog) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 19712024

Blue Virginia (Blog)
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June 7, 2023

Wednesday News: "Ukraine Dam Disaster: What Does It Mean for the War?"; "The 2024
GOP Field Is Basically Donald Trump and His Mini-Mes"; "6 tough t...

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Jun 07, 2023

Wednesday News: "Ukraine Dam Disaster: What Does It Mean for the War?"; "The 2024 GOP Field Is Basically Donald
Trump and His Mini-Mes"; "6 tough topics the media must not ignore in 2024 coverage"; "Virginians oppose RGGI
withdrawal but that may not be enough"

Home2024 ElectionsWednesday News: "Ukraine Dam Disaster: What Does It Mean for the War?";...

by Lowell

Here are a few international, national and Virginia news headlines, political and otherwise, for Wednesday, June 7.

Arctic Summer Could Be Practically Sea-Ice-Free by the 2030s (Disastrous. GET OFF OF FOSSIL FUELS ASAP!)Too late
now to save Arctic summer ice, climate scientists find ("Ice-free summers inevitable even with sharp emissions cuts and
likely to result in more extreme heatwaves and floods" Great job, fossil fuel companies!)Slow Transition to Clean Energy
Puts Billions at Risk of Household Air PollutionWorld off track for reaching key goal on sustainable energy by
2030Doubling global pace of energy efficiency progress by 2030 is key step in efforts to reach net zero emissionsMining
Critical to Renewable Energy Tied to Hundreds of Alleged Human Rights AbusesRussia and Saudi Arabia's Oil Partnership
Shows StrainWorld Economy Set for Weak Inflation-Plagued Recovery, OECD WarnsCollapse of Ukraine's Nova
Kakhovka dam an 'ecological catastrophe'Floodwaters set to peak in Kherson today as evacuations continue (Russia under
Putin is a terrorist state, bunch of war criminals.)Ukrainians make desperate escape from floods after dam collapse as shelling
echoes overheadD-Day dawns for UkraineUkraine Dam Disaster: What Does It Mean for the War?Russia and Ukraine trade
blame for destruction of Kakhovka dam, power plant (It's almost certainly Russia's fault, one way or the other.)First Thing:
Ukraine says 42,000 at risk from dam floodingAs flood waters rise around them, Kherson residents cast blame for destroyed
dam on 'inhumane' MoscowRussia floundering in 'mud of lies' over Kakhovka dam destruction, Ukraine tells UNU.S. eyes
Russia in destruction of Ukraine's Kakhovka damDrone attack in Moscow may have targeted homes of Russian intelligence
officials, multiple U.S. officials sayChina's exports plunge by 7.5% in May, far more than expectedSunak to raise trade
issues in US talks with Biden'Game changing': spate of US lawsuits calls big oil to account for climate crisis (Top oil
executives should also face CRIMINAL prosecution.)Where wildfire smoke is hitting the U.S. the hardest — and when it
will endAir Quality This Week Gives U.S. a Glimpse of the World's Air PollutionIn Kenya, lions are speared to death as
human-wildlife conflict worsens amid drought (Ugh.)Germany's far-right rides high on anti-immigration, anti-green agenda

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F*** him.)Mike Pence Is Starting His Presidential Campaign From A Historically Bad PositionFar-right 'Moms for Liberty' listed as a hate group for first timeHow Moms for Liberty is helping states pass vicious anti-LGBTQ billsThe Suburbs Are Still Driving American Politics, but Where Are They Taking Us?CNN's Chris Licht showed the problem with anti-woke centrism ("Anti-woke centrism is really about emphasizing differences with progressives, who are inaccurately cast as Twitter-obsessed college graduates who constantly use terms like Latinx and are out of touch with ordinary Democratic voters.")DeSantis Stays Silent on Whether Florida Arranged Migrant Flights to CaliforniaMigrants flown to California get assistance as state weighs charges against DeSantis administrationFlorida ban on trans care for minors is likely unconstitutional, federal judge rulesUS Judge blocks Florida ban on trans minor care in narrow ruling, says 'gender identity is real' (Of course it's real.)George Santos Ordered to Reveal His Bail Bond Sugar Daddies ("The indicted congressman has three days to give up the names of the individuals who put up the \$500,000 bail bond.")Family calls for arrest of White woman who fatally shot Black neighborWhite woman who fatally shot Black neighbor is arrested in FloridaThe PGA Tour Probably Couldn't Beat LIV Golf, So They Joined Them (Slimy.)The "BIG, BEAUTIFUL" Saudi Golf Deal Is Great News for Donald TrumpAtlanta City Council Approves Funding for "Cop City"Latest Bay report card: Middling health but signs of progressNew Roanoke College Poll: "Youngkin's favorability rating is...down six points to 46% (from 52% in February)"; Biden Leads Trump 54%-38% (Youngkin's +11 points net approval rating compares to +19 points for Ralph Northam, +24 points for Terry McAuliffe, +29 points for Bob McDonnell, +58 points for Tim Kaine, etc.)Video: In Virginia Beach, Freedom Virginia Launches 5-Stop 'Show Me Your Values' Mobile Billboard Tour on State Budget (VA House Dems Leader Don Scott: "do we let the MAGA agenda dictate our path, leading us towards tax handouts to big corporations, or do we invest in schools?")Cutting Top Personal Income Tax Boosts the Wealthy, Excludes People with Lower Incomes"The Youngkin administration recently pulled Virginia out of ERIC. 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NewsRoom

Hate groups' political influence growing, watchdog says, 2023 WLNR 19710577

NewsRoom

6/7/23 Colo. Newsline (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2023 WLNR 19710577

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June 7, 2023

Hate groups' political influence growing, watchdog says

Ashley Murray

Jun 07, 2023

WASHINGTON — More than 1,200 hate and anti-government extremist groups were active across the United States in 2022, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center's latest report on the nationwide prevalence of extremists who target people of color, LGBTQ people, Jewish communities and other religious minorities.

While the overall number of hate and anti-government groups tracked by the SPLC has remained relatively steady in recent years, trends and tactics have changed over time, according to the organization's annual audit. And some groups identified by the organization, which has long analyzed U.S. extremism, gained influence among a segment of elected Republicans.

"America is now seeing organizing locally to pursue a hateful agenda in public view, including the targeting of community safe havens like schools and houses of worship," said Margaret Huang, president and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center and SPLC Action Fund, during a virtual press conference Tuesday.

"As these groups have grown bolder, right-wing lawmakers have acted in lockstep pushing legislation to control our bodies, to erase Black history in schools, and to criminalize the LGBTQ+ community," she continued.

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Titled *The Year in Extremism and Hate 2022*, the report attributes some trends to "growing GOP extremism," specifically naming some officials in federal and state offices, and cites comments from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia about the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Rep. Greene's office and leadership of the U.S. House Freedom Caucus, the group that represents the chamber's most far-right members — including Reps. Lauren Boebert and Ken Buck of Colorado — did not respond to requests for comment on the report.

The survey, published annually since 1990, monitors leafleting and recruiting, "alt-tech" social media platforms, subversion among law enforcement, militia activity and anti-inclusion campaigns at the school district level.

Researchers at Tuesday's press conference said they found increasing extremist activity in numerous states, including Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Ohio and Virginia. Colorado was reported to have 14 hate groups and 17 anti-government groups.

Hate groups' political influence growing, watchdog says, 2023 WLNR 19710577

The gunman in the 2022 mass shooting that claimed 10 lives at a Buffalo grocery store in a predominantly Black neighborhood had compiled a manifesto based on the racist and anti-Semitic “Great Replacement” theory — one of the ideologies tracked by SPLC’s report.

”The renewed usage of ‘groomer’ rhetoric fueled a moral panic in 2022 that contributed to violence against LGBTQ people,” the report says. “Five people were murdered in the Club Q mass shooting in Colorado Springs, Colorado, simply because they were in an LGBTQ nightclub. In addition, anti-transgender rhetoric led extremists continue to target children’s hospitals and libraries – spaces that are integral to American civil society.”

Of the 12 “alt-tech” social media sites tracked by the SPLC in 2022, five of them ranked among the top 10% most visited domains in the U.S., researchers found. The report defined “alt-tech” sites as platforms and message boards with little to no content moderation.

Gab, one of the platforms that continues to be a “safe haven” for extremist rhetoric, according to the report, was the site where Robert Bowers, the alleged gunman in the 2018 deadly Pittsburgh synagogue attack, published his anti-refugee screeds before opening fire on three Jewish congregations — one that had just hosted a refugee support event.

Eleven worshipers died in the attack. Bowers is on trial in federal court in Pittsburgh.

The headquarters of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, on Feb. 8, 2023. (Brian Lyman/Alabama Reflector)

The groups

The SPLC defines hate groups as those that attack or malign people, “typically for their immutable characteristics.” The report’s criteria for anti-government groups include seeing the federal government as an “enemy of the people” and often spreading baseless conspiracy theories.

The report identified 523 hate and 702 anti-government groups active in 2022.

The activities of several groups are detailed in the 39-page document, including the targeting by Proud Boys members of more than 40 LGBTQ events in 2022.

The report also detailed some groups’ activities in Congress and state legislatures.

The Florida-based Moms For Liberty, with chapters throughout the U.S., targeted school curricula, including a chapter in Tennessee that campaigned against a book about Martin Luther King Jr. as “anti-white,” according to the report.

Moms For Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice testified in front of Congress in March during a hearing focused on a 2021 FBI memo about threats to local school officials.

Aftermath of Jan. 6, 2021

SPLC’s report found that militia activity declined after playing an outsized role in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol — though a decentralized anti-government movement continues to grow.

The drop was “largely a result (of) members and leaders being held accountable for their role in the Jan. 6 attack,” said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research, reporting and analysis for SPLC’s Intelligence Project.

Researchers found that the Oath Keepers — whose founder Stewart Rhodes was convicted of seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6 attack — significantly declined in local chapter numbers.

While four Proud Boys leaders were convicted of seditious conspiracy in the attack, their chapters have increased to 78 in 2022 from 43 in 2020 but are now “more autonomous,” with notable growth in Tennessee, said Cassie Miller, senior research analyst for SPLC’s Intelligence Project.

Anti-government groups’ tactics shifted, and local leafleting and flyering “have gone up dramatically,” Miller said.

Hate groups' political influence growing, watchdog says, 2023 WLNR 19710577

The report provides several recommendations, including increasing public and private investment in community-centered prevention, advocating for civics and inclusion education in schools, mandating that local police departments report hate crimes for the FBI's annual report, and holding social media sites accountable.

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Other Indexing: (SPLC Action Fund; U.S. House Freedom Caucus; Moms For Liberty; FBI; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

'Love, Light, and Liberation': Philadelphia Pride March..., 2023 WLNR 19836308

NewsRoom

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2023 WLNR 19836308

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June 7, 2023

Section: Philadelphia

'Love, Light, and Liberation': Philadelphia Pride March celebrates 51 years of Pride

Diamy Wang

Thousands headed to the streets on June 4 to celebrate the 51st annual Philadelphia Pride March and Festival, which saw leadership changes for the second year in a row.

This year's festivities were led by the social justice organization Galaei and had the theme "Love, Light, and Liberation." The parade started at approximately 10:30 a.m. at Washington Square in Center City and ended at noon in the Gayborhood, where the festival took place until 7 p.m.

The march began with speeches that emphasized the need for solidarity and political action, according to The Philadelphia Inquirer.

"We have to unapologetically tell folks in power that our rights are worth it," Democratic nominee for Philadelphia City Council Rue Landau said in a speech. "That we are here, we are not going back, and that we are here to stay, and we are getting louder and stronger." Landau is projected to be Philadelphia's first openly LGBTQ councilmember.

The parade also featured the largest rainbow flag in Philadelphia history, measuring 200 feet long.

The march then dispersed into the festival, which featured hundreds of booths representing artists, food trucks, health care services, and other community organizations.

Galaei took over from the volunteer-run PHL Pride Collective, which organized last year's Philadelphia Pride March. PHL Pride Collective's website says that it is "unable to produce events in 2023 due to consequences arising from Capitalism."

The change in leadership is the second since the organization Philly Pride Presents disbanded in 2021 due to allegations of racism and transphobia, according to the Inquirer. It had previously organized Philadelphia Pride events for 28 years.

This year's Pride took place amid rising anti-LGBTQ legislation and sentiment across the country. The American Civil Liberties Union is currently tracking 491 anti-LGBTQ bills in the United States in the 2023 legislative session. Locally, the Philadelphia Free Library is preparing for protests against its Pride Month programming from the right-wing activist group Moms For Liberty, which has advocated for book bans, The Philadelphia Gay News reported.

Despite such sentiment, attendees noted the intentional diversity at the day's festivities.

"I think [it was] really nice to see different speakers representing different minority groups," rising College junior Aubrey Shi said.

Watchdog lists 1,200 hate, anti-government 'extremist' groups, 2023 WLNR 19819953

However, Shi - a board member of the student group Penn Queer & Asian - also noted the lack of speakers that addressed a specific Asian and LGBTQ identity. Rising College junior Xandro Xu, who identifies as both Asian American and a member of the LGBTQ community, had previously spoken at the 2022 Pride parade on the intersections of those identities.

On its website, Galaei highlighted the importance of Pride as a time to “join together in celebration, find family, get resources and share the love, art, and joy that are hallmarks of our community.” 2023 Wharton graduate and first-time Pride attendee Nox Richmond resonated with the mission.

”It’s very exciting just to see other queer people,” Richmond said. “It’s like, the first time I’ve gotten to see queer pride out in public. I’m also not from a blue state, so it’s just really nice to see pride flags around and it not being a problem. The freedom to just be yourself - it’s very exciting.”

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June 7, 2023

Section: News

Watchdog lists 1,200 hate, anti-government 'extremist' groups

Ashley Murray | Kansas Reflector

WASHINGTON - More than 1,200 hate and anti-government extremist groups were active across the United States in 2022, according to Southern Poverty Law Center's latest report on the nationwide prevalence of extremists who target people of color, LGBTQ people, Jewish communities and other religious minorities.

While the overall number of hate and anti-government groups tracked by the SPLC has remained relatively steady in recent years, trends and tactics have changed over time, according to the organization's annual audit. And some groups identified by the organization, which has long analyzed U.S. extremism, gained influence among a segment of elected Republicans.

"America is now seeing organizing locally to pursue a hateful agenda in public view, including the targeting of community safe havens like schools and houses of worship," said Margaret Huang, president and CEO of Southern Poverty Law Center and SPLC Action Fund, during a virtual press conference Tuesday.

"As these groups have grown bolder, right-wing lawmakers have acted in lockstep pushing legislation to control our bodies, to erase Black history in schools, and to criminalize the LGBTQ+ community," she continued.

Titled "The Year in Extremism and Hate 2022," the report attributes some trends to "growing GOP extremism," specifically naming some officials in federal and state offices, and cites comments from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia about the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Greene's office and leadership of the U.S. House Freedom Caucus, the group that represents the chamber's most far-right members, did not respond to requests for comment on the report.

The survey, published annually since 1990, monitors leafleting and recruiting, "alt-tech" social media platforms, subversion among law enforcement, militia activity and anti-inclusion campaigns at the school district level.

Researchers at Tuesday's press conference said they found increasing extremist activity in numerous states, including Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Ohio and Virginia.

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Eleven worshippers died in the attack. Bowers is on trial in federal court in Pittsburgh.

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Watchdog lists 1,200 hate, anti-government 'extremist' groups, 2023 WLNR 19819953

spreading baseless conspiracy theories.

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The report also detailed some groups' activities in Congress and state legislatures.

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Moms For Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice testified in front of Congress in March during a hearing focused on a 2021 FBI memo about threats to local school officials.

SPLC's report found that militia activity declined after playing an outsized role in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol - though a decentralized anti-government movement continues to grow.

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Researchers found that the Oath Keepers - whose founder Stewart Rhodes was convicted of seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6 attack - significantly declined in local chapter numbers.

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The report provides several recommendations, including increasing public and private investment in community-centered prevention, advocating for civics and inclusion education in schools, mandating that local police departments report hate crimes for the FBI's annual report, and holding social media sites accountable.

Kansas Reflector is a nonprofit news operation providing in-depth reporting and daily coverage of state government and politics.

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Florida Politics
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June 7, 2023

Southern Poverty Law Center designates Moms For Liberty as ‘extremist’ group

Jacob Ogles

Jun 07, 2023

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has classified Moms for Liberty as an extremist group.

Moms for Liberty, which was founded in Brevard County, boasts close ties to Gov. Ron DeSantis, a candidate for President.

But conservatives in Florida immediately balked at the classification and said it shows more about the SPLC’s politics.

The SPLC for the first time included the political group in its “extremist files.” Notably, the watchdog organization is best known for tracking the activities of designated hate groups, and has not put that moniker on Moms for Liberty. The new designation, though, signals the SPLC wants to keep an eye on the rhetoric and activity of Moms for Liberty, which it lists as an “antigovernment organization.”

”Moms for Liberty and its nationwide chapters combat what they consider the ‘woke indoctrination’ of children by advocating for book bans in school libraries and endorsing candidates for public office that align with the group’s views,” the new file on Moms for Liberty reads.

”They also use their multiple social media platforms to target teachers and school officials, advocate for the abolition of the Department of Education, advance a conspiracy propaganda, and spread hateful imagery and rhetoric against the LGBTQ community.”

The file specifically names founders Tiffany Justice, Tina Descovich and Bridget Ziegler, the latter of whom no longer is an official part of the organization but maintains close ties.

Moms for Liberty blasted the designation and released a statement suggesting the move was politically motivated.

”Last year the (Joe) Biden White House worked with the (National School Boards Association) to label Parents Domestic Terrorists,” reads a statement on social media. “Today, the SPLC labels our organization — an organization full of moms who care about their kids — a Hate Group. This is a coordinated attempt to silence and suppress us. We see it and we are not going to backdown.”

The group encouraged supporters to donate in response to the designation.

The fairly young organization, founded in 2021, has emerged as one of the most controversial and influential voices in

Southern Poverty Law Center designates Moms For Liberty..., 2023 WLNR 19741504

Florida politics and beyond. The group is hosting a summit later this month in Philadelphia, where Republican presidential candidates DeSantis, Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy and Donald Trump are all slated to speak.

But the SPLC said rhetoric calling the National Teachers Union a “K-12 Cartel” and saying transgender students suffer from a mental health disorder warrants notice.

”Moms for Liberty was originally established to combat what it considered controversial COVID-19 safety measures in schools, mostly centered around masking,” the SPLC file reads.

”From there, it quickly expanded its focus to include an extreme stance on what it considers the indoctrination and sexualization of children through gender identity, the acknowledgement and acceptance of the LGBTQ community, as well as inclusive school pedagogy and curricula, including critical race theory, social emotional learning, and books that the organization deems inappropriate.”

The rapid spread of the group’s influence raises particular concern, according to the SPLC.

But Republican leaders slammed the designation.

”This plagued left-wing organization’s leadership tells you a lot about them. Even it’s founder was fired in disgrace. And they have the gall to attack Moms For Liberty for protecting their kids,” tweeted Helen Aguirre Ferré, executive director of the Republican Party of Florida, referencing the firing of co-founder Morris Dees for misconduct in 2019.

Post Views: 0

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; National Union of Teachers; National School Boards Association

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25))

Industry: (Healthcare (1HE06); Healthcare Practice Specialties (1HE49); Healthcare Services (1HE13); Political Science (1PO69); Psychiatric Services (1PS61); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms For Liberty; Department of Education; Southern Poverty Law Center; National Teachers Union; National School Boards Association)

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Southern Poverty Law Center designates Moms For Liberty..., 2023 WLNR 19741504

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty named anti-government extremist group by..., 2023 WLNR 19751073

NewsRoom

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Independent Online (UK)
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June 7, 2023

Moms for Liberty named anti-government extremist group by civil rights watchdog The ‘parents’ rights’ agenda taking aim at public education and LGBT+ rights is expanding its reach into state legislatures

Alex Woodward

A right-wing “parents’ rights” group that made headway in school board races and state-level legislation targeting LGBT+ people was designated an “anti-government extremist” organisation by the Southern Poverty Law Center in its latest review of the state of hate groups in America.

The report finds that schools have increasingly become a medium for locally driven extremist activity, with Moms for Liberty joining a dozen groups leading efforts to gain power through local school boards to undermine public education and restrict access to books, classroom materials and honest discussions of race, racism, LGBT+ people and gender and sexuality.

”Hate and anti-government extremist groups are intent on staging public spectacles of hatred” to threaten LGBT+ people and other vulnerable communities and minority groups, according to Susan Corke, director of the SPLC’s Intelligence Project.

The SPLC’s report collects activities from 1,225 active extremist groups across the US.

A statement from Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich shared with The Independent said the group is “devoted to empowering parents to be a part of their child’s public school education.”

”Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child’s education as ‘hate groups’ or ‘bigoted’ just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school – parents or government employees?” they added. “We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that.”

Recent attacks on public schools and education more broadly followed conspiracy theory-fuelled outrage at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic as schools shifted to remote learning and implemented public health guidance like mask requirements.

Those attacks “morphed into confrontation about pedagogy and curriculum, as far-right anti-government parents under the guise of simply being concerned began to assert themselves into what can and cannot be taught in public schools,” according to the SPLC’s report.

Moms for Liberty, which has attracted support from Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and other Republican officials, emerged as an influential force in that movement. The group claims to have a membership of 100,000 people in more than 250 chapters in 42 states.

Moms for Liberty named anti-government extremist group by..., 2023 WLNR 19751073

In last year's elections, Mr DeSantis – running for the GOP nomination for president in 2024 – made unprecedented endorsements by stepping into local school board races, endorsing members of Moms for Liberty and other far-right candidates, while members of the group offered their support for a slate of legislative priorities and echoed the DeSantis administration's agenda.

Christian Ziegler, vice chair of the Florida Republican Party and husband of Moms for Liberty co-founder Bridget Ziegler, has reportedly described the group as “foot soldiers” for Mr DeSantis and has credited the group with “20-and 30-year-old females involved with the Republican Party”.

The group has called teachers unions’ “terrorist organizations,” offered so-called bounties for reporting teachers who allegedly discuss “divisive topics” in schools, attacked The Trevor Project for supporting young LGBT+ people at risk of suicide, launched a barrage of book challenges, and is expanding its reach to state legislatures across the country.

A separate report from right-wing media watchdog Media Matters charts Moms for Liberty's influence in a slate of bills in several states as part of a broader effort against LGBT+ rights.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); International Terrorism (1IN37); Political Parties (1PO73); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Indian River Press Journal (Indian River County, FL)
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June 7, 2023

Moms for Liberty hosting both Trump, DeSantis at summit latyer this month
Trump and DeSantis, along with other presidential candidates, will speak at the Moms for
Liberty summit in Philadelphia at the end of June.

Finch Walker, Florida Today

Add one more battleground to the contest between Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump, the two GOP presidential frontrunners: winning the support of the conservative parent group Moms for Liberty.

DeSantis had already locked in a speaking role at the Moms for Liberty National Summit, June 29 to July 2 in Philadelphia. On Monday, the group announced Trump would be there, too, as a keynote speaker.

”What a great thing for parents and educators,” said Tiffany Justice, former Indian River County School Board member and co-founder of Moms for Liberty. “This is an opportunity for parents to have their voices heard.”

Having presidential candidates agree to speak at the second National “Joyful Warriors” Summit shows they care about the same issues as Moms for Liberty, Justice said.

”It’s more than we could have possibly hoped for,” Justice said, adding summit organizers wanted to hear from all parties about their stance on parental rights.

”We invited everybody,” Justice said. “Parental rights are not a partisan issue.”

Parents, who are a huge voting block, will determine the outcome of the 2024 election, Justice said.

Those issues cover a variety of topics that fall under the umbrella of “parental rights.” Moms for Liberty, founded by former Brevard County School Board member Tina Descovich and Justice in 2021, has been outspoken about topics such as COVID-19 restrictions, critical race theory and LGBTQ issues, with the group garnering national attention for its members’ protests at school board meetings.

The organization has grown to 280 chapters in 45 states and more than 115,000 members.

What is Moms for Liberty? Here’s a look at its roots, its philosophy and its mission

Endorsements from Moms for Liberty, DeSantis had impact on Treasure Coast school board races

Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice testifies in Congress about parental rights

Moms for Liberty hosting both Trump, DeSantis at summit..., 2023 WLNR 19700293

More: Version of ‘Anne Frank’ removed from Vero Beach High School library after complaint

The addition of Trump to the lineup could raise the question: How will that play with the Florida governor, who has aligned himself so closely with Moms for Liberty priorities?

Any kind of political dissension is not what Moms for Liberty had in mind, said Descovich.

, co-founder of Moms for Liberty.

The group, who has voiced support for both Trump and DeSantis in the past, invited a number of both conservative and liberal politicians to the summit, she said, including South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. and President Joe Biden, though DeSantis, Trump, Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy were the only four presidential candidates to confirm their attendance as of Monday.

”With presidential candidates agreeing to come and speak to us, it absolutely says that this is going to be an issue for the 2024 election,” Descovich said. “We’re excited to be bringing our issues to the forefront and that elected officials are listening, and we’re looking forward to (hearing) what they have to say about them.”

Moms for Liberty has supported both DeSantis and Trump since 2021. Though the two are leading candidates in the presidential race, Descovich said, she doesn’t think it will create a tense political situation at the summit.

”It’s not a debate; they’re not going to be on the stage together,” she said, adding that they will be at separate events over the course of three days. “We’ve asked them to speak to us about the issues that our moms are concerned about.”

More: What’s appropriate for kids to read in books? New Brevard schools review committee forms

This will be Trump’s first time speaking at the National “Joyful Warriors” Summit. DeSantis spoke at the inaugural summit in July 2022 in Tampa, where he encouraged attendees to be “leading the way when it comes to their school boards.”

DeSantis and Moms for Liberty in 2022

DeSantis and Moms for Liberty often partnered in endorsing conservative school board candidates during the 2022 election, despite those races being nonpartisan.

However, that doesn’t mean they’ve always agreed.

In February, DeSantis released a list of school board members — including Indian River County’s Peggy Jones and Brian Barefoot and St. Lucie County’s Jack Kelly — whom he said did not protect parental rights and/or shield students from “woke” ideologies, with the goal of “targeting” these members during the 2024 election.

DeSantis aiming to unseat Indian River, St. Lucie school board members for ‘woke’ ideologies

At the July 2022 summit, DeSantis told attendees to stand strong against their detractors.

”You need some courage,” he said. “You just gotta be willing to stand by your convictions ... Now’s not the time to let them grind you down. You gotta stand up, and you gotta fight.”

TCPalm/Treasure Coast Newspapers education reporter Colleen Wixon contributed to this report.

Finch Walker is the education reporter at FLORIDA TODAY. Contact Walker at 321-290-4744 or fwalker@floridatoday.com. Twitter: [@_finchwalker](https://twitter.com/_finchwalker).

This article originally appeared on Florida Today: Moms for Liberty hosting both Trump, DeSantis at summit latyer this month

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Company: Brevard County School Board; Treasure Coast Newspapers, LLC

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Public Affairs (1PU31); U.S. President (1US75); U.S. Presidential Campaigns (1US04); World Elections (1WO93))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Asia (1AS61); Florida (1FL79); Indian Subcontinent (1IN32); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); Southern Asia (1SO52); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Indian River County School Board; Congress; Brevard County School Board; Treasure Coast Newspapers) (President Donald Trump; Ron DeSantis)

Keywords: (Donald Trump,Conservative Political Action Conference,Politically Conservative,Ron DeSantis,Presidential Primaries,Presidential Elections,Election Campaigns,School boards,Joe Biden,Treasure Coast Elections (FL),Politics,Campaigns & Elections,Family,Lobbying,Primary & Secondary Schooling (K-12),Executive Branch,Social Issues & Advocacy)

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”Año de odio y extremismo”: Southern Poverty Law Center..., 2023 WLNR 19701107

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2023 WLNR 19701107

La Opinion
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June 7, 2023

Section: Política

”Año de odio y extremismo”: Southern Poverty Law Center publica un revelador informe sobre el odio en Estados Unidos

Maria Ortiz

El Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), una organización no gubernamental progresista de defensa de los derechos civiles, publicó el martes su informe anual sobre el alcance y el peligro de los grupos de odio y de los grupos extremistas antigubernamentales que operan dentro de Estados Unidos.

El informe titulado “Año de odio y extremismo” documenta 1,225 grupos activos que están “despojando a las comunidades de sus derechos” a través de manifestaciones públicas, volantes y atención de los medios en 2022.

”El movimiento de extrema derecha se adentró más profundamente en la vida de las personas en 2022, con comunidades resistentes que retrocedieron”, señaló SPLC.

El informe también muestra cómo las tácticas de esos grupos cambiaron después del ataque al Capitolio de Estados Unidos del 6 de enero de 2021 para organizarse localmente y seguir su agenda en los lugares donde es más fácil obtener poder.

En 2022, el movimiento de extrema derecha logró profundizar en la vida de las personas de manera visible y material, incluso si no tuvo un éxito electoral generalizado. Sus huellas digitales están en todas partes: hogares, escuelas, consultorios médicos, bibliotecas, bares, restaurantes, iglesias y otros espacios comunitarios.

”Enfrentarse a las facciones más odiosas de nuestro país es fundamental para dismantelar la supremacía blanca y promover los derechos civiles de todas las personas”, dijo en un comunicado Margaret Huang, presidenta y directora ejecutiva del Southern Poverty Law Center.

”Estamos exponiendo un esfuerzo concertado de grupos de odio y actores extremistas para aterrorizar a las comunidades y obtener el control de las instituciones públicas por cualquier medio necesario”, dijo Huang.

”Estos grupos están llegando a Main Street America e interrumpiendo la vida cotidiana de las personas, con demasiada frecuencia con consecuencias nefastas para las comunidades de color, los judíos y la comunidad LGBTQ+”, agregó Huang.

Los grupos de odio hacen manifestaciones, publican propaganda y obtienen atención de los medios para reclutar miembros, recaudar fondos e intimidar y amenazar a las minorías latinas, afroamericanas, judías y transgénero en particular.

Por ejemplo, el grupo nacionalista blanco Patriot Front es uno de los más activos en la realización de manifestaciones en las comunidades locales de todo el país. En total, el SPLC rastreó 4,739 manifestaciones públicas de ese grupo en 2022.

”Año de odio y extremismo”: Southern Poverty Law Center..., 2023 WLNR 19701107

El informe señaló a los grupos que se movilizaban en las escuelas públicas, que SPLC calificó de “extremistas”. Específicamente, el informe documentó 12 grupos contra la inclusión de estudiantes que atacaron la educación pública, prohibieron libros y eliminaron el plan de estudios centrado en la raza, la discriminación y las identidades LGBTQ+.

Para fines de 2022, se habían presentado o presentado al menos 84 proyectos de ley contra la inclusión de estudiantes en 26 estados. Florida hizo olas cuando el gobernador Ron DeSantis firmó la Ley de derechos de los padres en la educación de Florida, más conocida como la ley “No digas gay”.

El caso de Moms for Liberty, con sede en Florida

Moms for Liberty, un grupo basado en Florida, es considerado en el informe de SPLC como una organización antigubernamental de extrema derecha que se dedica a actividades contra la inclusión de estudiantes y se considera parte del movimiento moderno por los derechos de los padres.

”Los grupos extremistas de odio y antigubernamentales tienen la intención de organizar espectáculos públicos de odio que acosan, amenazan y dañan violentamente a las comunidades negras, morenas, asiáticas, judías, LGBTQ+ e inmigrantes”, dijo Susan Corke, directora del Proyecto de Inteligencia del SPLC, en un comunicado.

Menos milicias

Si bien SPLC rastreó un aumento en lo que el informe llamó grupos extremistas, como Moms for Liberty, el informe encontró que la cantidad de grupos de milicias activas había disminuido de 92 grupos en 2021 a 61 grupos de milicias activas en 2022.

Según SPLC, la caída en la movilización de milicias sigue a las recientes condenas federales de miembros de Oath Keepers y Proud Boys luego del ataque del 6 de enero de 2021 contra el Capitolio de EE.UU.

El informe también brinda recomendaciones de políticas para abordar el odio y el extremismo donde existe, desde el ejército hasta las plataformas de redes sociales.

Sigue leyendo:

- Los libros para niños que están siendo prohibidos en Estados Unidos
- Emiten nueva alerta de viaje a Florida por sus nuevas leyes que amenazan a la comunidad LGBTQ
- Newsom nombra a Bamby Saucedo de Los Ángeles para la Comisión contra los crímenes de odio

---- **Index References** ----

Language: ES

Keywords: (Crímenes-De-Odio, Derechos Civiles, Grupos Extremistas)

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"Año de odio y extremismo": Southern Poverty Law Center..., 2023 WLNR 19701107

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2023 WLNR 19763970

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June 7, 2023

Moms For Liberty Co-Founders Use SPLC Naming Them An ‘Extremist Group’ As An Excuse To Raise Money

Hunter Walker

Jun 07, 2023

Two of the co-founders of the ultra-conservative “parental rights” organization Moms For Liberty appeared on Facebook Wednesday to fire back — and solicit donations — after the Southern Poverty Law Center named them an “extremist group” in its annual report.

”We say, stick it to Southern Poverty Law Center and donate to us,” Tina Descovich declared on the broadcast. “Show that we don’t care what they think.”

Descovich’s fellow “Moms For Liberty” co-founder, Tiffany Justice, then informed listeners that an unnamed donor offered to match contributions on Wednesday up to \$300,000.

”Yeah, people are fired up with Southern Poverty Law Center going after moms,” Descovich said. “I think we just passed the \$30,000 mark on donations. ... We’ll take any size donation.”

Since its inception, Moms For Liberty, which is also known as “M4L,” has been at the forefront of efforts to fight COVID mask mandates and school programs that promote diversity, awareness of racism, and LGBTQ inclusion. The group has promoted right-wing candidates for local school boards around the country. During their Facebook broadcast on Wednesday, Justice boasted that M4L backed over 500 prospective school board members last year. Descovich suggested the organization was facing criticism due to its effectiveness.

”Our enemies — and I will call them our enemies — have had a plan for decades and they have been putting it in place and moving forward,” she said.

”Their plan is to fundamentally change America into a different system,” she added. “They hate capitalism. They hate our form of government. They hate the way we have done things historically and so they have used every tool in their toolbox to advance their agenda. ... We won’t go away so they keep layering on the attacks.”

Moms For Liberty is registered as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization, which means it can accept unlimited amounts of money without revealing the names of its donors. The group was founded in 2021 by Descovich and Justice, who are both former Florida county school board members, and a third woman, Bridget Ziegler, who has since left the group. The opaque nature of its finances makes it difficult to determine how much its leaders are paid.

Moms For Liberty Co-Founders Use SPLC Naming Them..., 2023 WLNR 19763970

Southern Poverty Law Center, which was founded in 1971, has focused on advancing and securing the aims of the civil rights movement. The organization has done legal work to combat hate groups and regularly publishes research on new extremist threats.

SPLC labeled Moms For Liberty an “extremist group” as part of its annual “year in hate and extremism” report. In that report, SPLC researchers Cassie Miller and Caleb Kieffer described last year as one in which the far right achieved a new level of “mainstream” success as it became “increasingly intertwined” with the Republican Party. Miller and Kieffer described Moms For Liberty as being “at the forefront” of “ramped-up and coordinated hard-right attacks” against inclusion in schools.

“Galvanizing supporters around supposed ‘parental rights’ and ‘family values’ is nothing new — similar rallying cries were adopted by those who opposed school desegregation during the civil rights movement and by the Moral Majority of the 1980s,” they wrote. “These political slogans have been used repeatedly because they are effective, framing the organizing of far-right activists as something done solely out of real concern for children.”

SPLC’s list of hate and extremist groups includes different ideological categories. The organization labeled Moms For Liberty an “antigovernment” extremist group while noting it has advocated for abolishing the Department of Education and has spread conspiracy theories, “hateful imagery” and “rhetoric against the LGBTQ community.” SPLC’s page dedicated to Moms For Liberty featured a series of quotes from the group including some that suggested gender nonconforming people are confused or mentally ill.

On their Facebook broadcast, Descovich and Justice rejected the notion they could be “antigovernment” due to their involvement in school board elections. They also attacked the SPLC.

“I see some people are talking and saying Southern Poverty Law Center is a terrorist network organization,” Justice said, adding, “I would tend to agree with that we should ask that they are designated as that.”

Descovich also objected to being included on a list that also has neo-Nazi and KKK organizations.

“People for some reason take Southern Poverty Law Center seriously,” she said. “I went to Southern Poverty Law Center’s website last night and I was looking at the other extremists and hate groups and, like, number one on there is some really dark scary-looking guy ... and he’s got Nazi flags and I think he was doing a ‘Heil Hitler’ sign. And I was like, ‘Yeah, that guy looks terrifying.’ I believe he’s probably a really bad dude. I have no idea. We can’t trust their judgment.”

As they railed against the SPLC and raised funds off of their plight, Justice and Descovich also noted the recognition and support they have received from Republican presidential candidates. Justice said she was spending Wednesday in New Hampshire, where she will be participating in a town hall with longshot White House hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy. The pair also touted a national summit the group is set to hold in Philadelphia at the end of the month with appearances from Ramaswamy as well as former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

“I hope this is the first step to Moms For Liberty being able to help presidential candidates really reach parents,” Justice said. “Education is a priority. Parental rights is a priority. We’ve got four presidential candidates coming to the summit to speak.”

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Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Government (1GO80); International Terrorism (1IN37); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Liberty Co; Moms For Liberty; M4L; Republican Party; Department of Education; White House; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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NewsRoom

HATE GROUPS ARE DESCENDING ON MAIN STREET AMERICA, ACCORDING...

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June 7, 2023

HATE GROUPS ARE DESCENDING ON MAIN STREET AMERICA, ACCORDING TO NEW REPORT RELEASED BY THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

MONTGOMERY, Alabama, June 7 (TNSres) -- The Southern Poverty Law Center issued the following news release on June 6, 2023:

Today, the Southern Poverty Law Center released Year in Hate & Extremism, an annual report detailing the scope and danger of hate and antigovernment extremist groups operating within the United States. The report documents 1,225 active groups and shows how their tactics shifted after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol -- organizing locally and pursuing their agenda in venues where it is easier to gain power and strip communities of their rights and livelihoods.

"Taking on the most hateful factions in our country is critical to dismantling white supremacy and advancing the civil rights of all people," said Margaret Huang, president and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center and SPLC Action Fund. "We are exposing a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary. These groups are descending on Main Street America and disrupting people's daily lives, too often with dire consequences for communities of color, Jewish people, and the LGBTQ+ community."

The newly released report (<https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-extremism-2022>) finds that hate groups are increasingly engaging in public demonstrations using flyering, marches, and banner displays to gain media attention. Hate groups leverage these demonstrations as a tool to recruit membership, raise funds, and intimidate and threaten Black, Brown, Jewish, and transgender communities in particular. For example, the white nationalist group Patriot Front is one of the most active in holding demonstrations in local communities across the country. In total, the SPLC tracked 4,739 public demonstrations in 2022.

Schools are a primary target for locally driven extremist mobilization, according to the report, with 12 anti-student inclusion groups leading a movement to gain power through school boards to attack public education, ban books, and remove any curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination, and LGBTQ+ identities. One group at the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group that the SPLC has designated as an anti-government extremist group in 2022.

"Hate and antigovernment extremist groups are intent on staging public spectacles of hatred that harass, threaten and violently harm Black, Brown, Asian, Jewish, LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities," said Susan Corke, director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project. "Schools, synagogues, and LGBTQ+ businesses -- venues that have traditionally been safe spaces for our children, the Jewish community and LGBTQ+ people -- are now on the frontlines of hatred and violence. We all have a responsibility to speak out against hate, extremism, and violence when we see it, and encourage those in positions of power to fulfill their duty to act."

One notable retreat of antigovernment extremist mobilization is in the militia movement. SPLC tracked 61 active militia groups in 2022, a decline from the 92 groups identified in 2021. This reduction in militia mobilization is largely the result of

HATE GROUPS ARE DESCENDING ON MAIN STREET AMERICA, ACCORDING...

members and leaders being held accountable for their role in the deadly Jan. 6 attack. While recent federal convictions of members of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys have stifled overall militia activity, the continued growth of Proud Boys membership -- reaching 78 chapters in 2022 -- signals that the violent threat from hard-right extremist groups persists.

SPLC's annual report (<https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-extremism-2022>), which combines research and data collection, public polling, social media analysis, investigating reporting, and expert insights, offers a comprehensive evaluation of hate and antigovernment extremist group activities and threats to inform the public and policymakers, support impacted communities, and protect democracy. It underscores the harm created by these groups, uplifts stories of those pushing back against malign forces, and offers resources to support community resilience. The report also provides policy recommendations to address hate and extremism where it exists, from the military to social media platforms.

Read the full report [HERE](https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-extremism-2022) (<https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-extremism-2022>).

* * *

Original text here:
<https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/hate-groups-are-descending-main-street-america-according-new-report-released-southern>

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Civil Rights Law (1CI34); Global Politics (1GL73); Intellectual Freedoms & Civil Liberties (1IN08); Judaism (1JU93); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62); World Conflicts (1WO07))

Region: (Alabama (1AL90); Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (SPLC Action Fund; Patriot Front; Moms for Liberty; Oath Keepers; Proud Boys; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER) (MONTGOMERY, Alabama)

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NewsRoom

SPLC labels 'parents' rights' groups extremist, PGA and LIV..., 2023 WLNR 19711305

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June 7, 2023

SPLC labels 'parents' rights' groups extremist, PGA and LIV Golf tours merge: 5 Things podcast

The SPLC designates Moms for Liberty and other so-called parents rights groups as
extremists, Chris Christie is running for president: 5 Things pod...

Taylor Wilson, USA TODAY

The SPLC designates Moms for Liberty and other so-called parents rights groups as extremists, Chris Christie is running for
president: 5 Things podcast

USA TODAY National Correspondent for extremism and emerging issues Will Carless looks at the annual report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, which has designated Moms for Liberty as an extremist group. Plus, the Human Rights Campaign issues a state of emergency over anti-LGBTQ laws, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is running for president, USA TODAY Domestic Security Correspondent Josh Meyer looks into worries from security experts about Twitter's vulnerability for the 2024 election, and the PGA Tour and the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Tour are merging.

On today's episode of the 5 Things podcast: 'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist by SPLC

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Hit play on the player above to hear the podcast and follow along with the transcript below. This transcript was automatically generated, and then edited for clarity in its current form. There may be some differences between the audio and the text.

Taylor Wilson:

Good morning. I'm Taylor Wilson and this is 5 Things you need to know Wednesday, the 7th of June 2023. Today, a look at the Southern Poverty Law Center's new designation for a number of so-called parents rights groups. Plus a state of emergency over anti-LGBTQ bills around the country, and security experts are worried about Twitter ahead of the 2024 election.

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The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated the Moms for Liberty and some other so-called parents rights groups as extremists in its annual report out this week. I spoke with USA TODAY National Correspondent for Extremism and Emerging Issues Will Carless to learn more. Will, welcome back to 5 Things.

Will Carless:

Thanks for having me on.

Taylor Wilson:

Will, can you tell our listeners who the Moms for Liberty are and why the SPLC made this decision?

Will Carless:

So, Moms for Liberty is an extremely conservative group that started during the coronavirus pandemic. It basically grew out of the mask mandates and the controversy over masks and vaccines in schools. It was founded by three conservative women in Florida and it has since pretty much spread across the country. They claim to have 40 chapters across the country and to represent about 100,000 people. I think it's fair to say it's quite a phenomenon in the kind of conservative political ecosystem as a grassroots group focused on what they call parents rights in schools.

Taylor Wilson:

And Will, just stepping back for a second for those who maybe don't know, can you put in context for us what the Southern Poverty Law Center's role is in tracking extremism, and even about some of the criticisms that the SPLC faces?

Will Carless:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, SPLC has gone through some changes in the last couple of years. Essentially the main kind of controversy or sort of criticism of the group is that they are too quick to label certain groups, particularly conservative groups, as extremist groups. Basically, once you land on the SPLC's designated list of groups, that becomes a kind of a defacto definition. But to answer your first question, the SPLC is basically a research institution, it was founded back in the '60s. It's well-known as the foremost research institution doing work into extremism and hate groups. They have all sorts of researchers, some of them will study technology, some of them study specifically white supremacist groups, and generally speaking, have a very good reputation for research, but also are very much criticized as a very, very partisan group by people who are more sort of right of center.

Taylor Wilson:

And also in its annual report, the SPLC gave kind of a checkup on the overall militia movement in the United States. What did they find here, Will?

Will Carless:

So, as far as militia groups are concerned, or so-called militia groups, groups that like to think of themselves as militia groups, basically the SPLC found that in the month or in the years since the January 6th insurrection, those groups have really kind of, not been decimated, but certainly the wind has been taken out of their cells significantly. You've seen the number of those groups drop, you've seen their activities drop, basically they've sort of melted back into the background. But the report does stress, just because they're not as visible or as active does not mean that the sort of anti-government militia type sentiment has gone away. And I do think it's important to stress, I mean, we've kind of focused on the Moms for Liberty aspect of this report, but this is a really comprehensive 50 page report on hate and extremism. For people like me who cover this stuff and follow this stuff, it's very in depth of just a very good record of kind of what was going on last year.

Taylor Wilson:

Yeah. So just one other angle of that report I want to get to here, Will, is this aspect of the so-called alt-tech spaces online, thinking places like 4chan. What did they say about these parts of the internet?

Will Carless:

The context for this is around about 2018, particularly social media companies - Twitter, Google, Facebook - they basically started to really get serious about kicking people that they considered to be extremists or who were spreading disinformation off their platforms. In response, you saw a whole bunch of sort of niche websites spring up to start to cater to those groups, to

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basically say, "Hey, if you're not allowed on Twitter, come over to us. In terms of social media. If you're kicked off YouTube, come over to us and stream your videos." And what this study showed is that those groups, far from being just small niche players, are actually consistently getting large numbers of people going to them and are consistently in the sort of top 10% of domains that are accessed by users. So the overall conclusion is these alternative tech sites aren't quite as alternative as you might think that they are, they're actually pretty popular.

Taylor Wilson:

All right. Will Carless covers extremism and emerging issues for USA TODAY. Thanks, Will.

Will Carless:

Thank you.

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Taylor Wilson:

The Human Rights Campaign issued a state of emergency yesterday over anti-LGBTQ laws passed around the country. The country's largest gay rights organization said its emergency declaration. The first in its more than 40 year history comes after 75 anti-LGBTQ bills have been signed into law in various states this year. That more than doubles last year's number, which was previously the worst year on record. Conservative lawmakers have focused their efforts on enacting laws banning drag queen performances, gender-affirming care, LGBTQ inclusive education and more. Meanwhile, in a narrow ruling yesterday, a Florida judge blocked enforcement of the state's ban on transgender affirming care, calling the rule and exercise and politics not good medicine. The move will allow parents who challenge the state to access medical care for their transgender children as the ban's constitutionality is debated in court. And last week, a federal judge said, "Tennessee's first-in-the-nation law designed to put limits on drag shows is unconstitutional."

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Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has officially joined the 2024 presidential race. He filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission yesterday and announced the bid during a town hall in New Hampshire. He's also expected to participate in a CNN town hall event next week taking questions from anchor Anderson Cooper. Christie is trying to set himself apart from others in the GOP field, mainly by going after the party's front-runner former President Donald Trump. Christie said, "He undermined our democracy and the only reason he undermined our democracy was because he was pissed." It's not yet clear which main issues Christie will campaign on heading into 2024. When he ran in 2016, he called for criminal justice reform focused on community policing efforts, a stronger national defense and a secure border.

◆

Security experts say that Elon Musk's changes to Twitter could leave the social media platform vulnerable ahead of the 2024 election. USA TODAY Domestic Security Correspondent Josh Meyer explains. Welcome back to 5 Things, Josh.

Josh Meyer:

Thanks for having me as always.

Taylor Wilson:

I want to start by just asking what the major changes have been to Twitter's security and operations teams since Elon Musk took over?

Josh Meyer:

Well, that's a good question. I'm not sure anybody would disagree with this, but Musk has essentially gutted much of the operations and security elements of Twitter, partly by design, partly by the way he's been running the organization. In the last couple of weeks, two more senior Twitter officials left, the two people that ran the trust and safety team, one who was appointed to replace the other, both of them have left. Essentially thousands of people that had worked for Twitter, many of them in very key positions, are no longer there. There's more of a skeleton crew than anything else that's left over according to one of the former trust and safety team leaders.

And the problem with that is that you need these teams there to moderate content. There's teams at Twitter that were on the lookout for manipulation by foreign powers like the Russian and Chinese governments, people creating fake bots and campaigns to manipulate the election to create false narratives and then have them go viral, things like that. So there's a lot of concern that without these kind of teams in place, that it's going to be much more vulnerable to the kind of manipulation that we saw in the last election.

Taylor Wilson:

Josh, you mentioned misinformation. What's changed when it comes to policing fake news specifically ahead of this '24 election?

Josh Meyer:

Well, I mean, Elon has said that he is a virulent free speech advocate and that sort of anything goes and we should let people say whatever they want, essentially on Twitter. Musk has restored not only Trump's account, but very virulent, right wing extremist organizations and individuals that have been using Twitter and other social media platforms to really create a polarized society and to exploit differences between people. And in some cases, according to experts, that's helped cause January 6th. Musk has been very hands-off on that, he's created some policies that have made it easier to do that. And there's a lot of concern that there's not going to be any kind of content moderation, especially when it comes to Trump's claims of a rigged election the last time perhaps rigged election this time about January 6th and other real hot button issues.

Taylor Wilson:

And maybe new concerns for the '24 election that we haven't seen in past elections as much are these AI bots. Could platforms like ChatGPT and others be used to manipulate the spread of information on Twitter around an election?

Josh Meyer:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I don't know if you've seen some of these deep fake videos there. There's one of the Pope wearing like a mink jacket, I think, and there's one of Ron DeSantis basically assuming the persona of the guy from the office, Michael Scott, defending himself for wearing a woman's suit. But yeah, these deep fake videos are very believable and they're getting better literally by the day. So I think that AI could be used for nefarious purposes in the election. There's a lot of people that also believe that AI could be used for good purposes, that it could be used to help cull through the algorithms and look through and see if there's any signs of manipulation, especially foreign interference and disinformation campaigns. So it could be a double-edged sword where it's used for good and for evil. We just don't know yet.

Taylor Wilson:

And Josh, you touched on this briefly, but what has Twitter said it's planning to do to alleviate some of these concerns?

Josh Meyer:

That's another good question. I'm not sure they really have said much that they're going to do. Musk has been very close to the vest when it comes to what he plans to do to fix problems at Twitter. I think one of the concerns is that the new Twitter executive, the former NBCUniversal executive Linda Yaccarino, that as she prepares to take over Twitter, that she'll be much more focused just on the advertising revenue and not on the trust and safety issues, and content moderation, and preventing Twitter from being used to create false narratives that could influence the election.

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Taylor Wilson:

All right. USA TODAY Domestic Security Correspondent Josh Meyer. Thanks as always.

Josh Meyer:

My pleasure.

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Taylor Wilson:

The PGA Tour and the Saudi-backed LIV Golf tour are merging. They made the announcement yesterday after a bitter year of tensions fractured the golf world in half. A year ago, LIV began as a breakaway competition taking several of the sports big names with it. PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said yesterday that he's aware some might call him a hypocrite after he previously denounced the Saudi-backed league over its ties to the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

In addition to golf, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund announced this week that it effectively seized controlling stakes in four of the country's largest pro soccer teams. The league has already extended massive sums of money to some of the world's best players, including Cristiano Ronaldo, who's making more than \$200 million a year to play there. Activists and academics have pointed to the PIFs investment in soccer and golf as part of a broader campaign of so-called sport washing or using sports to polish a country's otherwise problematic reputation. Saudi Arabia has a record of human rights abuses ranging from politically motivated killings to inhumane treatment of prisoners.

Thanks for listening to 5 Things. If you like the show, please subscribe and leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. And if you have any comments, you can reach us at podcasts@usatoday.com. I'm back tomorrow with more of 5 Things from USA TODAY.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: SPLC labels 'parents' rights' groups extremist, PGA and LIV Golf tours merge: 5 Things podcast

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION; META PLATFORMS, INC.; Federal Election Commission; PGA TOUR, INC.; Public Investments Fund

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Global Politics (1GL73); Government (1GO80); Public Affairs (1PU31); World Elections (1WO93))

Industry: (Internet (1IN27); Internet Media (1IN67); Online Social Media (1ON38))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arab States (1AR46); Florida (1FL79); Gulf States (1GU47); Middle East (1MI23); New Jersey (1NE70); North America (1NO39); Saudi Arabia (1SA38); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (LIV; Moms for Liberty; Southern Poverty Law Center; Human Rights Campaign; Facebook; Federal Election Commission; PGA Tour; Public Investment Fund)

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Moms for Liberty Labeled 'Extremist' Group for First Time..., 2023 WLNR 19632122

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June 7, 2023

Moms for Liberty Labeled 'Extremist' Group for First Time by Watchdog Org Evelyn Hockstein/ReutersThe Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) for the first time classified Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist" gro...

Erik Uebelacker

Evelyn Hockstein/ReutersThe Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) for the first time classified Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist" group, part of its latest "Year in Hate & Extremism" report released Tuesday. The group was one of 11 other so-called "parents' rights" groups that the extremism watchdog organization labeled as such in the report. Moms for Liberty is the most prominent in a constellation of similar groups that have terrorized local school officials amid a larger push to promote social conservative values in public education. The group made headlines this past year for going berserk over a school yearbook's LGBTQ+ page and allegedly hacking a dead woman's Facebook account to harass foes, among other headline-grabbing tactics. But it's hardly a unique phenomenon. These "parents' rights" groups have been on the rise, in part due to backlash over COVID-19 safety measures, the SPLC reports. More recently, they've grown "into an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities," the SPLC wrote in a statement attached to the report. "Moms for Liberty activities make it clear that the group's primary goals are to fuel right-wing hysteria and to make the world a less comfortable or safe place for certain students—primarily those who are Black, LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ families," the statement said. The group has grown exponentially in recent years, and now has more than 200 branches nationwide. Moms for Liberty also claims to be a bipartisan group—but cultivates deep ties to the Republican party, particularly in its founding state of Florida. Gov. Ron DeSantis heavily promoted their efforts to curb lessons focused on race and gender in state-run schools, and even endorsed a number of school board candidates from the organization during statewide elections in 2022. Both DeSantis and Donald Trump are slated to speak at the Moms for Liberty national summit at the end of June—setting up a bitter competition for the group's endorsement as they face off for the 2024 Republican nomination. Read more at The Daily Beast.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Public Affairs (1PU31); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Watchdog; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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2023 WLNR 19753237

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June 7, 2023

Section: News

Moms For Liberty deemed hate group by SPLC

Scott Lawson Managing Editor

SARASOTA - Members of a national group that started locally don't feel like they are part of a hate group.

But that's how they've been pegged.

Moms for Liberty earned the designation through the Southern Poverty Law Center's annual report Year in Hate & Extremism.

The group was started locally by Sarasota County Schools board member Bridget Ziegler along with other Florida women.

On Tuesday, the group was declared problematic by the longtime civil liberty group based in Montgomery, Alabama.

"Schools are a primary target for locally driven extremist mobilization," it stated in a news release that came along with the report. It said there were a dozen "anti-student inclusion groups" that led a movement.

The groups aim "to gain power through school boards to attack public education, ban books, and remove any curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination, and LGBTQ+ identities," it said. "One group at the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group that the SPLC has designated as an anti-government extremist group in 2022. "

SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke said the "hate and antigovernment" groups are "intent on staging public spectacles of hatred that harass, threaten and violently harm Black, Brown, Asian, Jewish, LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities."

"Schools, synagogues, and LGBTQ+ businesses - venues that have traditionally been safe spaces for our children, the Jewish community and LGBTQ+ people - are now on the frontlines of hatred and violence," Corke stated. "We all have a responsibility to speak out against hate, extremism, and violence when we see it, and encourage those in positions of power to fulfill their duty to act."

On social media, Moms for Liberty leaders and conservative political chiefs slammed the designation.

"Last year the Biden White House worked with the NSBA to label Parents Domestic Terrorists," it stated in a tweet. "Today, the SPLC labels our organization - an org full of moms who care about their kids - a Hate Group. This is a coordinated attempt to silence and suppress us."

It then sought a donation from its followers.

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Christian Ziegler, Bridget Ziegler's husband and a former Sarasota County commissioner and current Florida GOP chairman, defended his spouse online.

"Honest Q (since you know us pretty well): Do you really think (Bridget Ziegler) is an extremist full of hate?" he wrote, responding to a journalist. "Or is it more likely that the SPLC is full of s---?"

Bridget Ziegler did not respond directly to the labeling but retweeted others reacting to it.

"Moms who care about their kids' education are not a 'hate group,'" Gov. Ron DeSantis' Rapid Response Director Christina Pushaw wrote. "@RonDeSantis stands with @Moms4Liberty and will never back down!"

The SPLC also denoted other organizations as hate groups and noted that, despite convictions following trials of Jan. 6 participants, those types of groups are growing in numbers.

---- Index References ----

Company: SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Crime (1CR87); Hate Crimes (1HA65); International Terrorism (1IN37); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62))

Region: (Alabama (1AL90); Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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June 7, 2023

Section: National

Southern Poverty Law Center tars parental-rights advocates as ‘hate groups’

Valerie Richardson, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Parents opposed to the spread of critical race theory and gender ideology in public schools have landed on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “hate map.”

The far-left center added nearly 500 “hate groups” to its notorious “hate map” in 2022 by expanding the definition to include “antigovernment” organizations, which evidently means parental-rights groups like Moms for Liberty, in the newly released report on “hate and extremism.”

”Schools are a primary target for locally driven extremist mobilization, according to the report, with 12 anti-student inclusion groups leading a movement to gain power through school boards to attack public education, ban books, and remove any curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination, and LGBTQ+ identities,” said the SPLC in its press release.

The annual report issued Tuesday counted 1,225 “hate and antigovernment extremist groups” in 2022, an increase of 67% from 2021, when the group labeled 733 organizations as “hate groups.”

The jump may be attributed in large part to the addition of organizations like Parents Defending Education, Parents Involved in Education, Parents’ Rights in Education, and Moms for Liberty, which are now identified as SPLC as part of the “antigovernment movement.”

”One group at the forefront of this mobilization is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group that the SPLC has designated as an anti-government extremist group in 2022,” said the center.

The SPLC long has been known for attacking mainstream conservative organizations like the Alliance Defending Freedom and Family Research Council by lumping them on its “hate map” with neo-Nazis and the KKK.

But this is the first year the SPLC has targeted the parental-rights movement.

Moms for Liberty co-founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich, who started the group during the pandemic to counter teachers’ unions pushing school lockdowns, threw the “hate” label back at the SPLC.

”Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child’s education as ‘hate groups’ or ‘bigoted’ just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school – parents or government employees?” they said.

”We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to

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stop that,” they added.

Parents Rights’ in Education tweeted: “We @rightsparents take it as a badge of honor to make the ‘hate’ list of such a vile/evil/hate-filled organization as SPLC.”

”We will not stop, we will not be silenced. Stop messing with our kids,” said the group on Twitter.

Not impressed with the decision to tar parental-rights groups with the “hate” label was Sen. J.D. Vance, Ohio Republican.

”The SPLC is a garbage organization now dedicated to harassing groups that advocate for parents,” Mr. Vance tweeted. “In the future, their pronouncements must be met with scorn.”

The SPLC is a garbage organization now dedicated to harassing groups that advocate for parents. In the future, their pronouncements must be met with scorn. <https://t.co/L4DUAfD0UZ>

- J.D. Vance (@JDVance1) June 6, 2023

In the past few years, the SPLC has seen its credibility drop over its left-wing bias; its aggressive fundraising; its palatial office in Montgomery, Alabama, known as the “Poverty Palace”; and the 2019 firing of co-founder Morris Dees amid allegations of sexual harassment and sex- and race-based discrimination.

In April, a federal judge refused to dismiss a defamation case against the center filed by groups opposed to illegal immigration that were tagged as “hate groups.”

Even so, the Biden administration has used the center as an authoritative resource.

The White House partnered with the group in its anti-Semitism strategy unveiled last month, and the FBI’s Richmond office cited the SPLC in its much-decried leaked report on “radical-traditionalist Catholics.”

Tyler O’Neil, author of the “Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center,” noted that the center’s report makes no mention of the issues now roiling public schools, such as bringing in books with sexually graphic content in the name of LGBTQ inclusion.

”It does not mention how many on the Left champion the idea that children should be able to identify with a gender opposite their biological sex, hide that identity from their parents, and even obtain life-altering drugs without parental consent,” he said in the Daily Signal. “Instead, it acts as though the parental rights movement emerged in a vacuum, or worse, is motivated by hatred.”

A 2022 Grinnell College poll found two-thirds of Americans believe public schools are on the “wrong track,” spurring the rise of the parents’ rights movement.

”Empowering parents continues to be our mission today and that has fueled our organization’s growth – like wildfire to now 45 states in the country,” said the Moms for Liberty co-founders.

• Stephen Dinan contributed to this report.

---- **Index References** ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

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Region: (Alabama (1AL90); Americas (1AM92); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Other Indexing: (Moms for Liberty; Parents Defending Education; Parents' Rights in Education; Alliance Defending Freedom and Family Research Council; KKK; White House; FBI; Southern Poverty Law Center)

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June 6, 2023

'Parents rights' groups, Moms for Liberty designated extremists by Southern Poverty Law Center

Ruth Serven Smith; al.com

The Southern Poverty Law Center is for the first time labeling Florida-based Moms for Liberty and 11 other “parents’ rights” groups as extremist groups in its annual report, released today.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as “anti-government extremist groups.” The SPLC said it decided to label Moms for Liberty, Parents Defending Education and No Left Turn, among others, as extremist because their rhetoric often takes on “anti-LGBTQ, racist and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographics segments of American society.”

The organization did not formally respond to the SPLC’s label Tuesday. Multiple politicians weighed in on social media; Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton tweeted, “The SPLC is a corrupt slush fund devoted to defamation. Groups like @Moms4Liberty and @DefendingEd should be proud of the work they do for families and kids.”

Moms for Liberty is one of the largest and most visible of a “pack of conservative groups that have popped up across the country post-pandemic, dedicated to advancing a slate of issues they label “parents’ rights,” that typically include opposing public school programs, books and curriculums that address issues like racial discrimination and inequity, gender identity and sexuality,” according to Anna Claire Vollers at Reckon News. The group has successfully flipped some school boards.

Over the past year, apparent members have disrupted school board meetings with claims the schools are teaching critical race theory, attempted to ban books from school libraries and pushed against LGBTQ+ inclusion.

The SPLC claims such campaigns have contributed to an increase in threats and harassment against educators. A Moms for Liberty member in Arkansas allegedly threatened to shoot a school librarian.

Moms for Liberty was formed in Florida in 2021 by three former school board members who were upset about COVID-19 school restrictions. Florida GOP Vice Chairman Christian Ziegler is the husband of one of the original cofounders, Bridget Ziegler.

The SPLC claims that the group later morphed into “an anti-student inclusion movement that targets any inclusive curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination and LGBTQ identities.”

Moms for Liberty has a formal chapter in Madison County, Alabama, and other members throughout the state, according to the organization’s website.

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---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Education (1ED85); Health & Family (1HE30); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Library & Information Science (1LI40))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Arkansas (1AR83); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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Coral Gables banned books giveaway slated for 3..., 2023 WLNR 19611802

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Coral Gables banned books giveaway slated for 3 Miami-Dade-restricted texts

Jesse Scheckner

Jun 06, 2023

A trio of local writers are joining advocacy groups, parents, teachers and students to celebrate, read and give away three books that were recently restricted in a Miami-Dade County public school.

The public event is happening at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Coral Gables Congregational Church, where local bookstore chain Books & Books will distribute 1,200 free copies of the titles.

The event is meant to “shine a light on the policies of the Miami-Dade Public School System that are creating a chaotic and regressive atmosphere that has led to the irrational restriction of student access to these and other books,” promotional material said.

Participants will include Miami-Dade poet laureate Richard Blanco, who read at President Barack Obama’s 2013 swearing-in ceremony; prize-winning novelist Edwidge Danticat; and author, historian and Florida International University professor emeritus Marvin Dunn, who founded the Miami Center for Racial Justice.

All will read from the challenged texts, which include “The Hill We Climb” by poet Amanda Gorman, who read at President Joe Biden’s 2021 inauguration; “The ABCs of Black History” by Rio Cortez and Lauren Semmer; and “Love to Langston” by Tony Medina and R. Gregory Christie.

Blanco will read Gorman’s poem, while Danticat will read from “Love to Langston” and Dunn will read from “The ABCs of Black History.”

Gorman, who said she was “gutted” upon learning her poem had been placed on a restricted list with the other titles at the K-8 Bob Graham Education Center in April, helped fund the giveaway.

So did poet Tom Healy, a trustee of PEN America, which helped to organize the event.

Representatives from ACLU Florida, National Coalition Against Censorship, United Teachers of Dade, Florida Freedom to Read and O, Miami will also speak, as will concerned parents, students and educators.

As the Miami Herald reported, the K-8 issued restrictions for elementary-aged students on four of five titles parent Daily Salinas complained included inappropriate topics and should be removed “for the total environment.”

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Salinas, who admitted to only reading part of the material she objected to, was later exposed for spreading antisemitic propaganda on social media and having ties to school censorship group Moms for Liberty and the self-described “western chauvinist” Proud Boys.

The free and public “FREEDOM” banned book giveaway is happening 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Sanctuary for Banned Books at Coral Gables Congregational Church, 3010 De Soto Blvd.

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty listed as 'anti-government' group by..., 2023 WLNR 19621969

NewsRoom

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Moms for Liberty listed as 'anti-government' group by extremism watchdog The 'parents' rights' group has backed book bans and the removal of discussions of race and LGBTQ+ issues in schools

Jason Wilson

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has listed the Republican-connected "parents' rights" group Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist" organization in its latest Year in Hate & Extremism report.

In a statement accompanying the report's release, a spokesperson for the extremism watchdog group wrote that Moms for Liberty was the most prominent of 12 extremist "anti-student inclusion groups" mobilizing to "attack public education, ban books, and remove any curriculum that contains discussions of race, discrimination, and LGBTQ+ identities".

The listing puts the group – whose members and endorsees now sit on school boards around the country – in the same category as anti-government organizations like the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the John Birch Society.

In an emailed response to the Guardian's request for comment, the Moms for Liberty founders Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice wrote: "Name-calling parents who want to be a part of their child's education as 'hate groups' or 'bigoted' just further exposes what this battle is all about: Who fundamentally gets to decide what is taught to our kids in school – parents or government employees?"

The pair added: "We believe that parental rights do not stop at the classroom door and no amount of hate from groups like this is going to stop that."

Moms for Liberty was co-founded in January 2021 by Descovich and Justice – who had exited central Florida school boards after opposing Covid-19 restrictions at public schools – along with Bridget Ziegler, then in her second term on the Sarasota county school board.

The group soon expanded its campaigning remit to oppose teaching about racism and racist history and LGBTQ+-inclusive policies in public schools, and has since sought to land members and supporters on school board seats.

According to the SPLC report, the group has made its way by "intimidating and harassing teachers and school officials", battling teachers' unions, attacking corporations like Disney that are supportive of LGBTQ+ rights, and supporting and making use of laws like Florida's so-called "don't say gay" statute, which limits classroom discussion of gender and sexual identity.

Moms for Liberty has expanded into a nationwide network of more than 200 branches, and the SPLC now lists each of these branches as an extremist group.

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While the group has claimed to be non-partisan, from the beginning it has had close ties to the Republican party, especially in Florida, where it has won the backing of the rightwing governor and 2024 presidential candidate Ron DeSantis.

Ziegler’s husband Christian was serving as vice-chairman of the Florida Republican party when she co-founded Moms for Liberty, and in 2021 he reportedly credited the group with getting “20- and 30-year-old females involved with the Republican party”.

In Florida’s 2022 elections, DeSantis made an unprecedented endorsement of a slate of school board candidates, many of whom were members of Moms for Liberty or other radical parents’ groups. In turn, Ziegler and other prominent members of the group offered vocal support for his rhetorical, legal and legislative attacks on diversity and inclusion measures in the state’s public institutions – or what the governor has called “the woke mind virus”.

Elsewhere in the report, the count of active extremist groups is at 1,225, which is not significantly greater than the 2021 count of 1,221. The SPLC attributed the slowed growth to a significant collapse in the militia movement, which accounted for only 61 groups in 2022, down from 92 in 2021, a fact the SPLC said was due to “members and leaders being held accountable for their role in the deadly Jan. 6 attack”.

However, in the statement accompanying the report, the SPLC warned that “hate groups are increasingly engaging in public demonstrations using flyering, marches and banner displays to gain media attention”, with schools in particular emerging as a target not just for radical parents’ groups, but for established hate groups like the Proud Boys.

In a statement, the SPLC president and CEO, Margaret Huang, called such attacks “a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary”.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; The John Birch Society

News Subject: (Campaigns & Elections (1CA25); Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Political Parties (1PO73); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05); World Elections (1WO93))

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NewsRoom

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[17:00:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HARRY DUNN, U.S. CAPITOL POLICE OFFICER: It's hard to have a flashback of something when it hasn't ended and it's still like a nonstop playing scene in your head. Maybe I'm obsessed with it. Maybe. I don't know. But that's not a flashback moment. Every day, it's in my mind. I'm seeing what happened that day.

So, it's hard to say, no, it's not like a flashback, a triggering moment. This is my life now. And -- you know, how could it end until, like I said, accountability has been had? Eight hundred and sixty-three days. That's a long time waiting. Tired of waiting.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

NICOLLE WALLACE, MSNBC HOST: It is a long time. Hi, everybody. It's 5:00 in New York. That was U.S. Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, a victim of the January 6 insurrection, talking candidly on this program about how he lives every day. He can't have a flashback because it's never receded, the attack on the U.S. Capitol that he experienced that day.

It is an attack that was characterized officially by the sitting director of the FBI as -- quote -- "domestic terrorism." That threat of domestic terrorism is one that has only grown since the deadly Capitol insurrection. It currently poses the most lethal threat to the U.S. homeland.

A brand-new report out by the office of the inspector general of DOJ takes a look at the department's handling of this growing threat and concludes this -- quote -- "The FBI has stated that more domestic terrorism investigative activity occurred in the U.S. in 2020 than in the previous 25 years, and that the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6 resulted in a two-fold increase in its domestic terrorism case.

And now the I.G. writes this -- quote -- "According to the department, threats posed by domestic violent extremists have not only increased over the past few years but are also becoming more complicated due to emergence of new violent ideologies, the impact of social media, and the response to recent political and social events."

When it comes to DOJ's handling, the inspector general says more work can be done. Quote -- "DOJ should continue to enhance its mechanisms to routinely evaluate the efficacy and impact of its DVE." That's domestic violence extremism efforts.

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This update from the inspector general at DOJ comes as yet another analysis of hate and extremism in our country reveals some deeply disturbing new trends. Just a few hours ago, the Southern Poverty Law Center released its latest report where it counted 1,225 active hate and antigovernment extremist groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center concludes that after January 6th, those groups shifted their tactics, writing this -- quote -- "Without Trump at the helm, activists have made a concerted effort to organize in the local arena, pursuing their agenda in venues where it is easier to gain power. Meaning extremism has seeped deeper and perhaps more opaquely into the fabric of American life.

Quote -- "In 2022, the hard-right movement succeeded in burrowing deeper in peoples' lives in visible and material ways, even if it did not have widespread electoral success. Its fingerprints are everywhere: people's homes, schools, doctors' offices, libraries, bars, restaurants, churches, and other community spaces. The fear and pain experienced by Black, brown, and LGBTQ communities went far beyond any individual incident, deeply disrupting their ability to participate in an inclusive democracy."

The rise of hate and extremism in America is where we begin the hour with some of our favorite experts and friends. Margaret Huang is here. She is the president and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center, the group that just issued the report we read from. Also joining us, former assistant director for counterintelligence at the FBI and MSNBC national security analyst Frank Figliuzzi is here. And with me at the table, "The New York Times" political and investigative reporter and MSNBC political analyst Nick Confessore.

Margaret, take me through the report. You don't need to summarize. We will spend a lot of time on it. But just take me through some of the most startling things one at a time.

[17:05:00]

MARGARET HUANG, PRESIDENT AND CEO, SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER: Thanks so much, Nicolle. Great to be with you. Southern Poverty Law Center has been putting out our annual year hate and extremism report since 1990. The year 2022 was really markedly notable and distinctive in a few ways. First, as we also saw with the FBI hate crimes statistics report, the number of hate crimes across the country is on a dramatic increase.

It's worth pointing out that nearly 50% of all hate crimes in this country target Black Americans. This is an ongoing consistent statistic year after year but it's worth highlighting because a lot of the other changes we're seeing are additional groups who are now being added to the targeting list.

For example, we're seeing far more attacks on the Jewish community, on the LGBTQ community, of course on immigrants, and increasingly on students. That's one of the other big notable differences this year.

We have marked that there are actually 12 anti-student inclusion groups in the country that are pushing to ban certain books, ban curricula, punish teachers who talk about inclusive education, and generally make our school boards miserable in seeking to provide an inclusive education for all. These groups include moms for liberty, which is the largest group in the country. And we've added those 12 groups to our anti-government groups in our hate list this year.

Maybe a last highlight I'll lift up is that we saw a real change as we saw the move from a sort of national stage to more local and visible presence as you read from the beginning of the report. Increasingly, what we're seeing are activists or the far-right ideologies going to local school board meetings, to city councils.

And as we've seen that, we've seen a real shift in the organizing efforts. So, for example, our anti-government militia members have actually decreased this year. But our numbers are about the same as last year because we've actually seen a rise in other groups that are having more success at the local level like the Patriot Boys.

WALLACE: Margaret, let me read -- I want to read from the report about schools and kids. This is in the report. Reactionary anti-student inclusion groups such as Moms for Liberty, Moms for America, Parents Defending Education that the Southern

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Poverty Law Center lists as extremist groups are, by their very nature, responding to social progress that they dislike and have no control over.

Like many other hard-right groups, these reactionary anti-student inclusion groups are constantly painting themselves as an oppressed class, while vilifying those discriminated against.

We covered Nikki Haley's attacks on the trans community. She blamed the rise in teenage girl suicide rates on trans athletes. Our reporting, I think the source is Newsweek, showed that there are maybe 100 trans athletes. And to be clear, as the next Republican, I think they're only upset about trans kids who identify as girls. I've not seen any of them single out trans kids who identify as boys.

So, how do you explain the gap between the reality that there are less than a hundred trans kids playing sports and less than 100 school communities contending with whatever the issues are around those teams or those athletes and those families and the rise in the platforming of hatred towards the trans community?

HUANG: As we've seen more and more of the hate and extremist groups becoming active at the local level, we have seen state and local elected leaders taking up these positions of being anti-trans or anti-student inclusion in the schools.

This is very much a coordinated effort. We are seeing state legislatures work in lockstep with those far-right activists who are attacking school board members for wanting inclusive education.

And what it means is that we're seeing an increasing number of politicians embracing this far-right ideology far more than in the past. In the past, you would see politicians seek to distance themselves from far-right ideology and far-right extremism. Today, they're all aligned and they're using the same talking points.

And so rather than focus on what kids and children need, there's a much greater willingness to use political talking points about schools, about young people that actually have nothing to do with supporting those children to have their best possible education.

[17:09:56]

WALLACE: The report is rooted on research and data, but are you able, Margaret, to tell us what it's like right now to be one of these targeted and maligned and threatened kids in one of these communities?

HUANG: It's terrifying, Nicolle. There are parents and families and children who are contemplating leaving their homes and moving to other states because they're so afraid that they can't access the health care that they need, that their children are being targeted by political officials in ways that are so detrimental to their well-being.

And I think one of the most important things to lift up is our report tries to share the stories of those who are fighting back. There's a wonderful organization that started in Florida, Support Our Schools, which is organizing parents, families, and educational communities to push back to support our teachers, to support inclusive education in the classroom, and to not let these loud, hateful voices be the ones dominating the public discourse.

WALLACE: Frank Figliuzzi, I want to bring you in on this, from the report. It's something that you've warned us about, I believe, going back a few years.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reports this on Proud Boys and drag shows. Quote -- "Far-right extremists have especially targeted events that include drag performers, people who boldly and visibly defy the right's strict ideas of gender and gender identity. The Proud Boys, whose chapters have grown considerably since the group participated in the January 6 insurrection, targeted more than 40 LGBTQ events in 2022 through harassment or protests."

Just talk about this strategy and this brutal targeting and the intersection with politically-aligned and targeted threats of violence.

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FRANK FIGLIUZZI, MSNBC NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST, FORMER FBI ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR COUNTERINTELLIGENCE: First, let me give kudos to the SPLC for an extremely comprehensive, well-written, well-packaged report. I recommend everyone reading this who wants to just become more familiar with what's happening all around us now because the overall take away is that hate is becoming more entrenched. They have gone local. Hate has gone local. The more local it goes, the more mainstream it becomes.

Now, one of the strategies we see is what you mentioned, which is an increased targeting of the gay community. It's part of the so-called culture war that they want us to believe is happening, that our religious freedoms are being targeted, our children are being target. It's about as anti-freedom as you can be in reality. But that's not what they want. They want us to believe everything we stand for is somehow at risk, including our children's safety.

So, the convenient target here has become, in addition to the Jewish community, noble act community, has become the gay community. And here we are, of course, in pride month where security really has to be paramount for the various events going on.

But I harken back to decades ago when the FBI and DOJ really aggressively targeted and successfully went after criminally the KKK. And what happened there was they took off their hoods and their sheets, they put on suits and ties, they went local, and they ran for office.

So, this isn't the first time we've seen this going local mainstreaming of hatred. We've seen it before. And we see it now with people who truly are driven by hate and deception running for school board and elective office. That is where the problem is.

So, there's good news, bad news in this report. There's drop in militia groups and activity. There is clearly, mentioned in the report, chilling effect that the 1,000 arrests now have had from January 6th on these militia groups.

But the bad news is, you know, just as soon as you get your hands around them from a law enforcement perspective, identify people and groups, they go local. They hide behind suits and ties and try to legitimize themselves. That makes it very, very hard to get a handle on what's happening.

WALLACE: Frank, where is the intersection? Is it discernible? Does law enforcement have the tools to know exactly where the fault line is between the projected sort of laundered free political speech targeting the trans community coming from behind podiums, televised debates and town halls, and the rhetoric and conduct and organizing that threatens people, especially families of trans kids and LGBTQ kids?

FIGLIUZZI: Yeah, I think -- I've long said, Nicolle, that two things are not mutually exclusive. You can protect our civil liberties at the same time you protect our nation from violence. They're not mutually exclusive. But the far-right extremists want us to believe that the big, bad government is trying to police our thoughts, our ideologies. Of course, that's not true. They're trying to prevent violence.

[17:15:00]

And as you said, the problem, the challenges, the tools still aren't in the tool kit. Many people think that something magic happened in law enforcement after January 6th, new tools, new laws. The answer is no, nothing has changed in the law enforcement tool kit.

We still -- I know you've heard me say this to a point where you may be tired of hearing me say it, we still don't have a law in the federal books against domestic terrorism. That deprives law enforcement of the ability to get out ahead of violence. The continued threat continues to be the lone offender who is increasingly difficult to ferret out and find.

WALLACE: So, with that in mind and I never get tired of you making that point, Frank Figliuzzi, what do you make of the inspector general's report on DOJ's approach? I understand this is an audit that Inspector General Horowitz did of DOJ's policies on the book. Is that how you read it? Take us inside that this document is, hot it came to be, and what you think of its substance.

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FIGLIUZZI: So, yeah, two different questions. I like the fact that we have innocence in audit by the IG here who is looking deep into how law enforcement, particularly FBI, goes after and addresses domestic terrorism.

I don't see here the solutions because what we keep seeing out of DOJ is, hey, we created a new unit. Remember this? What? Was it a year ago, two years ago? We created a domestic terrorism unit at DOJ. Well, we had a domestic terrorism unit. So, you put people in one room and called it something new, different. Do you have any new ways to approach this?

FBI said, you know, we've got increased resources on this. Again, without the tools. And the so-called whistleblowers out of the FBI who have been suspended and fired and Jim Jordan keeps parading around, you know what they're saying? They're saying, well, the FBI is fudging their domestic terrorism numbers because it's all about January 6th. And yeah, there's 1,000 cases but other than that, there's no real problem.

Well, there's a thousand people and more, by the way, coming who are under investigation and arrested for domestic terrorism, and they've been scattered throughout the United States. So, yes, indeed, we have an entrenched problem developing here, and I don't see study after study without solutions and major change, particularly legislative change, really making a difference. Moving forward, we still have a major problem on our hands in terms of addressing the threat inside the United States.

WALLACE: I don't know if your kids have hamsters. We have a hamster that runs on a wheel. So, this is a very meaningful sort of way to describe this. But with the advent -- I don't even call it advent -- with the existence of Republican Party, whose rhetoric is in many instances and many news cycles indiscernible from the rhetoric that animates domestic violent extremists, to target the very groups reported on by the Southern Poverty Law Center, added to the rolling back of any speech in social media, it feels like we are as combustible as we've ever been.

NICK CONFESSORE, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR, POLITICAL REPORTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES: Absolutely. I mean, look, it's striking to me that in the midst of the January 6th prosecutions, the largest prosecutions in DOJ history, we're seeing an expansion of domestic violence of the Proud Boys and not a contraction of it.

I do think that we're in a politics right now where the stakes feel elevated and where, especially on the right, there is a rhetoric that says that the whole foundation of the country, its culture, its constitution, its politics are at stake, is about to be destroyed. It's escalating all the time and there are intellectuals on the right who can make that case.

WALLACE: Launder it.

CONFESSORE: Yeah. And so --

WALLACE: Who are the intellectual forces?

CONFESSORE: It's the people who surrounded the Trump world, people -- you know, the Claremont Institute have made the case that kind of all is lost if we don't win. And we have to win the culture war. That's a big shift. It's not really the fight over tax cuts anymore. Tax cuts are still there. It's a fight over culture.

The culture war is now the unifying principle from the right, from Ron DeSantis to Donald Trump. I think that accounts for the skirmishing we constantly see around trans kids and wokeism and DEI.

WALLACE: But no one can define wokeism. I think they would put abortion in that. You've got 93% of all Americans who oppose their most radical bans against exceptions, the limited exceptions for the life of the mother. I mean, the substance that agenda is deeply unpopular even with Republicans.

CONFESSORE: That's why we see DEI and wokeism becoming a catch all term for almost anything --

WALLACE: But nothing. It means nothing.

[17:20:00]

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CONFESSORE: Yeah, but that's exactly why it's useful as a rhetoric and kind of why we see people trying to define it in 10 different ways. It's whatever I don't like right now is wokeism

WALLACE: It's crazy. Thank you all so much for having this conversation. We will call in all of your expertise as the campaign season heats up. Margaret, thank you very much. Nick, thank you very much. Frank is sticking around.

When we come back, Republicans are on the verge of holding FBI Director Chris Wray in contempt of Congress. It is all over a document that the bureau has provided and shown to Congress. It contains an unsubstantiated and later dismissed allegation that involves -- you guessed it -- President Joe Biden.

It all makes sense when you hear one Republican lawmaker say the quiet part out loud and admit that the goal is not to ascertain the truth about the Bidens. We will show you that, next.

And later, the destruction of a massive dam in Ukraine is forcing thousands of Ukrainians to evacuate just as the counter offensive to take back territory seized by Russia gets under way. Our experts and friends will explain the significance of the attack and what it means for the war going forward.

"Deadline: White House" continues after a quick break. Don't go anywhere.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

WALLACE: Today, the Republican Party is going there, proceeding with contempt charges for Donald Trump's handpicked director of the FBI, Christopher Wray. His crime, in their view, not complying with a subpoena. But this is after Republican Oversight Chairman Jim Comer was briefed last night by bureau officials on the exact document that had been subpoenaed by Comer.

[17:25:04]

Now, the document that we're talking about supposedly describes an alleged bribery scheme involving President Joe Biden. Last night, after viewing the document, Chairman Comer told reporters that the document was part of a -- quote -- "ongoing investigation."

The Democratic congressman, Jamie Raskin, the ranking member of the Oversight Committee, was also able to view the document last night and here's how he described it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. JAMIE RASKIN (D-MD): Attorney General Barr named Scott Brady, who was the U.S. attorney for Western Pennsylvania, to head up a group of prosecutors and FBI agents who would look into all of the allegations related to Ukraine.

What I know is that the FBI, Department of Justice team under William Barr and Scott Brady in the Western District of Pennsylvania, terminated the investigation. They said there were no grounds for further investigative steps.

UNKNOWN (voice-over): Comer said that it was part of an ongoing investigation, that that's what he learned today.

RASKIN: Okay. Then I must have missed that because I've not heard that this is part of any ongoing investigation.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: Because it's not. This is part of a trough -- I'm at loss for a better word -- for the garbage that Rudy Giuliani was stirring up about Ukraine by Bill Barr to deal with what he knew was garbage from Rudy Giuliani.

To sum up what has been publicly reported and what we know, Oversight Chairman Comer subpoenaed FBI director,

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handpicked by Donald Trump, Christopher Wray, for a document that contains unsubstantiated allegations against President Joe Biden that came through this channel headed by Bill Barr to receive garbage from Rudy Giuliani.

He saw the document. He was handed the documents. Afterwards, he appears to say that there's an ongoing investigation. Bill Barr didn't think so and is still moving to hold Christopher Wray in contempt. Why? Well, Republican Senator Chuck Grassley very generously answered it for us last week.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. CHUCK GRASSLEY (R-IA): We're doing the constitutional job of oversight. I have read that document. If he would read it -- it's unclassified document. He admits it exists. And we aren't interested in whether or not the accusations against Vice President Biden are accurate or not.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: We aren't interested in whether the accusations against -- I think he meant then Vice President Biden are accurate or not. It is all out in the open now.

Joining our conversation, "The New York Times" congressional reporter Luke Broadwater. Frank is still around.

Luke, this is -- I remember this. Geoff Berman writes about it in his tell- all about running SDNY, that what Barr sets up is basically -- I can't think of a better word but a trough for the garbage and the slough that Rudy is stirring up and ginning up about the Bidens and this channel is in part to divert tips -- I think that's using the word generously but tips from Rudy to bypass SDNY and send them through the office that Congressman Raskin talks about.

Am I missing part of this? And Chuck Grassley says -- quote -- "We don't care if they're true or not."

LUKE BROADWATER, CONGRESSIONAL REPORTER, THE NEW YORK TIMES: Right. These were allegations that were investigated by the Justice Department some years ago, in 2020, in fact. They may even predate 2020.

But Scott Brady, the U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh, is tasked by Bill Barr with looking in all the materials that Rudy Giuliani, who is President Trump's personal lawyer at the time, is trying to accumulate this dossier of negative information against Joe Biden.

And, you know, people who are familiar with this review of the evidence say that a lot of it was junk, a lot of it was pretty worthless. He did end up forwarding some materials to other U.S. attorneys' offices. You know, people (INAUDIBLE) numbers from some of these documents. There may have been some things that were useful for further investigation.

But most of it -- most was discounted and was not elevated to a formal investigation. There were a lot of facts that we really need to launch an investigation into this stuff. It was sort of a way to filter the information before it actually went out to prosecutors who were doing, you know, real serious work.

WALLACE: And the ethics of having Rudy Giuliani import information into DOJ under Bill Barr's tutelage while at the same time John Durham is out trying to manufacture an investigation against the investigators with two trials that went nowhere. I mean, what is the bigger picture over on earth one where reality still rings about the extremely audacious and brazen attempts to politicize the FBI by Comer and his committee, Luke?

[17:29:56]

BROADWATER: Yeah, I mean the FBI says what the House Republicans are doing right now is completely unwarranted and is a broadside attack on the institution. They feel like they've bent over backwards to provide unsubstantiated, unverified claims to Congress, to House Republicans, while still protecting the sanctity of investigations, of protecting clandestine witnesses and informants.

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And, you know, they went to some length. They sent a team over for more than an hour. They briefed James Comer yesterday, they let him see the document, answer questions at length. And then, to say -- to come out of a meeting immediately and say we're going to hold you in contempt anyway, you know, did not go over well at FBI headquarters.

I do think it's worth pointing out that, you know, at Congress it's always politics at play, and I don't think the viewers or readings lead with the impression that, you know, Christopher Wray is in danger of going to jail or something. If the House does vote to hold him in contempt, you know, I can't see any world in which the Justice Department would follow through on that contempt charge and try to pursue a criminal case.

WALLACE: It all has a real-world implication, though, Frank Figliuzzi, after Donald Trump started railing against the FBI after the judge court approved search of his Mar-a-Lago property, which actually resulted in the discovery of hundreds of classified documents. The FBI field office was targeted.

I mean, it doesn't happen -- I take Luke's point that it's not likely to result in a criminal process for Christopher Wray, but there're real-world implications to this campaign to discredit the FBI and manufacture a reality that just doesn't exist in a document that was sent to DOJ when it was run by the Trumpiest people the world has ever known, Bill Barr, and plenty of other people who were littered all over the Justice Department. How is the FBI dealing with this, maybe in ways we can't see?

FRANK FIGLIUZZI, MSNBC NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: So, my understanding is that an all-employee memo went out from FBI headquarters across all the field offices saying, look, here's the transparency. This sourced document contains the names of individuals that you know, all FBI employees know, we protect. And the entire foundation of the FBI's informant program, the ability to go out and develop cooperating witnesses and important cases is based on the notion that their identity will be protected at all costs.

And so, what's been redacted for those who are, well, something in there is redacted, you know -- what's redacted is to protect the future of the FBI's informant program, because if you can look across a desk at someone who's thinking about cooperating with you and say we might have to turn your name over to congress, and it might be on the front page of the Washington Post, they're not going to cooperate.

So, this is an attempted death by a thousand cuts by the far-right who simply wants to erode the institution. And why this institution? As you've alluded to, it's the FBI that's investigating their guy. And as I'm telling people, if their guy gets indicted, it's an FBI agent who's going to tell the former president of the United States, I have a warrant for your arrest. It's an FBI agent who's going to read Mr. Trump his Miranda rights.

So, it's understandable that they need to attack the institution of the FBI, because when the indictments come, they want to be able to say we held their director in contempt, they're not to be believed. That's what this is about.

WALLACE: But, Frank, the FBI is also the institution that connects the dots after a terrorist attack that is responsible for protecting the homeland, protecting Americans from all sorts of crimes, gun trade, drug trade. I mean, why -- I mean, should Christopher Wray do more? Should he go on TV and protect the reputation and the integrity of the rank and file of the FBI by saying, these guys don't want the truth, they can't handle the truth, here's the truth, and explain what you just explained?

FIGLIUZZI: So, I -- look, he's between a rock and a hard place because he's -- you know, we've already got a situation where the FBI has sadly become highly politicized by the far-right, and it's the worst thing that could happen to an objective law enforcement agency. So, if he comes out, he's damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. He comes out publicly and attacks the far-right, he's automatically becoming a political animal, and that's not the way to go here.

But what I do sense is happening, Nicolle, is an increased strategy of pushing back. Pushing back hard saying, look, this is extraordinary accommodation. We don't hand out source documents to Congress every day. So, what is it you want? Do you want to prop for your theater? Do you want a piece of paper to wave around on national television and claim what? That we didn't look at whether Biden took a \$5 million bribe because Rudy Giuliani said so? We did. The Republican attorney general gave it to a Republican U.S. attorney who said it's not credible, and Barr accepted the finding. So, this is theater. I think most Americans understand that.

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[17:34:59]

And try to push back against a circus is really not helpful. You become part of that circus.

WALLACE: And that ship seems to have already sailed, but circus is a good word for it. Luke, our correspondent, live with the circus on all these goings on, thank you very much my friend. Frank Figliuzzi, thank you for spending so much time with us.

When we return, the destruction of a massive and vitally important dam in southern Ukraine forces thousands of residents to flee, and threatening Ukraine's much anticipated counter offensive to take back territory occupied by Russia. Our experts tell us what this means for the war and the people of Ukraine after a short break. Don't go anywhere.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

WALLACE: A potential bombshell in Jack Smith's twin investigations into Donald Trump. New York Times reported seven minutes ago that Mark Meadows, he was Donald Trump's chief of staff at the end of the presidency when the documents were taken, as well on January 6th, those events also under investigation by Jack Smith. Times just dropped a story under this headline, Mark Meadows has testified to grand jury and special counsel investigation of Trump. We will read from it.

Mark Meadows, the final White House chief of staff under President Donald Trump, and a potentially key figure in inquires related to Trump, has testified before a federal grand jury hearing evidence in the investigations being led by the special counsel's office.

[17:39:58]

That is according to two people briefed on the matter. Meadows is a figure in both of the two distinct lines of inquiry being pursued by the special counsel appointed to oversee the Justice Department's scrutiny of Trump. This, of course, Jack Smith.

The Times goes on to report this, one inquiry is focused on Trump's efforts to cling to power after losing the 2020 election culminating in the attack by a pro-Trump mob on the Capitol during congressional certification of the electoral college results on January 6, the others in investigation into Trump's handling of hundreds of classified documents after he left office, and whether he obstructed efforts to retrieve them.

Times reports this, it's not clear precisely when Meadows testified or if investigators questioned him about one or both of the cases. This has been an open question whether or not Meadows who was represented by a former DOJ official and highly regarded conservative attorney, George Terwilliger, had testified in any of the investigations into Trump, those being run by Jack Smith or the Georgia probe being run by Fani Willis.

No indication in this story that he's helped the Georgia investigator, but the Times breaking the news that he has testified in Jack Smith's investigations into Donald Trump.

Joining us by phone, New York Times Washington correspondent, Mike Schmidt, whose byline is on this new piece of reporting. Mike, what can you tell us?

MIKE SCHMIDT, THE NEW YORK TIMES WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT: Look, one of the biggest questions is -- you know, there's a lot of questions, but one of the bigger questions about the people in Trump's orbit has been what has Meadows been up to? You know, his profile has sort of sunk in Trump's world. He hasn't been seen around as much. He hasn't been heard as much, and we have been trying to figure out why that is and how he fits into these larger investigations.

Obviously, Meadows, as we saw during the congressional investigation into the January 6th attacks was a key person, who was someone that was in the room for a lot of the key moments that happened around January 6th and the lead-up to that and the efforts to overturn the election, as we saw that came out just a few days ago where it was related to that audio recording of the researchers from his book.

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He's someone that has at least some ties to the president in regards to the documents investigation. Probably the most interesting thing about the reporting here was, you know, the quote in the story from Meadows' lawyer, George Terwilliger, you know, who said without commenting on whether or not Meadows testified before the grand jury or heard any proceedings, Mr. Meadows has maintained a commitment to tell the truth where he has a legal obligation to do so.

Look, in many ways that's sort of a perfunctory response and it doesn't confirm anything. But in Trump's world where loyalty is such an important thing and anyone who turns on Trump is seen as disloyal, or anyone following legal procedures is seen as disloyal, this is clearly a sign that, you know, Mark Meadows is in the hands of an attorney that was going to make sure that he followed the law.

And George Terwilliger is someone who's fairly extremely experienced in this area. And, you know, you know, knows what they're doing.

WALLACE: Mike, that was an interesting quote. I wasn't sure reading if that was a quote about George Terwilliger or about Mark Meadows, because Steve Bannon, at least at different points, had lawyers who, I guess in the past, had that sort of code as well.

Was that in your view, and are you pointing to it because it indicates that he's helpful or he's been helpful to Special Counsel Jack Smith?

SCHMIDT: I think it's just simply that he has a lawyer to make sure that he follows the law and that he's responsive to legal proceedings if there are legal proceedings in which he is legally asked to answer questions. And while that may not seem like that big a deal in Trump's world where we've seen a range of different folks around Trump who didn't always answer questions or didn't always answer them truthfully, you know, someone like George Terwilliger is certainly signaling that his client follows the law.

WALLACE: I mean, I think it's a huge deal and a potential major differentiator with these final witnesses that until 8 minutes ago we haven't known to have been before of a grand jury. I just want to read for our viewers this story just dropped. I read some of it. I want to share a little bit more of it, because you and your colleagues report on what -- sort of remind us what Meadows saw.

[17:44:57]

You report that Meadows was a polarizing figure at the White House among some of Trump's aides who saw him as a loose gatekeeper at best, during the final year in which the former president moved aggressively to mold the government in his image. This was brought to life, I think most illustratively, by Cassidy Hutchinson, and probably less illustratively by Pat Cipollone, who described interactions with Donald Trump on January 6th this way, by saying that he wouldn't condemn the rioters because he, quote, "agreed with them." They were chanting, hang Mike Pence.

If he were to field a question after Mike Pence on the January 6th side of the Jack Smith probes, what is sort of the assessment of how instrumental he could be?

SCHMIDT: I mean, look, I -- he's incredibly important. Because you have to remember, not only was he in the room for all these things, but we've never heard from Meadows under oath related to January 6th. He was one of the witnesses who had not cooperated with the January 6th investigation. The Justice Department had looked into and ultimately decided not to charge him and Scavino with, you know, contempt of Congress for their, you know, for the lack of cooperation with the January 6th investigation.

So, Meadows is someone who -- you know, who knows what Meadows knows. Certainly, we had a fair amount of insight into it from Cassidy Hutchinson. And we learned about it from other witnesses and what Meadows' role was. But at the end of the day, Meadows was around for a lot of things and could answer a lot of questions.

I'm sure someone like Tim Heaphy would loved to have questioned Mark Meadows and know what he knew about what was

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going on. And the committee was never able to get there, but Jack Smith was. And it's just yet another reminder of the difference between the congressional investigation and the special counsel's investigation.

(CROSSTALK)

WALLACE: Sorry.

SCHMIDT: And the difference between this special counsel's investigation and the special counsel's investigation that went on under Trump under Mueller, because this one has really gone after the people around the president and been able to pierce different privilege issues and force the cooperation and the testimony certainly in a way that looks at the January 6th committee an extraordinary amount of headway in this area, but Jack Smith has gone further.

WALLACE: And you report this, Mike. Mr. Meadows was around for pivotal moments leading up to and after the 2020 election as Trump plotted to try to stay in office and thwart Joe Biden from being sworn in to succeed him. Some of them were described in the hundreds of text messages that Meadows turned over to the House Select Committee that investigated the January 6th attack on the Capitol before he decided to stop cooperating. Those texts served as a road map for the House investigators.

Adam Kinzinger, now a retired House Republican, on this show described Mark Meadows as their star witness. So, what he saw, and I think to your point, Tim Heaphy has said that if there were anyone, other than Trump, he could talk to would be Mark Meadows. What he's already shared was of vital importance.

Do you have any sense that there was one investigation that took priority over the other based on the other reporting in the Times about who's been in most recently? Because the story today also has a great deal of reporting on his role in the final days, including the packing of Trump's personal items.

SCHMIDT: No, I -- as we say in the story, you know, it was unclear which investigation he was, you know, testifying to or both. Obviously, he's important to both of them. But you raise an important point, which until today when we were working on this reporting, I had almost forgotten, which was the importance of the Meadows text messaging.

The Meadows text messages really served as a -- the word game changer may be too much, but an important moment to the committee where it was able to gain a larger understanding of what was going on around Trump in the lead- up to and during January 6th. And that served as an important blueprint for I think a lot of the questioning that goes on in the months that followed and the committee's ability to -- to get the information that they did.

Because it's one thing to have all the witnesses before them the way that they did, but you really need to be answering the right questions, and you really need to be pushing on the right issues. And there's a lot of reasons that they were ultimately able to get to the answers that they got to. Cassidy Hutchinson, you know, being part of that. But one of them was the blueprint of sorts that was given to them by the Meadows text.

WALLACE: And it's such a good reminder that so many of the leads that were pursued that resulted in this dramatic public testimony that sort of captured everyone's imagination were first alluded to.

[17:50:01]

So, even in the case where they didn't have a full picture, Mike, it was the -- some of the things Don Junior was texting about, the plans in the earliest days after Trump's defeat for contesting the election and other threats that were pulled by that committee, doggedly over many, many months.

I want to read for our viewers -- again, this broke while we were on the air, and I want to share what you and your colleagues report about Meadows' potential importance in the documents probe, something we've been talking about a great deal over the last two hours.

You and your colleagues writes this, Meadows also has insight into efforts by the National Archives to retrieve roughly two

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boxes of presidential materials that officials have been told Trump took with him when he left the White House in January 2021. Meadows was one of Trump's representatives to the archives, and he had some role in trying to discuss the matter with Trump, according to two people briefed on the matter.

And then you guys get into what has been reported about Meadows' autobiographers. I want to read that for our viewers as well. Meadows is also now connected tangentially to a potentially vital piece of evidence that investigators uncovered in recent months, an audio recording of an interview that Trump gave to two people assisting Meadows in writing a memoir of his White House years.

Meadows didn't attend that meeting which took place in July of 2021 at Trump's club at Bedminster, New Jersey. During that meeting, Trump referred to a document he appeared to have had in front of him and suggested that he should have declassified it, but he no longer could since he was out of office.

Certainly, no less vital issues that Mark Meadows could speak to rather singularly on the documents probe. Mike, can you speak to his role as we've noted all along, as the last chief of staff, which is that first chunk of reporting, as well as his role tangentially as how you and your colleague describe it in this episode of his knowledge of what an unclassified document limits him in terms of dissemination?

SCHMIDT: You know, look, he was in charge in those final days, when the boxes are being packed up. Because of that, he was someone that had a knowledge of how they were complying or not complying with the National Archives. In the time that followed, he had a prominent role in Trump's inner circle in that period of time, in which there was a back and forth with the archives about what they needed back and what was being produced and what was not being produced.

He was someone that was supposed to be a custodian of sorts for the president's material. And it is -- you have to remember the documents story goes all the way back to that time with the National Archives, and the back and forth of the archives, and 15 boxes that go to the archives. And it was Meadows, you know, who just was much more prominent in Trump's inner circle than he's been in recent months as this investigation has sort of come to an end and (INAUDIBLE)

WALLACE: Mike, there's one last piece of reporting in this story that I want to ask you about while we have you. You guys note this, for months, people in Trump's orbit have been puzzled by and weary about the low profile kept by Meadows in the investigation. As reports surfaced of one witness after another going into the grand jury were to be interviewed by federal investigators, Meadows has kept largely out of sight, and some of Trump's advisers believe he could be a significant witness in the inquiries.

I presume that's by design and maybe one of the benefits of having a skilled attorney, but do you have any sense? It's not clear from the reporting about when Meadows went in. Do we know if it was before or after Pence, or do we know if they had any idea that he went in in the Trump circle?

We have lost Mike Schmidt. I think we have gotten through this entire piece of breaking news. This was a story that dropped at 5:32 in the New York Times, with a -- certainly a political bombshell, most likely a legal one as well. Donald Trump's final chief of staff, who was overseeing the process of packing Trump for Mar-a-Lago after his foiled coup, but who was also extremely active, particularly in the Georgia efforts to contest and overthrow Donald Trump's defeat there.

New York Times breaking the news about 25 minutes ago that Mark Meadows has already testified before the grand jury in Jack Smith's investigations into Donald Trump. Our thanks to Mike Schmidt, whose byline is on this story, for joining us to talk about them. We're going to sneak in a quick break. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[17:55:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

WALLACE: An explosion at a major dam and hydroelectric power plant in southern Ukraine figures to have massive

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implications for not only the residence in the surrounding areas, but for the future of the war itself, in the near term at least. At this hour, thousands of people have been evacuated by rising floodwaters from the Kakhovka Dam after it was damaged on Tuesday. That crucial dam which holds back a body of water the size of the great Salt Lake in Utah, supplies drinking water to the region, as well as water to cool reactors at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the site that has proven to be a crucial flash point since the earliest days of the war.

We should note that the United Nation's atomic watch dog says the plant is not currently threatened by these floods, while it is still unknown exactly what happened, both Ukraine and Russia have blamed one another for the disaster with Ukraine accusing Russia of blowing it up. Moscow is denying that attack. They're saying it was an act of sabotage by Ukrainian forces.

NBC News can report that while the motive is still being assessed, the U.S. has intelligence that they're working on declassifying that leans toward Russia being behind the attack, according to two U.S. official officials and one western official.

This major development comes as Kyiv has been planning their long- anticipated counteroffensive in the southeast with Russia claiming that Ukraine has already launched a significant attack in an attempt to reclaim occupied land. We had hoped to talk about this important story with Ambassador Michael McFaul and General Barry McCaffery. We will call on them again tomorrow. We've had a -- it was a casualty of breaking news.

Our thanks to you for letting us into your homes during these extraordinary times. We are grateful. "THE BEAT" with Ari Melber starts right now. Hi, Ari.

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---- **Index References** ----

Company: Federal Bureau of Investigation; SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; UNITED NATION ASSOCIATION; Claremont Institute

News Subject: (Government Litigation (1GO18); Legal (1LE33); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Security (1SE29); Security Agencies (1SE35); TV (1TV19); TV Programming (1TV26))

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Other Indexing: (MSNBC NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST; DOJ; Patriot Boys; Moms for Liberty; Moms for America; Parents Defending Education; Support Our Schools; The Proud Boys; House Republicans; Congress; White House; Justice Department; House Select Committee; National Archives; Moscow; 2023 VIQ Media Transcription, Inc.; FBI; Southern Poverty Law Center; United Nation; Claremont Institute) (NICOLLE Wallace; Nicole Wallace)

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NewsRoom

Spike Lee's "Passing Strange" coming to Evanston in June, 2023 WLNR 19623918

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Section: Suburbs

Spike Lee's "Passing Strange" coming to Evanston in June

Myrna Petlicki

Two Evanston theater companies have formed a connection to stage the daring musical, "Passing Strange." Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre, which is producing the show, asked Tim Rhoze, artistic director of Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre, to direct the musical by Stew (book, lyrics, and music) and Heidi Rodewald (music), in collaboration with Annie Dorsen, June 9-July 30.

Rhoze said that when Theo Ubique's co-founder and Artistic Director Fred Anzevino asked him if he would be willing to direct "Passing Strange," he read the script and watched the video that Spike Lee directed.

Rhoze said that he was already aware of the show's history and its success, and that he was drawn to the storytelling of the show.

"It was the story of a coming of age. A story of a love letter of a boy to his mother. It was a story about paying homage to the history of Black (people) in entertainment - whether here or abroad. And, of course, the music and compositions are exceptional," Rhoze related. "All of those things brought me to the table."

The most prominent character in the play is the Narrator - a part originally played by singer-songwriter and performance artist Stew. For that all-important role, Rhoze chose Jordan DeBose.

"He has a personality that is very commanding," Rhoze said. "Also, you have to have an incredible voice and he certainly has that. He brings a lot to the process with his talent and his personality and his commitment to the process. He's the real deal when it comes to portraying the Narrator."

"I've been with 'Passing Strange' for almost its entire time," DeBose said. "I really got into musical theater around 2008 when I was coming out. In college, I listened to the soundtrack and watched the Spike Lee a little after college and fell in love with it. The story is so intricate and beautiful."

They added that "the words just kind of wash over you but you don't care, it's just so beautiful."

They noted that although the Narrator is the storyteller he plays a much larger role than that, serving as an intricate part of the story. DeBose observed that the show is actually the Narrator's retelling of the story of his youth. And it is based on playwright and composer Stew's youth - with some liberties taken.

DeBose said that they really connects with the character, in particular regarding not seeing the point of love without understanding.

Spike Lee's "Passing Strange" coming to Evanston in June, 2023 WLNR 19623918

"I've definitely struggled with that in my life and in my relationships, specifically with my mom," they said. "The Narrator has that issue with his mom as well."

They added that they do have a good relationship with their mother but, like everybody, has issues to work through with her.

DeBose reported that the show is very challenging vocally with the Narrator singing an estimated 80% and 90% of the show.

"It's a beast vocally," they said. "But it's so much fun and the music is gorgeous and people are going to be up and dancing."

Because Theo Ubique's space is set up as a cabaret, director Rhoze noted that it creates an intimate atmosphere. This production will also be distinctive because of "the attention to the story and the use of the journey from the beginning to the end," the director concluded.

Tickets to "Passing Strange" are \$35-\$70. A three-course prix fixe dinner is available from Good to Go Jamaican Cuisine for \$30.

For reservations, visit theo-u.com/passing-strange.

Myrna Petlicki is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

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Industry: (Entertainment (1EN08); Live Entertainment (1LI85); Music (1MU57); Music Concert (1MU45); Theater (1TH47))

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Other Indexing: (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre; Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre) (Spike Lee)

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June 6, 2023

Oxford mother advocates for national parent group

Matthew Fahr; The Oakland Press, Sterling Heights, Mich.

Jun. 5—A chance meeting in Lansing led to one Oxford parent joining a group looking to push back against extreme views being brought before school districts around the state.

Cara Erskine was in Lansing earlier this year to testify on new weapons laws being proposed in the wake of mass shootings in Oxford and at Michigan State University.

While she was waiting to speak, she met members of Red, Wine and Blue, a group geared toward suburban parents who want to organize and push for change in their schools, as well as push back against ultra-conservative activists that have become more prevalent in the past few years.

The group recently created a campaign dubbed “Freedom to Parent 21st Century Kids”.

The campaign is designed to unite advocates on things like racial history education, gender issues, social and emotional learning and LGBTQ rights, along with combating book bans.

It is also aimed at pushing back against extremist groups such as Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending Education using tactics like fear-mongering and misinformation to undermine trust in public education and democracy.

Red, Wine and Blue founder Katie Paris said in a press conference last month that the new campaign is aimed directly at combating those groups.

”We are up against well funded, powerful forces and despite that we are choosing not to be quiet,” she said. “This is highly personal and we have no choice but to speak up. We are going to lead even if our political leaders won’t.”

Erskine said she and other parents in Oxford had been staying in touch, but Red, Wine and Blue offered an opportunity to join a broader effort.

”There are Oxford people already in the trenches and we weren’t quite sure how to do everything, but they are giving us the resources to help us,” said Erskine. “We were already trying to organize and mobilize other mothers in Oxford, so it seemed like the perfect fit.”

Erskine admitted conservative groups like Focus on Oxford are already established in the area and some parents are looking to counteract their arguments.

Oxford mother advocates for national parent group, 2023 WLNR 19497605

"They take a lot of their talking points from Moms of Liberty and we are trying to be proactive because we know what is coming from them," she said. "We know they are in the area and we are preparing ourselves and Red, Wine and Blue is giving us the tools to do that."

Tools such as virtual workshops with mental health experts and other professionals, "troublemaker training" where parents learn how to organize and push back and a podcast where parents from around the country share their views and ideas.

They have also started a banned bookmobile club to distribute and sell books that have been banned by school districts around the country.

Erskine said the group is willing to listen to any ideas and learn how to protect and educate their children, but without all the divisiveness which has accompanied it in the past.

"What is crucial is being able to have difficult conversations, but staying calm about it and not just throwing out talking points and understanding that everyone just wants to keep their children safe," said Erskine. "It is about doing it without all that extremism"

She added, "They might be the loudest, but I don't think that they are the majority in numbers," she said. "We have a lot to fight for in Oxford and we are trying to do that as we are still trying to heal."

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Children (1CH89); Family Social Issues (1FA81); Health & Family (1HE30); Parents & Parenting (1PA25); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Alcoholic Beverages (1AL86); Beverages (1BE22); Food & Beverage Production (1FO79); Wine Production (1WI92); Wines (1WI47))

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NewsRoom

Moms for Liberty to bring big names and controversy to Philly, 2023 WLNR 19591061

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Section: Region

Moms for Liberty to bring big names and controversy to Philly

Maddie Hanna (Staff Writer)

The Moms for Liberty summit in Philadelphia later this month is expected to convene hundreds of conservative women and spotlight GOP presidential hopefuls Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley.

It also will feature its share of controversy.

The national group has led culture-war crusades against school boards, pushing to ban books it deems pornographic from libraries and accusing teachers of seeking to indoctrinate students. Protesters have been calling on the downtown Marriott to refuse to host the event, citing anti-LGBTQ rhetoric.

Here's what to know about the group and its plans in Philadelphia:

What is Moms for Liberty?

Moms for Liberty says its focus is "parental rights," training parents to hold school leaders accountable. It was founded at the start of 2021, quickly garnering attention from conservative media while opposing pandemic restrictions and mask mandates.

But the group has since turned its attention to curriculum and library books - becoming a prominent voice in a conservative movement accusing schools of ideological overreach, including teaching about race, gender, and sexuality.

The group claims 115,000 members and 275 chapters nationally, and says Pennsylvania represents its second-largest membership base after Florida.

Who is behind Moms for Liberty?

While it bills itself as a grassroots organization, Moms for Liberty has ties to prominent Republicans. One of its former directors, Bridget Ziegler, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. DeSantis recently appointed Ziegler to a commission overseeing Disney's Orlando theme parks amid a battle between the Florida governor and Disney over the state's law banning classroom instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Moms for Liberty's cofounders, Tina Descovich and Tiffany Justice, started working with Republican campaign consultant Marie Rogerson, who is also a leader in the group.

Moms for Liberty reported \$370,000 in revenue in its first year, including contributions of \$100,000, \$20,000, \$15,000, \$10,000, and \$5,000, according to a federal tax form. (As a 501(c)4 "social welfare" nonprofit, Moms for Liberty doesn't

Moms for Liberty to bring big names and controversy to Philly, 2023 WLNR 19591061

have to publicly disclose its donors.)

The group has said it's still working on preparing more recent financial statements. Descovich recently told The Inquirer that "we definitely have some bigger individual donors who have come in over the last year to help us out."

What is Moms for Liberty's role in school board races?

The group has been trying to play a bigger role in school board races nationally. In 2022, it says, it endorsed 500 candidates, and 275 were elected.

In one South Carolina county, newly elected school board members who had been backed by Moms for Liberty fired their superintendent, banned critical race theory, and set up a committee to decide whether books should be removed, hours after being sworn in. Moms for Liberty promoted the episode as an example of "bold leadership."

The group posted a losing record in school board races in Wisconsin earlier this year. Descovich blamed a lack of money, telling The Inquirer the group has only funded races in Florida, but is now aiming to spend in other states.

Moms for Liberty has not posted any endorsements on its website for Pennsylvania, where school board elections will be held in November. The group says local chapters decide endorsements.

Chapters in Philadelphia's collar counties have not been promoting endorsements. In Montgomery County, chair Vicki Flannery said her group has not yet decided if it will publicly endorse, while in Bucks, chair Jamie Tromba said the chapter had endorsed just one candidate so far, in the Centennial School District.

But Moms for Liberty "voter guides" identifying candidates they support - including in Montgomery and Bucks Counties - have been circulated on social media by opponents criticizing candidates' association with the group.

A questionnaire for Bucks candidates asks if they are seeking a public endorsement, or whether "I do not want a public endorsement but want your members to know where I stand on issues important to them." (Among the issues Bucks candidates are asked to weigh in on: masking, vaccines, library policies, and gender identity.)

What will happen at its Philadelphia summit?

The June 29-July 2 national summit will provide training to school board candidates in Pennsylvania and beyond. Leaders hope to draw 650 attendees; general admission is \$249, and VIP, \$499.

Speakers at the event will include Trump - who was announced Friday - DeSantis, Haley, and fellow GOP presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, a biotech founder who has criticized "woke" investing and corporations.

Others include Mark Robinson, lieutenant governor of North Carolina, who in 2021 said there was "no reason anybody anywhere in America should be telling any child about transgenderism, homosexuality, any of that filth"; conservative radio host Dennis Prager, whose online video company is working to create "an edutainment media enterprise devoted to our Judeo-Christian values"; and Chris Elston, known as "Billboard Chris," who travels the country wearing a billboard that says "Children cannot consent to puberty blockers."

The event is being held at the downtown Philadelphia Marriott.

Who's opposing Moms for Liberty?

The summit is drawing opposition from other parent groups, LGBTQ advocates and some elected officials, who have been asking the Marriott to refuse to host the event. Activists from ACT UP Philadelphia and others have been organizing protests outside the hotel, including one planned for Friday evening.

GLAAD, the LGBTQ media advocacy organization, has placed Moms for Liberty on its "accountability project" for

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anti-LGBTQ actions, while online petitions have referred to Moms for Liberty as a “ hate group.”

In an April 20 letter to the hotel, State Sen. Nikil Saval, State Rep. Mary Louise Isaacson, and State Rep. Ben Waxman, all Philadelphia Democrats, said that Moms for Liberty “has been widely recognized for its divisive rhetoric, discriminatory practices, and promotion of harmful policies that target vulnerable communities, especially the LGBTQ+ community.” They urged Marriott to reconsider.

Marriott has not responded to requests for comment. Moms for Liberty has said “any accusations of dangerous behavior” are false. “We strongly reject any attempts to portray our members as violent or threatening.”

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---- Index References ----

Company: The Inquirer; THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

News Subject: (Gay & Lesbian Issues (1GA65); Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Political Parties (1PO73); Public Affairs (1PU31); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Florida (1FL79); North America (1NO39); Pennsylvania (1PE71); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); USA (1US73))

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NewsRoom

Southern Poverty Law Center labels parents' rights groups extremist, anti-government

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June 6, 2023

Southern Poverty Law Center labels parents' rights groups extremist, anti-government

SHERI WALSH

June 6 (UPI) --

The Southern Poverty Law Center released a report Tuesday saying hate groups are on the rise and targeting public education through book bans and protests, as the center labeled 12 right-wing parents rights groups extremist.

The report, titled "Year in Hate & Extremism," documents 1,225 active "extremist hate groups which are stripping communities of their rights" through public demonstrations, flyers and media attention.

"Taking on the most hateful factions in our country is critical to dismantling white supremacy and advancing the civil rights of all people," Margaret Huang, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Poverty Law Center, said in a statement.

"We are exposing a concerted effort by hate groups and extremist actors to terrorize communities and gain control of public institutions by any means necessary," Huang said.

"These groups are descending on Main Street America and disrupting people's daily lives, too often with dire consequences for communities of color, Jewish people and the LGBTQ+ community," Huang added.

Groups mobilizing at public schools, which SPLC called "extremist," were singled out. Specifically the report documented 12 anti-student inclusion groups, which it said have attacked public education, banned books and removed curriculum focused on race, discrimination and LGBTQ+ identities.

One of those groups is Florida-based Moms for Liberty.

"Hate and anti-government extremist groups are intent on staging public spectacles of hatred that harass, threaten and violently harm Black, Brown, Asian, Jewish, LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities," Susan Corke, director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project, said in a statement.

"Schools, synagogues and LGBTQ+ businesses -- venues that have traditionally been safe spaces for our children, the Jewish community and LGBTQ+ people -- are now on the frontlines of hatred and violence," Corke added.

Moms for Liberty, which SPLC called a far-right anti-government organization that engages in anti-student inclusion activities and is considered part of the modern parental rights movement, says it created the group to fight the "woke indoctrination" of children.

Southern Poverty Law Center labels parents' rights groups extremist, anti-government

"I raise my children. The government does not. We do not co-parent with the government," Tiffany Justice, Moms for Liberty co-founder, said in a C-SPAN2 About Books interview.

"And there are certain sensitive subjects that we would like to be directing the conversation around for our children," Justice added. "As the teachers union pushes an agenda focused on everything BUT education for our children, American parents are rising up, taking back our school districts and putting the focus back on educating our children."

While SPLC tracked an increase in what the report called extremist groups, such as Moms for Liberty, the report found the number of active militia groups had dropped from 92 groups in 2021 to 61 active militia groups in 2022.

According to SPLC, the drop in militia mobilization follows the recent federal convictions of members of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

---- Index References ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Global Politics (1GL73); Judaism (1JU93); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Religion (1RE60); Social Issues (1SO05); Top World News (1WO62); World Conflicts (1WO07))

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What to know about latest migrant charter flight dispute..., 2023 WLNR 19564832

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What to know about latest migrant charter flight dispute between California, Florida California's AG said Florida is responsible for a private flight that took migrants from El Paso to Sacramento in the latest immigration policy ploy.

Natalie Neysa Alund and Zac Anderson, Palm Springs Desert Sun

California's top lawyer said he believes the state of Florida is likely behind the arrival of more than a dozen migrants in Sacramento last week.

Over the weekend, Attorney General Rob Bonta said he met with 16 South American migrants transported from El Paso, Texas to Sacramento by "private plane, with no prior arrangement or care in place."

The Colombian and Venezuelan migrants turned up at the Roman Catholic Church diocese's Sacramento headquarters Friday, state officials reported. California authorities are looking into exactly who recocated the group according to Bonta, who also said he is investigating whether any crimes were committed.

Another flight carrying 20 migrants arrived in Sacramento Monday, according to the Sacramento Bee. That flight also departed from New Mexico and used the same private plane as Friday's flight.

If Florida is to blame for the movement, the migrants would be the latest lifted from a Republican-led state to one led by Democrats.

Here's what we know so far about the case:

The migrants had documentation from Florida

Although circumstances about the group's relocation remained under investigation Monday, Bonta confirmed the migrants – which included men and women – had documentation "purporting to be from the Florida government."

"While we continue to collect evidence, I want to say this very clearly: State-sanctioned kidnapping is not a public policy choice, it is immoral and disgusting," Bonta said in a statement, adding he is looking into whether any civil or criminal law violations occurred.

Today I met with over a dozen migrants who were brought to Sacramento by private plane, with no prior arrangement or care in place. We are investigating the circumstances by which these individuals were brought to California.
pic.twitter.com/UXY2yKvKwl

— Rob Bonta (@AGRobBonta) June 4, 2023

How did the migrants enter the US?

The migrants entered the U.S. through Texas, the Tallahassee Democrat, part of the USA TODAY Network reported.

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Eddie Carmona, campaign director at PICO California – a faith-based group that helps migrants, said American immigration officials had already processed the group and “given them court dates for their asylum cases when individuals representing a private contractor” approached them outside a migrant center in El Paso, Texas, the Associated Press reported.

There, Carmona told the outlet, they offered to help them get jobs and get them to their final destination.

”They were lied to and intentionally deceived,” Carmona told the AP, adding the migrants did not know where they were after being dropped off in Sacramento. The migrants, he said, have court dates in cities throughout the country and none of them planned to wind up in California.

The group was then transported from Texas to New Mexico and flown by private plane to Sacramento, California officials aid.

Tara Gallegos, a spokesperson for Bonta, told the AP the migrants’ documents indicated they were transported through a program run by Florida’s Division of Emergency Management and carried out by contractor Vertol Systems Co.

Migrant fact check claim False claim video shows soldier allowing migrants to illegally cross border

Florida’s governor’s stance on immigration

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has been a critic of federal immigration policy under the current presidential administration. DeSantis, who is seeking the Republican nomination to run for president, has heavily publicized Florida’s role in past instances in which migrants were transported to Democratic-led states.

In September, DeSantis took credit after 50 undocumented immigrants arrived unannounced in Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. The migrants – many if not all of whom are from Venezuela and included children as young as 3 – spent the night on a church property after arriving unexpectedly on one-way charter flights.

Neither Vertol Systems nor DeSantis’ office responded to requests for comment, the AP reported. Alecia Collins, a spokesperson for the Florida Division of Emergency Management told the AP in an email Monday she could not confirm whether the agency was involved.

Also on Monday, a Texas sheriff in Bexar County, where the migrants were approached for the Martha’s Vineyard flight, recommended several charges of unlawful restraint. The charges include both felonies and misdemeanors, according to the sheriff’s office. The case was forwarded to the local district attorney to decide whether to prosecute.

It’s not clear which individual or entity could face charges. A spokesman for the Bexar County Sheriff said “At this time we are not naming the suspects involved in the case.”

Border patrol child custody death 8-year-old who died in Border Patrol custody had fever of 104.9; internal review finds failures

How California’s governor reacted

California’s Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom said in a statement he also met with the migrants and said officials are making sure they are being “treated with respect and dignity” through this process.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg issued a much more stern statement: “Whoever is behind this must answer the following: Is there anything more cruel than using scared human beings to score cheap political points?”

Contributing: The Associated Press and the Tallahassee Democrat, part of the USA TODAY Network.

Natalie Neysa Alund covers breaking and trending news for USA TODAY. Reach her at nalund@usatoday.com and follow her on Twitter @nataliealund.

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Florida migrant relocation: Yes, Florida does have a migrant relocation program. Here's what you need to know about it

Moms for Liberty: Trump, DeSantis both slated to speak at Moms for Liberty summit at end of month

Tim Scott on 'The View' Tim Scott gets booted on The View over the DeSantis fight with Disney, defends GOP on race

This article originally appeared on Palm Springs Desert Sun: What to know about latest migrant charter flight dispute between California, Florida

---- Index References ----

Company: USA today network; Florida Division of Emergency Management; Vertol Systems Company Inc.; ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH; THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

News Subject: (Catholic Church (1CA30); Christianity (1CH94); Crime (1CR87); Criminal Law (1CR79); Government Litigation (1GO18); Immigration & Naturalization (1IM88); Legal (1LE33); Religion (1RE60); Smuggling & Illegal Trade (1SM35); Social Issues (1SO05))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); California (1CA98); Florida (1FL79); Iowa (1IO85); Latin America (1LA15); Massachusetts (1MA15); New Mexico (1NE26); North America (1NO39); South America (1SO03); Texas (1TE14); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); U.S. Southeast Region (1SO88); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); U.S. West Region (1WE46); USA (1US73); Venezuela (1VE06))

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Other Indexing: (USA TODAY Network; Florida Division of Emergency Management; Vertol Systems Co.; Roman Catholic Church; Disney)

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'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key..., 2023 WLNR 19607989

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'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key Florida group as anti-government
The research center's designations are sometimes controversial. Its new report puts the
influential Florida group in the same category as the Oath ...

Will Carless, USA TODAY

The research center's designations are sometimes controversial. Its new report puts the influential Florida group in the same category as the Oath Keepers.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is for the first time labeling Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing "parents' rights" groups as extremist groups in its annual report, released Tuesday.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as "anti-government extremist groups," based on longstanding criteria, explained the law center's Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they are drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

"(The movement) is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools," Corke said. "We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level."

The new designations are detailed in the law center's annual 2022 Year in Hate and Extremism report.

The 12 new groups brought the total number of active extremist groups included in the 2022 report to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the law center designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That's almost flat from 2021 when the law center counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate groups. The law center has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

But the law center has also been criticized for designating as extremist some groups that argue they simply take a political position and has defended itself in lawsuits, including from immigration policy groups it has designated as anti-immigrant hate groups. (The organization also is fighting a lawsuit from Gavin McInnes, who founded the Proud Boys and who has argued the center's hate group designation harmed his career.)

Moms for Liberty did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key..., 2023 WLNR 19607989

The report also has other findings, including that the so-called "militia movement" declined significantly last year, that antisemitism continues to be a major force animating the extreme far-right and that alternative tech sites aren't as niche as perhaps might be expected.

Moms for Liberty makes the extremist list

Moms for Liberty's national summit: Trump, DeSantis both slated to speak

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty has hit the headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The law center study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the "social welfare" nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

The group pitched itself as a potent grassroots movement of outraged parents, many of whom weren't active in school politics until COVID-19 restrictions forced them to pay attention. It has sprouted local chapters in at least 40 states, claims more than 100,000 members and has the ear of the Republican establishment: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has championed their efforts to restrict teaching about race in schools and universities. Critics in Florida slam the group for turning schools into a political battlefield.

That influence solidified the group's position in national politics. At the end of this month, barely two years after the group came into existence, both DeSantis and former President Donald Trump will speak at Moms for Liberty's national summit in Philadelphia and may now compete to win the Moms for Liberty vote.

'We are war moms': Moms for Liberty dominates school board politics across U.S.

Despite the national profile, these organizations spread conspiracy theories and operate on the myth that educators are engaged in "Marxist indoctrination" of the nation's children by imbuing them with dangerous ideas about equality and sexuality, the law center said.

While the movement may be reasonably new, it is founded on the same traditional racist, misogynist and homophobic views that brought people out to protest the desegregation of schools in the 1950s and '60s, the law center argues.

"Over the past two years, reactionary anti-student inclusion groups have been popping up from coast to coast, claiming to battle for parents' rights. Just like their predecessors, their rhetoric takes on marked anti-LGBTQ, racist and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographic segments of American society," the report states. "These groups publicize their fight for alleged parents' rights while simply attempting to maintain absolute authority on issues they oppose."

The primary focus of these groups has been twofold: They have fought against curriculums that teach about America's racist and violent history and have more recently taken aim at any educational efforts to teach children about LGBTQ issues. To attract attention and seek new followers, groups like Moms for Liberty promote the false claim that left-wing teachers and educators are engaged in a conspiracy to "sexualize" or even "groom" the schoolchildren under their care.

It's a narrative that has had significant success, the law center notes.

Moms for Liberty alone claims to have "flipped" 17 school boards nationwide to parental-rights supportive majorities, the report states. "Almost immediately following elections, many of these boards began making sweeping changes at school board meetings, such as firing superintendents and making curriculum changes," the researchers found.

"They have just been really successful in leveraging their relationships with school officials, and extremist groups, to put them kind of in a place where they can make sweeping changes for the majority of people when they're actually in the minority," said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst at the law center.

'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key..., 2023 WLNR 19607989

The law center's standard criteria for determining if a group is anti-government is spelled out on its website:

"An anti-government group is an organization or collection of individuals that – based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities – believes the federal government is tyrannical and traffics in conspiracy theories about an illegitimate government of leftist elites seeking a 'New World Order.'"

The law center report notes that at Moms for Liberty's first national conference, former U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos stated "I personally think that the Department of Education should not exist," a quote that the group then used on its website.

Moms for Liberty joins the ranks of groups including the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the United Constitutional Patriots, a self-styled militia that "patrols" the U.S.-Mexico border.

The 12 "parent's rights" groups labeled by the SPLC as extremist groups: Moms for Liberty; Moms for America; Army of Parents; Courage is a Habit; Education First Alliance; Education Veritas; No Left Turn in Education; Parents Against CRT (PACT); Parents Defending Education; Parents Rights in Education; Purple for Parents Indiana and Parents Involved in Education. "Nowhere ever have we been anti-government or anti-inclusive," Elicia Brand, who identified herself as the founder of Army of Parents, told USA TODAY in a statement.

'Militia' movement cratering

Stewart Rhodes' unhinged life Vegas parking valet, Yale law graduate, unhinged Oath Keepers leader: Who is Stewart Rhodes?

Largely because of a law enforcement crackdown following the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, the so-called "militia movement" of armed extremists saw some of the wind taken out of its sails last year, the law center found.

Probably the country's most high-profile armed militia leader, Stewart Rhodes, who founded the Oath Keepers, was found guilty of seditious conspiracy in a Washington, D.C., courtroom late last year, along with a co-conspirator. Last month, Rhodes was sentenced to 18 years in prison – the longest sentence handed down to a Jan. 6 participant.

"The attention brought by the insurrection has done severe damage to the militia movement, driving away members who no longer want to be associated with the day's violence," the law center report states. Researchers found the total number of armed militia groups nationwide decreased from 92 in 2021 to 61 in 2022.

But that doesn't mean the threat from organized armed groups has gone away, the law center warns. Anti-government rhetoric and beliefs run as deep, if not deeper, today as they have for decades. While organized militia groups may be out of vogue for now, their attraction persists for armed, conspiracy-minded Americans, the report concludes.

"As legal cases run their course through the justice system, militia groups have had to go underground to reorganize and recruit," it states.

The law center report also includes several recommendations for keeping this trend going, including federal and state authorities using existing legislation that outlaws organized militias to hold these groups accountable and keep them from growing.

The alt-tech space isn't that alternative

'Heyday' of extremist fundraising Exclusive: Extremists raised \$6.2 million on crowdfunding websites in 'heyday' of financing

For years now, since major tech companies started getting serious about enforcing their terms of service and de-platforming extremists in about 2018, a succession of "alt-tech" sites has grown up to cater to extremists, especially on the far-right.

Websites including social media platforms, crowdfunding sites and video-streaming services have grown to accommodate white supremacists and other extremists. And the law center's research shows that these sites aren't quite as "alternative" as one might assume.

'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key..., 2023 WLNR 19607989

Law center researchers analyzed data estimating the number of people visiting 12 of these sites, including the message board 4Chan and the far-right social media site Gab.

"Five of the 12 sites that the SPLC analyzed regularly ranked among the top 10% of domains in the United States, according to data from the network security technology company Cisco," the report states.

The growth of these sites has allowed far-right personalities and propagandists to thrive despite being banned from most of the major tech platforms, law center researchers concluded. The report states:

"We found that the majority of 'alt-tech' sites, whose purveyors emphasize minimal or nonexistent content moderation, have developed and sustained a dedicated user base. This stability allows hard-right extremists to resist some of the repercussions, such as loss of audience or funding streams, that result from deplatforming."

Other findings

The comprehensive annual law center report includes a number of additional findings, including:

Extremist flyering and propaganda incidents continued to increase in 2022 : The law center counted 155 incidents on campuses, 4,739 public propaganda incidents and 169 "banner drops" where groups hung hateful messages on banners in public spaces. Flyering incidents have increased by 291% since 2018, the report found. Hate at public events: As USA TODAY has reported, the law center found that hate groups have increasingly descended on public events, primarily targeting drag shows and school board meetings to protest against LGBTQ-inclusive programming. The so-called "Constitutional Sheriffs" movement continues: In 2022, members of the group, who believe that local sheriffs are the highest authority in the country and are not beholden to state or federal law enforcement, began interfering with elections, the law center said. "Members melded their extremist positions with their law enforcement authority to investigate rogue, conspiratorial allegations of fraud in the 2020 presidential election and brought doubt into the legitimacy of the 2022 midterm elections," the report states. Antisemitism continues to motivate the extremist far-right : "In 2022, Jewish people and spaces were regularly harassed, assaulted, vandalized and threatened," the report found.

This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: 'Parents' rights' groups labeled extremist: SPLC lists a key Florida group as anti-government

---- **Index References** ----

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER INC.; U.S. Department of Education

News Subject: (Education (1ED85); Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Minority & Ethnic Groups (1MI43); Race Relations (1RA49); Social Issues (1SO05))

Industry: (Political Science (1PO69); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Social Science (1SO92))

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