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N.C.'s Twice-Weekly African-American Newspaper

RALEIGH, N.C.

SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2022

## Legislature Finally Ends 2021 Session

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

A North Carolina General Assembly annual work period that stretched 14 months while a state budget was finalized and district maps were redrawn twice essentially concluded Thursday with passage of a clean-up bill and backing a resolution supporting Ukraine.

With a House vote now complete, the legislature will send to Gov. Roy Cooper's desk an omnibus measure that included both technical and substantive changes to items contained in the current two-year state government budget and other recently approved legislation.

Provisions included helping more businesses with a COVID-19 economic recovery grant program, raise pay for more home health-care and personal-care workers covered by government health programs to \$15 per hour and expand a federal crop loss program to a hard

freeze last spring. There were also changes to how money for local capital projects are distributed.

The 52-page bill, which already received Senate approval Wednesday, also ensures that any runoffs from the May 17 primary elections are held July 26. State law would have required so-called "second primaries" to be held July 5 if none of them were for U.S. Senate or U.S. House nominations. Election officials were concerned about finding workers for the day after Independence Day.

When the legislature officially ended on Friday its work session that began in January 2021, it marked the longest uninterrupted session since at least 1965, when calculated by the number of days that lawmakers hold chamber floor meetings, according to legislative data. The House had gavelled in 198 daily floor sessions after Thursday, with the Senate 196 legislative days.

"We have set a record," House Speaker Tim Moore, a Cleveland County Republican, said to colleagues, "and I hope it is a record that we don't try to break. I certainly won't."

The House also voted unanimously on Thursday for a resolution stating it "stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they fight for their freedom" against the Russian invasion. It also urges the federal government to hold the Russian government accountable for its actions and "take steps to reduce the United States' dependence on foreign oil by increasing domestic energy production."

The resolution also asks that federal law be changed so that state pension funds can seek financial damages in courts should they lose money from "corrupt regimes and foreign state-owned corporations." That could lead to the seizure of Russian assets as

(See LEGISLATURE, P. 2)



## Key Senator Praises Jackson

By Mary Clare Jalonick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP)—Republican Sen. Susan Collins had words of praise for Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson after meeting with her for more than an hour and a half at the Capitol on Tuesday, raising Democrats' hopes that she could be a GOP vote in favor of her confirmation.

Collins, a moderate from Maine, said afterward that her discussion with the judge was productive and that her credentials are impressive. She said that Jackson, an appeals court judge who would be the first Black woman on the high court, "explained in great depth" the process she uses when making decisions.

"She takes a very thorough, careful approach in applying the law to the facts of the case, and that is what I want to see in a judge," Collins said. She said she would wait to make a final decision on whether to support Jackson after her confirmation hearings, which begin March 21.

The Maine senator is perhaps Democrats' best hope of landing a Republican vote for Jackson's nomination, as Supreme Court confirmations have become sharply partisan affairs in recent years. President Joe Biden and Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who is guiding the vetting process for Jackson, have both said they want to get back to the days when Supreme

Court confirmations were overwhelmingly bipartisan. Retiring Justice Stephen Breyer, whom Jackson would replace, was confirmed with 87 votes in 1994.

Both Biden and Durbin have made Collins' vote, in particular, a priority. Durbin said he called her within hours of learning that Breyer would retire; Biden has called her personally three times, according to her office. She said after the meeting with Jackson that she has "confidence" in Durbin's ability to lead the hearings.

Collins has only voted

against one Supreme Court nominee since she was elected in 1996 —Justice Amy Coney Barrett, whom Trump nominated after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death in September 2020. Collins voted against Barrett because of the accelerated six-week timeline that saw her confirmed just days before the presidential election.

While Democrats are using the rapid timeline for Barrett as a model for Jackson, Collins says the circumstances are different. For one, the vacancy is

(See KEY SENATOR, P. 2)

## 'Sisters Of The Skys' Takes Off



By Rox Edward

Atlanta Daily World

Sisters of the Skies (SOS), the nonprofit international aviation organization, and Delta Airlines presented the Sisters of the Skies 2022 Scholarship Gala. The fourth annual fundraiser was held Saturday, Feb. 26 at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, 265 Peachtree Street NE.

The purpose of the gala is to seek to improve the current number of Black female pilots which stands roughly north of 150 in the United States for those holding Airline Transport

Pilot, Commercial, Military and or Certified Flight instructor licenses. The first gala was held in February 2019 in Atlanta, Georgia honoring the first All-African American Female flight crew. This year the SOS brings fundraiser back to where it began again recognizing Black women who are first in their aviation careers.

Sisters of the Skies is an organization of Black female pilots who are committed to supporting future black aviators through mentorship, professional development, outreach and scholarships.

The keynote speaker at the gala was SOS President Emeritus and Co-Founder, United Air Lines Captain Theresa Claiborne. She is a native of Emporia, Virginia and earned a degree in Media Communications from California State University of Sacramento. She flies the Boeing 787 (Dreamliner) for United Airlines. On June 20, 1981, Claiborne was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the USAF. She became the first African American female pilot in the U.S. Air Force after graduating from Laughlin Air Force Base on September 16, 1982.

## Did Meadows Commit Voter Fraud?

By Steve Peoples and Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

Mark Meadows, who as chief of staff to President Donald Trump promoted his lies of mass voter fraud, is facing increasing scrutiny about his own voter registration status.

Public records show that he is

registered to vote in two states, including North Carolina, where he listed a mobile home he did not own—and may never have visited—as his legal residence weeks before casting a ballot in the 2020 presidential election.

Critics contend that Meadows' voter registration status, first reported by *The New Yorker*, suggest the former North Caro-

lina congressman may have committed voter fraud himself. A spokesperson for Meadows did not respond to a message seeking comment on Wednesday.

Meadows listed a mobile home in Scaly Mountain, as his physical address on Sept. 19, 2020, while he was serving as Trump's chief of staff in Washington. Meadows later cast an absentee

ballot for the general election by mail. Trump won the battleground state by just over 1 percentage point.

*The New Yorker* spoke to the former owner of the Scaly Mountain property, described as a 14-foot by 62-foot mobile home with a rusty metal roof, who indicated that Meadows does not own the home and never has. The previous owner said Meadows' wife rented the property "for two months at some point within the past few years" but only spent one or two nights there. Neighbors said Meadows was never present, *The New Yorker* reported.

The *New Yorker* story doesn't identify the former owner's name, saying she "asked that we not use her name."

The North Carolina Board of Elections declined to comment on the specifics of the situation, offering only a general statement: "The State Board of Elections investigates credible allegations of violations of election laws in North Carolina. When warranted by evidence, the State Board refers cases to district attorneys or U.S. Attorney's offices for further investigation or prosecution at their discretion."

Meanwhile, public records show that Meadows registered to vote in Alexandria, Va., al-

(See DID MEADOWS, P. 2)



### PANTHERS NOT RAISING TICKET PRICES FOR 2022 NFL SEASON

CHARLOTTE (AP)—The Carolina Panthers announced season ticket prices for non-premium seats will remain the same for the 2022 season.

Premium tickets, which include club seats and suites, are priced based on the terms in those contracts. Single game ticket pricing will be announced when the NFL schedule is released.

Based on 2021 data, the Panthers ranked 17th in the NFL in non-premium ticket pricing with an average ticket price of \$107. A year ago the Panthers raised the average ticket price by about \$3 per game but decided against any increases this year.

"Each season we take a strategic and analytical approach to ticket pricing by evaluating a variety of factors, and make a decision based on that analysis," the Panthers said in a statement Thursday to The Associated Press. "Each year our fans make the decision to spend their hard-earned money with us and we sincerely appreciate the investment our PSL owners make and the support they give us each season."

Panthers PSL owners received their annual renewal notice invoices on Thursday. Season ticket holders can pay in full by May 2 or set up an interest-free, six-month payment plan.

### GERMANY'S BAYER SELLS PEST CONTROL BUSINESS FOR \$2.6 BILLION

BERLIN (AP)—German chemical and health care company Bayer said Thursday it is selling a U.S.-based pest control business to private equity firm Cinven for \$2.6 billion.

Bayer said the Environmental Science Professional business, which is headquartered in Cary, North Carolina, had about 800 employees last year. It specializes in "environmental solutions" for pest, disease and weed control in non-agricultural areas.

Bayer board member Rodrigo Santos said in a statement that the sale of the business, which the company said it planned to divest in February 2021, "allows us to focus on our core agricultural business."

The sale is expected to close in this year's second half, and the proceeds will be used to reduce Bayer's net financial debt.

### CAWTHORN CITED BY PATROL FOR DRIVING WITH REVOKED LICENSE

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP)—Republican Congressman Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina has been cited by state troopers for the third time in five months for a traffic violation, including a stop last week for driving with a revoked license, authorities said.

The N.C. State Highway Patrol said a state trooper stopped a car March 3 in Cleveland County at around 10:26 p.m. after observing it traveling left of the center line. Cawthorn, who was identified as the driver, was found to have been driving with a revoked license and was charged with two violations, according to the patrol's statement.

"Our office expects the traffic matters to be resolved quickly and we remain focused on serving the constituents of NC-11," Cawthorn's office said in a statement. He is scheduled to appear in court on May 6.

In January, Cawthorn was stopped by a state trooper in Polk County for speeding and charged with driving 87 mph in a 70-mph zone, according to the patrol. Last October, Cawthorn was stopped by the patrol on Interstate 40 in Buncombe County for driving 89 mph in a 65-mph zone, the patrol said.

(See STATE BRIEFS, P. 2)



HOME SWEET HOME? This is the trailer on Scaly Mountain where U.S. Rep. Mark claimed to have lived in the run-up to the 2020 elections. Trouble is, he not only didn't own the trailer, he never apparently even visited it. In addition, he was to registered to vote in two states.

# Legislature Finally Ends 2021 Session—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

compensation, according to the office of State Treasurer Dale Folwell, who backs the idea. Senators offered a somewhat similar request on Wednesday.

Historically, the first, odd-numbered year of the General Assembly's biennial session ends in the summer. But that didn't happen in 2021, as COVID-19

precautions and federal aid, a later tax filing deadline, a multi-billion-dollar revenue surplus and lengthy budget talks between Republican legislative leaders and the Democratic governor pushed the work well into the fall.

"Everything in the world happened this year," said Rep. Robert Reives of Chatham County,

who had just become the chamber's Democratic leader in early 2021.

And while redistricting was completed in early November, litigation over the maps and resulting uncertainty prompted legislative leaders to keep the session open, leading to many pro forma floor meetings. The

General Assembly returned for votes in late November, mid-January and ultimately in mid-February, when a state Supreme Court ruling that struck down the congressional and legislative maps as illegal partisan gerrymanders forced redraws. The last legal appeal ended last week.

The approved resolution for-

mally closing the 2021 "regular session" gives the General Assembly the option to hold three days of meetings in early April and early May, but a top senator said it's unlikely they'd be used. If true, the legislature wouldn't need to return until May 18 for the start of its traditional session in even-numbered years.

Adjusting the second year of the current two-year budget is the top responsibility of lawmakers during this "short session." Both Moore and Senate Rules Chairman Bill Rabon said last week the goal was to keep the upcoming session truncated. Recent "short sessions" ended in late June or July.

# Key Senator Praises Jackson—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not being filled immediately before an election. She has also noted that Jackson has been confirmed by the Senate several times before, for two federal judge positions and for the U.S. Sentencing Commission, where she served under former President Barack Obama.

Collins, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina were the only three Republican senators to vote to confirm Jackson to

the appeals court last year. Murkowski said in a statement last week that her previous vote did not mean she would be supportive this time, and Graham has signaled he won't vote for Jackson after he pushed Biden to pick a different candidate from his home state, federal Judge J. Michelle Childs.

Other Republicans are unlikely to vote for Jackson. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, who met with the

nominee last week, afterward questioned her support from liberal advocacy groups.

"She's clearly a sharp lawyer with an impressive resume, but when it comes to the Supreme Court, a core qualification is judicial philosophy," McConnell said.

Jackson is meeting with senators one-on-one this week, a ritual for nominees, as the Judiciary committee prepares for hearings and as the White

House makes the case for her confirmation. On Tuesday, Jackson also met with Democratic Sens. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island and Cory Booker of New Jersey. She also met with Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida and Ted Cruz of Texas. All but Scott sit on the Judiciary panel.

Hirono said she talked to Jackson about comments by

Mississippi Sen. Roger Wicker, a Republican, that he viewed President Joe Biden's pledge to nominate a Black woman to the court as "affirmative action." Hirono said she told Jackson that she found that insulting and that she believes that phrase is used as "code for minority nominees" and questions about competence.

Hirono noted that Jackson excelled at Harvard Law School and is highly qualified

for the position. She asked that "those who use those terms stop using them."

Hirono said Jackson told her one of her strengths would be listening to the other justices on the court, which has been increasingly partisan in recent years.

"She is someone who wants to reach out to the other justices and be as persuasive as she can," Hirono said.

## STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

### NC CONTRACTOR FINED OVER DEATHS OF 2 WORKERS IN ALABAMA

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—Federal regulators fined a North Carolina electrical contractor more than \$40,000 following the deaths of two young apprentices who were electrocuted while repairing downed utility lines after a storm in Alabama last year.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced the penalties Tuesday against Pike Electric of Mount Airy, North Carolina.

The company, with 10,000 employees, was repairing electrical lines in Adger, located about 23 miles southwest of Birmingham, when the workers were killed on Aug. 31, 2021. The Jefferson County Coroner's Office identified the victims as Eli Nathaniel Babb of Kellyton and Layton River Ellison, both 19, of Alexandria.

Investigators determined the company let the workers repair a 7,200-volt distribution line without taking all the proper safety steps and without sufficient training. Pike Electric also didn't have enough people with first aid training on the crew, OSHA said.

"Two young people suffered fatal electrocution because Pike Electric LLC failed to meet their responsibility to ensure a safe and healthful workplace and ensure the proper supervision of new workers," Ramona Morris, OSHA's area director in Birmingham, said in a statement.

Pike Electric did not immediately respond to messages sent by email and a social media account on Wednesday seeking comment.

The company has 15 days to pay fines totaling \$43,506 or to contest the penalties, the agency said.

### NORTH CAROLINA MAN DIES AFTER STRAY BULLET HITS APARTMENT

CHARLOTTE (AP)—A North Carolina man was killed after he was hit by a stray bullet from what was described as a "large shootout," police said.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police said in a news release on Monday that James Freiberg, 48, was pronounced dead on the scene by emergency personnel.

Police said officers on the south side of the city reported hearing gunshots around 3 a.m. on Saturday and found several casings in the parking lot of an apartment complex that had been fired into one of the units. The incident was between two groups of people unrelated to Freiberg, according to police.

Freiberg is a Chicago native who was a realtor and a sports card expert for a local business. He also served as a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps while stationed at the Air Station New River in Jacksonville.

### WILDFIRE COVERS 1,000 ACRES ON NORTH CAROLINA'S OUTER BANKS

A wildfire in eastern North Carolina has burned parts of the Outer Banks and covered the area in smoke.

The Roanoke Island Volunteer Fire Department said Tuesday morning on Facebook that there was an active wildland fire at Dare County Bombing Range, a training location for military aircraft crews. The fire department received calls about a strong smell of smoke.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in North Carolina wrote in a post Tuesday afternoon that the fire had slightly spread to the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, which is one of the only places in the world where endangered red wolves can be seen in the wild.

The agency said refuge firefighters were helping the state Forest Service fight the blaze. It covered 1,000 acres and was 60 percent contained as of Wednesday morning, according to the Forest Service's website.

"Thankfully, with forecast weather, we do not expect the fire to present much additional threat to refuge habitats and facilities," the Fish and Wildlife Service said on Facebook.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire.

# Did Meadows Commit Fraud?—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

most exactly one year after he registered in Scaly Mountain and just weeks before Virginia's high-profile governor's election last fall. Republican Glenn Youngkin won the Democratic-leaning state by just under 2 percentage points.

Meadows frequently raised the prospect of voter fraud before the 2020 presidential election, as polls showed Trump trailing Joe Biden, and in the months fol-

lowing Trump's loss to suggest Biden was not the legitimate winner. He repeated baseless claims that the election was stolen in his 2021 memoir.

A collection of judges, election officials in both parties and Trump's own attorney general has concluded there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud. Experts note there are isolated incidents of intentional or unintentional violations of voter laws

in every election.

Meadows' political critics from both parties were quick to condemn the former White House chief of staff.

"It's almost like (Meadows) didn't realize voting records are public records?" former Rep. Barbara Comstock, R-Va., tweeted last week, writing that the details look "more and more damning" as Meadows stays silent.

Bobbie Richardson, chair of

the North Carolina Democratic Party, urged a full investigation of Meadows' actions by the state elections board and the local district attorney that covers Scaly Mountain.

The "hypocrisy of helping to spread false claims of voter fraud in 2020 in an attempt to overturn the election," combined with the registration information, "is unparalleled," Richardson said in a written statement.

# House District Under Threat From FL Governor Is Steeped In Black History

QUINCY, Fla. — When Black business owner Kiara Smith looks across the street from the door of her downtown shop, she sees the grounds of the county courthouse. The building was constructed in 1912, but the site is historic for what happened there decades earlier.

"This was one of the biggest places for the slave trade," Smith, 30, a Quincy native, said of the place where the enslaved were sold. "When you're born in Quincy, there's no doubt your great-great-grandparents were slaves. And some of the White people here, they're more than likely the descendants of the owners. That's just the reality we live with."

A 200-mile stretch along Florida's northern border is dotted with small cities like Quincy, at its western end, where Black residents have historically made up a third or more of the population. But in the 145 years since the end of Reconstruction, only in the last five years has Quincy and most of North Florida been represented in Congress by a Black politician, Rep. Al Lawson (D).

Now a rancorous and unprecedented battle between the Republican-led Florida legislature and Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) over the decennial redrawing of political maps could wipe out Lawson's district and put Gadsden County, where Quincy is located, and seven other counties with large Black populations back in congressional districts represented by White Republicans.

"This governor is attempting to turn back the hands of time. He's not leading us forward. He's leading us backward," said Ben Frazier, an activist in Jacksonville at the eastern end of the district, who likened DeSantis to Southern segregationist governors who battled the civil rights movement. "He's doing the same thing that Orval Faubus in Arkansas and George Wallace in Alabama did. He's just doing it in a new



House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) administers the oath of office to incoming Rep. Al Lawson (D-Fla.) during a mock swearing-in ceremony on Capitol Hill on Jan. 3, 2017. (Zach Gibson/AP)

suit." The battle over the district lines began in January, just as the Florida Senate was set to vote on its map, which left Lawson's 5th Congressional District intact. On the eve of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, DeSantis complicated what had been a bipartisan process by presenting his own, dramatically more partisan map that boosted Republican seats and erased the 5th District. The current House seat was created in 2015 after a protracted legal battle over redistricting ended with the state Supreme Court drawing a congressional map that created a new district running east to west along the northern border that would provide an advantage to Black voters.

Earlier this month, Republicans in the state House bent to DeSantis's will and passed two possible congressional maps — one already approved by the state Senate that kept Lawson's seat intact and another that reduced the district to a tiny area around Jacksonville that would be 35 percent Black, displacing all the other Black communities in Northern Florida into districts Donald Trump won in 2020. The Senate quickly passed that second map and the legislature sent both options to DeSantis.

DeSantis has vowed to veto both maps, claiming all versions but his own contain "unconstitutional gerrymanders." As the House was voting on its maps March 4, DeSantis said on Twitter that

they were "DOA." Under DeSantis's map, most of the current 5th District seat would be absorbed into GOP Rep. Neal Dunn's district, taking it from a district Trump won in 2020 by 34 percent of the vote down to one where Trump would have won by 11 percent. Dunn's office did not respond to request for comment.

"We had a lot of legislators who were calling our office saying, well, it's a bluff. I don't bluff," DeSantis said at a news conference after he sent the tweet. "So let's get together and try to have a compromise on some of those issues."

Written by Lori Rozsa and Colby Itkowitz of the Washington Post

# PA: Man Coerced College Girls For Sex, Money

By Larry Neumeister

Associated Press

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—A prosecutor cast an ex-convict Thursday as a mobster-like figure who coerced his daughter's college friends to join his "family" as he accumulated power, sex and money, forcing one woman into a sex work enterprise so lucrative that she gave him \$1 million in a single year.

A defense lawyer, though, told the Manhattan federal court jury during the trial's opening statements that Lawrence Ray committed no federal crimes as he encircled himself with college-age "storytellers" who claimed to have poisoned him and arranged to have him physically attacked.

"You'll see that Larry Ray is not guilty," attorney Allegra Glashauser said.

Ray, who once served as the best man at a wedding of former

New York City police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, has been incarcerated since his early 2020 arrest.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lindsey Keenan began her opening statement with a description of a gruesome October 2018 attack she said Ray carried out on a woman who gave Ray over a million dollars in sex work proceeds that year alone.

She said Ray and a woman who served as his "trusted lieutenant" found the woman they had "forced into a life of prostitution" at a hotel, where Ray tortured her for hours to make sure she'd continue her sex work.

The prosecutor said Ray used "violence, fear, sex and manipulation" to gain sex, power and money.

The abuse began in the fall of 2010 when Ray began living in his daughter's on-campus small townhouse dormitory dwelling at Sar-

ah Lawrence College, where he persuaded his daughter's friends to stay the next summer at his Manhattan apartment, she said.

There, Keenan said, Ray learned their secrets and insecurities and exploited them, "profiting off their labor, their money and even their bodies."

"Once he gained control of their lives, ... he took over their lives," she said.

The women were forced to do manual labor for Ray in 2013 in North Carolina at his stepfather's home and obey his commands after he convinced them they owed him money for damaging some of his belongings or for trying to poison him, the prosecutor said.

Against threats to release their secrets and embarrassing videotaped moments to friends and family or on the internet, the women and at least one man complied with Ray's demands, she said.

"When shame and embarrassment were not enough, he relied on violence," Keenan said. "The victims had no choice. They lived in fear of the defendant."

The allegations against Ray attained public prominence with the 2020 publication of "The Stolen Kids of Sarah Lawrence," a New York magazine feature.

Glashauser, an assistant federal defender, disputed the prosecutor's portrayal.

She said her client was seeking to reconnect with his daughter when he went to her dormitory and told stories about "hobnobbing" with Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet Union president, being best man at Kerik's wedding and having friends who were U.S. military generals.

Soon, the college students told stories about their own lives, embellishing them with tales of having drugged drug dealers and other exploits, she said.

## The Carolinian

(ISSN 00455873)

1504 New Bern Avenue, Raleigh, North Carolina 27610

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 25308

Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

Periodical Postage Paid at Raleigh North Carolina 27611

Warrenton Address: P.O. Box 536

Warrenton, NC 27589

Postmaster

Send all address changes to:

The Carolinian

1504 New Bern Avenue

Raleigh, NC 27610

PUBLISHED SIX TIMES MONTHLY

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

One Year .....\$45.00

Payable in advance. Address all communications and make all checks and money orders payable to The Carolinian.

Founded by P.R. Jervay, Sr. in 1940

The Carolinian Newspaper, Inc. of Raleigh

Publisher ..... Adria Jervay

Production Manager ..... Howard Barnett

Sales Consultant ..... Paul R. Jervay, Jr.

Circulation Manager ..... Andrew Alston

Jervay Agency, National Advertising Representative

www.TheJervayAgency.com

Member:

North Carolina Black Publishers Association

National Newspaper Publishers Association

HUB Certified MWBE

The Publisher is not responsible for the return of unsolicited news, pictures or advertising copy unless necessary postage accompanies the copy.

Opinions expressed by columnists in this newspaper do not necessarily represent the policy of the newspaper.

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# Business & Finance

## Deportation Agents Use Smartphone Apps To Monitor Refugees

By Amy Taxin and Amancai Biraben

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP)—U.S. authorities have broadly expanded the use of a smartphone app during the coronavirus pandemic to ensure immigrants released from detention will attend deportation hearings, a requirement that advocates say violates their privacy and makes them feel they're not free.

More than 125,000 people—many of them stopped at the U.S.-Mexico border—are now compelled to install the app known as SmartLink on their phones, up from around 5,000 less than three years ago. It allows officials to easily check on them by requiring the immigrants to send a selfie or make or receive a phone call when asked.

Although the technology is less cumbersome than an ankle monitor, advocates say tethering immigrants to the app is unfair considering many have paid bond to get out of U.S. detention facilities while their cases churn through the country's backlogged immigration courts. Immigration proceedings are administrative, not criminal, and the overwhelming majority of people with cases before the courts aren't detained.

Advocates said they're concerned about how the U.S. government might use data culled from the app on immigrants' whereabouts and contacts to round up and arrest others on immigration violations.

"It's kind of been shocking how just in a couple of years it has exploded so quickly and is now being used so much and everywhere," said Jacinta Gonzalez, senior campaign director for the Latino rights organization Mijente. "It's making it much easier for the government to track a larger number of people."

The use of the app by Immigration and Customs Enforcement soared during the pandemic, when many government services went online. It continued to grow as President Joe Biden called on the Department of Justice to curb the use of private prisons. His administration has also voiced support for so-called alternatives to detention to ensure immigrants attend required appointments such as immigration court hearings.

Meanwhile, the number of cases before the long-backlogged U.S. immigration court system has soared to 1.6 million. Immigrants often must wait for years to get a hearing before a judge who will determine whether they can stay in the country legally or should be deported.

Since the pandemic, U.S. immigration authorities have reduced the number of immigrants in detention facilities and touted detention alternatives such as the app.

The SmartLink app comes from BI Inc, a Boulder, Colora-

do-based subsidiary of private prison company The GEO Group. GEO, which runs immigration detention facilities for ICE under other contracts, declined to comment on the app.

Officials at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, declined to answer questions about the app, but said in a statement that detention alternatives "are an effective method of tracking noncitizens released from DHS custody who are awaiting their immigration proceedings."

In recent congressional testimony, agency officials wrote that the SmartLink app is also cheaper than detention: it costs about \$4.36 a day to put a person on a detention alternative and more than \$140 a day to hold someone in a facility, agency budget estimates show.

Advocates say immigrants who spent months in detention facilities and were released on bond are being placed on the app when they go to an initial meeting with a deportation officer, and so are parents and children seeking asylum on the southwest border.

Initially, SmartLink was seen as a less intensive alternative to ankle monitors for immigrants who had been detained and released, but is now being used widely on immigrants with no criminal history and who have not been detained at all, said Julie Mao, deputy director of the immigrant rights group Just Futures. Previously, immigrants often only attended periodic check ins at agency offices.

"We're very concerned that that is going to be used as the excessive standard for everyone who's in the immigration system," Mao said.

While most people attend their immigration court hearings, some do skip out. In those cases, immigration judges issue deportation orders in the immigrants' absence, and deportation agents are tasked with trying to find them and return them to their countries. During the 2018 fiscal year, about a quarter of immigration judges' case decisions were deportation orders for people who missed court, court data shows.

Advocates questioned whether monitoring systems matter in these cases, noting someone who wants to avoid court will stop checking in with deportation officers, trash their phone and move, whether on SmartLink or not.

They said they're concerned that deportation agents could be tracking immigrants through SmartLink more than they are aware, just as commercial apps tap into location data on people's phones.

In the criminal justice system, law enforcement agencies are using similar apps for defendants awaiting trial or serving sentences. Robert Magaletta, chief executive of Louisiana-based Shadowtrack Technolo-

gies, said the technology doesn't continually track defendants but records their locations at check ins, and that the company offers a separate, full-time tracking service to law enforcement agencies using tamperproof watches.

In a 2019 Congressional Research Service report, ICE said the app wasn't continually monitoring immigrants. But advocates said even quick snapshots of people's locations during check ins could be used to track down friends and coworkers who lack proper immigration authorization. They noted immigration investigators pulled GPS data from the ankle monitors of Mississippi poultry plant workers to help build a case for a large workplace raid.

For immigrants released from detention with ankle monitors that irritate the skin and beep loudly at times, the app is an improvement, said Mackenzie Mackins, an immigration attorney in Los Angeles. It's less painful and more discreet, she said, adding the ankle monitors made her clients feel they were viewed by others as criminals.

But SmartLink can be stressful for immigrants who came to the U.S. fleeing persecution in their countries, and for those who fear a technological glitch could lead to a missed check in.

Roseanne Flores, a paralegal at Hilf and Hilf in Troy, Michigan, said she recently fielded panicked calls from clients because the app wasn't working. They wound up having to report in person to immigration agents' offices instead.

"I see the agony it causes the clients," Flores said. "My heart goes out to them."

Taxin reported from Orange County, Calif. Biraben reported from Los Angeles, Calif.

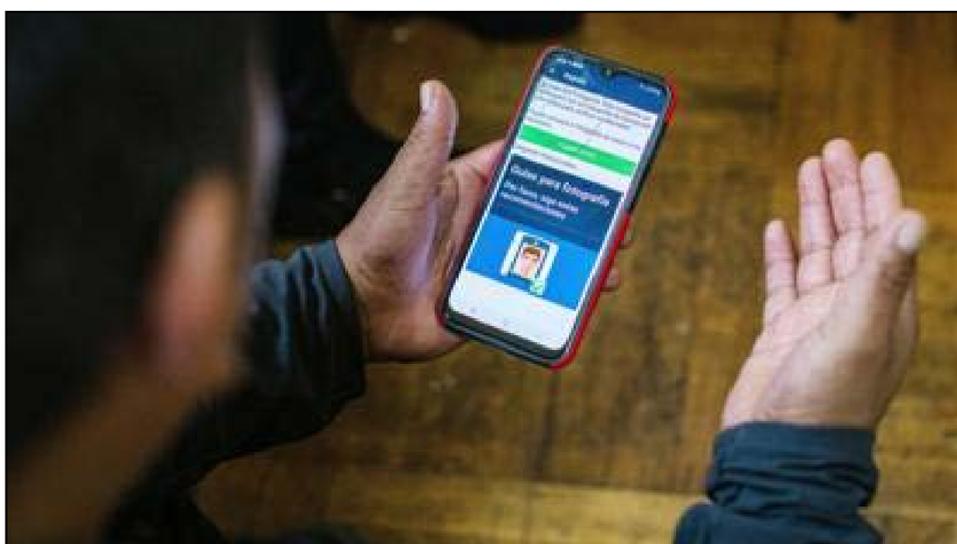
## Steer Clear Of Scams

By Josh Stein

North Carolina Attorney General

It's tax season, which means scammers are out in full force looking to take advantage of hard-working North Carolinians. Each year, my office hears from North Carolinians struggling to file their taxes while fending off fraudsters. Tax scams put people's money and personal information at risk, but my office is here to help you avoid them. Here are some tips to help you file your taxes safely.

**Guard your personal information.** Identity thieves can use your Social Security number to take out loans, open credit cards, or even collect your tax refund. Remember, email is vulnerable to hackers, so avoid emailing your Social Security number or other confidential information to a tax preparer or accountant. If you're using a website to file your taxes, make sure your information is secure by looking for the lock icon and https:// in the



**GESTAPO OR A KINDER WAY TO TREAT IMMIGRANTS?** Undocumented immigrants and their supporters are crying foul over a new smartphone app clients are being forced to download that allows ICE to keep track of them. The government says it's better than being kept in detention to ensure that they show up for deportation hearings.

## Holmes Saga Heads To TV

By Michael Liedtke

AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP)—"I am expecting quite a show."

I didn't realize how prophetic my words would be when ABC News correspondent Rebecca Jarvis asked in early September what I was expecting on the opening day of a high-profile trial dissecting an alleged scam orchestrated by fallen Silicon Valley star Elizabeth Holmes.

The interview became part of Jarvis' podcast, "The Dropout," re-

volving around the trial the culminated in Holmes' Jan. 3 conviction on four counts of fraud tied to the nearly \$1 billion invested in Theranos, a blood-testing company that she founded at age 19 after dropping out of Stanford.

Now that she is facing a likely prison sentence, Holmes' meteoric rise and mortifying collapse has been turned into "The Dropout," a highly entertaining Hulu TV series based on the podcast and other sources that delved into a drama that shined a bright light on Silicon Valley's dark side.

Holmes, who faces 20 years in prison when she's sentenced in September, turned 38 last month while out on bail while living on a luxurious Silicon Valley estate.

The eight-episode series, which begins streaming Thursday, draws upon some of the evidence that emerged during that trial, particularly texts between Holmes and her former lover and business partner, Sunny Balwani. Other material had been previously laid out in the book, *Bad Blood*, by former *Wall Street Journal* reporter John Carreyrou whose 2015 stories exposed the flaws in Theranos' technology and the 2019 HBO documentary, "The Inventor."

But the Hulu series breathes life into Holmes' saga like no other while also telling the stories of a cast of characters who were charmed, reviled and otherwise affected by her quest to become a billionaire and perhaps change the world along the way, much like her idol, the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Showrunner Elizabeth Meriwether told *The Associated Press* she took "some poetic license, but in a thoughtful way" as she infused

the saga with even more drama.

The series uses the real names of everyone involved with one notable exception, Theranos' former lab director, Adam Rosendorff, who spent five days on the witness stand during the trial, much of the time sparring with one of Holmes' lawyers, Lance Wade. Meriwether cited unspecified legal reasons for identifying Rosendorff's character as Mark Roessler in the series, even though anyone who knows Holmes' story will realize who it really is.

Other people featured in "The Dropout" who factored into the trial include former Theranos employee and key whistleblower, Erika Cheung and former Walgreens CEO Wade Miquelon, who both were called to the stand by federal prosecutors; Carreyrou, who came to court six of the seven days Holmes testified, ensuring he had a seat in her direct line of vision; and Holmes' mom Noel (who came to court every day holding her daughter's hand on the way in and out), and her father, Chris, who only came for closing arguments and the jury deliberations that led to the verdict.

The series also illuminates the roles of people we heard about during the trial but didn't take the stand. That includes another whistleblower, Tyler Shultz, and his grandfather, Theranos board member, former U.S. Secretary State, George Shultz, who died last year before the trial began. In this series, Tyler is depicted as a courageous hero while his grandfather comes across as an aging statesman better suited for negotiating with world leaders than for seeing through Holmes' charms.

## As Gas Prices Set New Records, Internet Blames Electrics

By Amanda Seitz

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—Some social media users suggest that soaring fuel prices in the U.S. aren't the result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, increased consumption or supply chain issues as daily life resumes after two years of stagnation brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead, the flurry of Facebook and Twitter posts offer, without evidence, that a nefarious

scheme is underway: President Joe Biden's administration is intentionally driving up the price of gas to get more American drivers behind the wheel of an electric car.

"\$6.00 a gallon gas is how you get people to buy electric cars," claims one popular meme, shared thousands of times across Facebook and Instagram since Tuesday.

The newest internet fabrication shows that Americans' obsession with conspiracy theories contin-

ues to play an outside role in how they interpret political decision-making, even during times of war.

"At this point, conspiracy theories have become so ingrained in people's psyche and because of social media, they spread like wildfire," said Mia Bloom, a Georgia State University professor who recently authored a book examining the QAnon conspiracy theory. "If it's not this conspiracy theory this week, it'll be another one next week."

The conspiracy theory-laden memes, Twitter posts and videos began swirling as the average price of regular gas broke \$4 a gallon for the first time in nearly 14 years. The output of posts increased Tuesday after Biden announced a ban on Russian oil imports, a move he warned would almost certainly drive up U.S. gas prices further but would deal a "blow" to Russian President Vladimir Putin's offensive in Ukraine.

The claims about electric vehicles echo the core themes at the center of several conspiracy theories peddled at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic by followers of QAnon, a conspiracy theory that cast then-President Donald Trump as a hero fighting a cabal of elites who operate child sex trafficking rings.

Many QAnon social media accounts pushed false conspiracy theories that the government would try to microchip people with a vaccine or that a coin shortage during the pandemic was a plot to push Americans into a cashless society that would be easier for the federal government to control.

The electric vehicle appears to be the latest reiteration of those conspiracy theories.

Some social media posts have suggested that the government wants to push people to use electric vehicles so they can shut down a driver's car at will.

"I don't know who needs to

hear this, but high gas prices will push more people to electric cars that can be frozen just like your bank account," one false post circulating across social media platforms claims.

Contrary to that assertion, electric vehicles work similarly to gas-powered ones; the government cannot shut down individual vehicles at will. With electric cars, drivers can use public or at-home, private charging stations to recharge. In fact, 80 percent of electric vehicle charging is done from a driver's home, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

These types of conspiracy theories are popular during times of crisis—such as when a pandemic shuts down much of the world or during a war—because they give people an explanation for the inexplicable, Bloom said.

"Conspiracy theories provide such comfort during these very stressful times," she said. "Having an explanation, even if it's that someone is pulling the strings is, for whatever reason, less distressing" for some people. "If there's a conspiracy behind everything—OK it makes sense. Now I understand."

Mentions of "electric cars" and the "government" have increased by 400 percent over the past few days across public social media accounts, news websites and television news, according to an analysis social media intelligence firm Signal Labs conducted for *The Associated Press*.

The spike in conversation also was driven by conservative social media accounts that seized on comments made Monday by Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg during an event with Vice President Kamala Harris. The pair promoted the federal government's funding for public transportation and electric vehicles under Biden's infrastructure law passed last year.

"Last month, we announced \$5 billion to build out a nationwide electric vehicle charging network so the people from rural to suburban to urban communities can all benefit from the gas savings from driving an EV," Buttigieg said.

But misleading posts across social media took Buttigieg's comments out of context, suggesting that he was responding directly to the recent jump in gas prices by telling people to buy electric vehicles. Some posts claimed Buttigieg's answer to rising gas prices was for Americans to buy a "\$50,000 electric car."

"Pete Buttigieg says if we don't like gas prices, we should change vehicles," claimed one post, shared thousands of times across Facebook and Instagram.

Buttigieg, appearing to respond to the claims, shared a website link that lists electric car prices that range from \$27,400 to \$181,450 on Twitter.

"Seeing some strange claims about EV prices out there," Buttigieg wrote in the tweet.



# Opinion

## Finding Our Inner Ukrainian

By Melinda Burrell

National Association for Community Mediation

As we watch Ukrainians defend their country from a brutal onslaught, many of us are seeking ways to engage. We're donating money, lighting buildings with blue and yellow, analyzing President's Zelensky's inspiring leadership.

And there's another way we can engage in this moment. We can protect and strengthen our own democracy in a time when relationships are straining and behaviors deteriorating.

A recent study, evaluating societies around the world and across the centuries, showed that those most able to keep the peace were ones that had norms and values that were peaceful, not war-promoting. They also had visionary peace-focused leaders. Norms and leaders were more important than economic ties.

The 2022 midterm elections will be a flashpoint. Violence quells democratic expression. People don't speak their minds or turn up to vote when they're afraid of violence. To protect our peaceful democracy, how can each of us help surface those leaders and reinforce those norms and values?

We can start by thinking about our own behavior, including not posting inflammatory material on social media. This is how we uphold—or tear down—norms of peaceful democratic behavior. We all enjoy liking a tweet or post that expresses how we see the situation, and often the stronger the terms the better. But we need to be alert to confirmation bias—our built-in tendency to accept information that confirms how we already see the world and ignore challenging information. This hardwiring often prompts us to spread dramatic soundbites or even disinformation—worsening the situation. What can we express that norms democratic behavior?

We can also think about how we interact in our communities. A great way to do this is to seek out groups that are diverse, where we can build relationships that get us away from stereotyped visions of “the other” and create a more nuanced understanding. Relatedly, we can create space for civic dialogue. Talking across divides is difficult but necessary. Mayors, church leaders, universities, and others can convene public discussions around community issues with respected speakers from different sides of a conflict—ideally with experienced facilitators keeping the conversation constructive. We need to normalize talking across our divides, and elect leaders who help us do so.

Finally, we can use our democratic institutions. These are the ultimate form of nonviolent conflict resolution. This means registering voters, making voting safe and accessible, and protecting peaceful protest. It could even mean participating in the running of our institutions, such as by becoming a poll worker. Fewer poll workers mean fewer polling places, and/or polling places that run more slowly. It definitely means protecting election workers, many of whom are volunteers struggling with threats to their personal safety, a deluge of misinformation about voting, and even partisan pressure to corrupt the system. Our system is based on norms of respect for law and other citizens. By using our system, we uphold the democratic norms on which it was created.

This isn't always easy, but Ukrainians are showing us that the right thing isn't always easy. Fortunately, the U.S. has its own strong civic spirit. We are permeated with the belief that citizens can and should play a substantive role in our democracy. As Ukrainians fight for their democracy, we can fight for ours as well.

*Melinda Burrell, Ph.D., is a humanitarian aid worker who studies polarization and trains on the neuroscience of communication and conflict. She is on the board of the National Association for Community Mediation, which offers resources on cross-divide engagement.*



## Our New Normal

By Winslow Myers

War Preventive Initiative

Putin's cruel invasion of the Ukraine reminds us that there are leaders of countries—and not only Putin—who think and act according to the conviction that if they do not get their way, they might turn to nuclear weapons as a last resort.

Or in the fog of war or extreme tension, someone might misinterpret events, beginning nuclear escalation inadvertently. The record of the Cuban Missile Crisis makes clear that we were fortunate to have Kennedy as President of the U.S. and Khrushchev leading the U.S.S.R., because they secretly negotiated a peaceful way out of the crisis, even as U.S. generals were pushing hard for an invasion of Cuba that would have resulted in global holocaust.

The brutality of Putin's indiscriminate attack upon helpless civilians has appalled the world, but we still need to put ourselves in his shoes as best we can.

He's on record that the breakup of the old Soviet Union was a disaster, one that requires the restoration of the Russian Empire. In addition he is an autocrat who feels threatened by the Ukraine becoming a successful liberal democracy with strong economic and political ties to Western Europe and the U.S., whom he conceives as a single combined adversary.

Historically, Russia has been invaded many times, in recent history by Napoleon and Hitler, and has responded to instability at its borders with consistent force—as we in the United States would also if we felt that our own stability was threatened by chaos at our edges.

A further complication is the ethnic distribution of Russian-speaking or Russian-leaning citizens in the Ukraine, with more of those to the East and less to the West of the country, creating a web of contradictory loyalties—even as Ukrainian identity has been solidified by the invasion.

Anxiety, angry helplessness, moral outrage, blaming, and enemy-imaging would seem to be “normal” responses, along with “what-aboutism”: the U.S. also launched invasions in Iraq, Afghanistan and a number of other countries which many of us saw as unnecessary or unjustified. Putin himself has used what-aboutism to rationalize his choices.

The level of violence available to the nine nuclear states means that nuclear cataclysm would not lead to victory for anyone. In this new world, normality and even sanity depends upon knowing that my survival depends upon the survival of my adversaries, and their survival depends upon mine. To the extent that enough people—citizens, media, Putin himself—lose this sense of existential interdependency, we will keep moving closer to catastrophe.

Which is why the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons has worked so hard to get more nations to join the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—the only way to permanently end the nuclear possibility which will keep raising its head with every new great power conflict. Though 59 nations have ratified the treaty, none of the 9 nuclear states have signed

on, indicating that those nine still think that nuclear weapons, possessing them, threatening to use them, or actually using them, are indispensable to their survival, when the exact reverse is true.

Which is also why a truly “normal” response to our planetary situation would be hundreds of millions of people in the streets demonstrating not only in favor of Ukrainian independence but also for the permanent prohibition of nuclear weapons, and for using the enormous savings that result to build a sustainable world.

War is a huge distraction and drain from the unprecedented degree of planetary cooperation we must learn in order to address the climate emergency. Sadly, such cooperation is the opposite of the way Putin has chosen.

Along with nuclear weapons, climate change equally makes the case that the new normal is that my survival depends upon you and yours depends upon me. This reciprocity, appearing in all the world's great religions as the Golden Rule, far from being an impractical ideal with no relevance to great power conflict, has instead become, in the form of the twin nuclear and climate challenges, our fundamental planetary reality—our new normal.

To the extent we learn to act from this understanding, a different world is possible.

*Winslow Myers, author of Living Beyond War: A Citizen's Guide, serves on the Advisory Board of the War Preventive Initiative.*



## Saving Ukraine, Saving Lives, Saving Ourselves

By Tom H. Hastings

Portland State University

I teach nonviolence. Students ask, so, okay, and just how could Ukraine possibly resist Putin and a brutal invasion using nothing but nonviolence?

I have two sets of comments. One, this cannot be a philosophical inquiry. Not only is it too late to respond with complete nonviolence, since resistance is already violent, but only a pompous fool would attempt to tell others how to gain their liberation.

Two, I am a professional analyst, so it is actually my job to construct hypotheticals about using nonviolence to achieve goals.

As a human being, I join with the millions in awe of the brave resistance of Ukrainians to the brute violence of Putin and his massive armed forces. If I were a Ukrainian dad or grandpa, I pray I'd have even half their courage.

As an analyst, I am interested in historical examples that might help me imagine a nonviolent resistance option.

First I think about Denmark's nonviolent resistance to Nazi invasion and occupation. Like Ukraine perceived by Russia as the “little Slav brothers,” the Nazis felt some Aryan cultural connection to Danes and apparently hoped to exploit them but also gain their subservient admiration.

Denmark, unlike the rest of Europe, did not build up their military after WWI, largely pursuant to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which was made to avoid such a catastrophic war again. Obviously, Germany under Hitler completely violated the pact and threw everything into their evil ambition to rule Europe and beyond. When they swept into Denmark 9 April 1940 they encountered no resistance because Danish leaders decided saving their people was more important than waging overmatched war against such a mighty military force.

Danes developed strong hidden resistance, led initially by a boy, 17-year-old Arne Sejr, complemented by 71-year-old King Christian.

The boy created his “10 Commandments” for being a good Dane, including doing shoddy work, producing little or nothing for the Germans, and maintaining ultimately loyalty to Denmark.

The king rode his horse through the streets of Copenhagen every day, refused to allow the swastika to be raised above his palace, and when the Nazis ordered Jews in Denmark to wear the identifying Star of David, the king wore one.

Both the boy and the king inspired the best kind of nationalism, the opposite sort from the sick Deutschland über alles, but rather a protective love for their land and people. Danes gathered in public parks on Sundays to sing their national songs—keeping their spirits as strong as possible.

Finally, the Nazis ordered any saboteurs summarily executed and the Danish Parliament dissolved in protest.

Then the Nazis ordered the roundup of all Jews in Denmark and the Danish people got wind hours ahead and went into full protection action, hiding Danish Jews and getting them across a few miles of sea to neutral Sweden.

In other words, when the question was really called, the Danes offered substantial, brave, successful civil resistance. They weathered the terrible affrontery and ugly Nazi invasion and occupation.

Looking at WWII deaths by percent of population, Denmark suffered far less than most, losing 6000 people to the war even though they were occupied literally for almost the entire war. Tiny Luxembourg, not much more than five percent as populous, lost more than 7000 people and so many other countries lost so many more both in raw numbers of people and in percent of their populations.

Danes were clearly not the country that defeated Hitler and his godawful German military blitzkrieg machine of death, but they eroded it to the best of their abilities and protected their people remarkably.

The Allies did the heaviest lifting, obviously, to ultimately drive Germany to surrender.

Now, with the new allies imposing serious sanctions on Putin, his oligarchs, and his economy, Russia will need to dampen its imperial ambitions eventually. It took more than five years to defeat the Axis powers at a cost of approximately 100 million people. What if it took five years to get Russia out of Ukraine but in that interim Ukrainians survived because the Russian military would stop shooting and bombing them because the Ukrainians were not resisting with violence?

I do not pose this as any disrespect for the valiant Ukrainians who are doing so much, risking so much, losing so much, and in fact suffering and dying and fighting back. How could any decent person offer anything but respect to the men and women, boys and girls, of that poor country right now?

I only suggest that we learn much more about how to survive and ultimately defeat the dictators who misuse their militaries to seize other people's lands and threaten their lives. Nonviolence seems weaker at first glance, but, as more and more research is showing, is actually, by far, the most gain for the least pain, and takes at least as much courage in the face of threat of death.

*Dr. Tom H. Hastings is Coördinator of Conflict Resolution BA/BS degree programs and certificates at Portland State University and on occasion an expert witness for the defense of civil resisters in court.*



## From Selma to the Supreme Court, We Are Still Making History

By Ben Jealous

People for the American Way

History was made in Selma, Alabama, on March 7, 1965. Alabama state troopers viciously attacked peaceful voting rights marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The troopers were hoping to stop the voting rights movement in its tracks. But their violence did the opposite. Televised images of “Bloody Sunday” offended the conscience of people of good faith around the country. The movement was energized. And soon, the federal Voting Rights Act became law.

Voting rights activists were back in Selma this month to commemorate history—and to make it.

Vice President Kamala Harris spoke at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. As the first Black woman to hold that high office, she embodies many of the victories of the civil rights movement. From that “hallowed ground,” she spoke truth about the “un-American” laws that have passed in many states to make it harder for Black people and others to vote.

Vice President Harris recognized that 2022 is not 1965, as her presence made clear. “We again, however, find ourselves caught in between,” she said.

“Between injustice and justice. Between disappointment and determination. Still in a fight to form a more perfect union. And nowhere is that clearer than when it comes to the ongoing fight to secure the freedom to vote.”

The threat to voting rights today comes most directly from state legislators and governors putting laws in place that make it harder for Black people and others to vote. The threat also comes from a far-right-dominated Supreme Court that has mostly abandoned voting rights in favor of “states' rights.” In a 2013 decision in a case that began in Shelby County, Alabama, the court's majority gutted a section of the Voting Rights Act that prevented states from imposing racially discriminatory changes in voting laws and regulations.

Since then—and especially since historic turnout by Black voters helped defeat Donald Trump's reelection bid—legislators in state after state have passed new barriers to voting. The Supreme Court is letting them get away with it.

And just recently the Supreme Court's far-right justices allowed Alabama to hold elections this year using racially gerrymandered congressional maps created by the state legislature. That was another signal to Black voters and voting rights supporters that the current court majority cannot be counted on to protect our rights.

We must organize. We must elect pro-voting-rights majorities in Congress and state legislatures wherever we can. And we must demand that they take action to protect our democracy.

That brings us back to Selma. As a young man, the late Rep. John Lewis nearly gave his life on the Edmund Pettus bridge to secure voting rights. Activist leaders of this generation are now building on that history and making their own.

A coalition of local and national civil rights groups used this year's Bloody Sunday commemorations as a time to look forward as well as back. They organized a march and a series of voting rights events along the route of the original Selma to Montgomery march. They are lifting up younger generations of leaders and mobilizing activists around the connections between voting rights and the broader movement to advance opportunity and economic justice.

At the same time, civil rights activists around the country are organizing to achieve another historical milestone: the confirmation of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice. As expected, Judge Jackson's nomination has been met with some resistance and racist commentary. But it is generating even more excitement and enthusiasm.

Our country's history is in part a history of struggle to achieve hard-won progress toward more universal access to rights and opportunities. That is still our struggle today. Like the work of the activist leaders who are building a movement to protect voting rights and expand access to opportunity, the confirmation of Judge Jackson will move the nation forward toward the ideal of equal justice. It's our turn to keep our feet on the ground, our shoulders to the wheel, and our eyes on the prize.

*Ben Jealous serves as president of People For the American Way and Professor of the Practice in the Africana Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania where he teaches leadership. Jealous has decades of experience as a leader, coalition builder, campaigner for social justice and seasoned nonprofit executive. In 2008, he was chosen as the youngest-ever president and CEO of the NAACP. He is a graduate of Columbia University and Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and he has taught at Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania.*

