

## States Move To Protect Abortion Seekers

By Jennifer McDermott,  
Geoff Mulvihill and  
Hannah Schoenbaum

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP)—Democratic governors in states where abortion will remain legal are looking for ways to protect any patients who travel there for the procedure—along with the providers who help them—from being prosecuted by their home states.

The Democratic governors of Colorado and North Carolina on Wednesday issued executive orders to protect abortion providers and patients from extradition to states that have banned the practice.

Abortions are legal in North Carolina until fetal viability or in certain medical emergencies, making the state an outlier in the Southeast.

“This order will help protect North Carolina doctors and nurses and their patients from cruel right-wing criminal laws passed by other states,” Gov. Roy Cooper said in announcing the order.

The governors of Rhode Island and Maine also signed executive orders late Tuesday, stating that they will not cooperate with other states’ investigations into people who seek abortions or health care providers that per-

form them.

Rhode Island Democratic Gov. Dan McKee said women should be trusted with their own health care decisions, and Democratic Lt. Gov. Sabina Matos said Rhode Island must do all it can to protect access to reproductive health care as “other states attack the fundamental right to choose.”

Maine Democratic Gov. Janet Mills said she will “stand in the way of any effort to undermine, rollback, or outright eliminate the right to safe and legal abortion in Maine.”

Their offices confirmed Wednesday that they are preemptive, protective moves, and that neither state has received a request to investigate, prosecute or extradite a provider or patient.

Their attempts to protect abortion rights come as tighter restrictions and bans are going into effect in conservative states after last month’s *Dobbs v. Jackson* ruling in the U.S. Supreme Court, which overturned the nearly half-century-old holding from *Roe v. Wade* that found that the right to abortion was protected by the U.S. Constitution. The issue reverts to the states, many of which have taken steps to curtail or ban abortions.

Several states have put new

restrictions already in place since the Supreme Court ruling and more are pressing to do so. In Louisiana on Wednesday, the state Supreme Court rejected the attorney general’s request to allow immediate enforcement of laws against most abortions saying it was declining to get involved “at this preliminary stage.” Enforcement was blocked by another court last week. Attorney General Jeff Landry tweeted that Wednesday’s decision “is delaying the inevitable. Our Legislature fulfilled their constitutional duties, and now the Judiciary must. It is disappointing that time is not immediate.”

The specific fears of Democratic officials are rooted in a Texas law adopted last year to ban abortions after fetal cardiac activity can be detected. The law lets any person other than a government official or employee sue anyone who performs an abortion or “knowingly engages in conduct that aids or abets” obtaining one.

The person filing the claim would be entitled to \$10,000 for every abortion the subject was involved with—plus legal costs.

The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear challenges to

(See **STATES MOVE**, P. 2)



**PROTECTING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**—North Carolina (where abortion remains legal, as it was before the *Roe v. Wade* decision many years ago) is among the states taking steps to protect those from other states that may seek an abortion here. Above, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper announces an executive order to that effect.

## NC Court Eyes Abuse Claim Extension

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

North Carolina’s Supreme Court will accelerate appeals over the constitutionality of a state law that gave adults with child sexual abuse claims another two years to seek civil damages.

A majority of justices agreed last week to hear the case of three former Gaston County student-athletes who are suing the coach who was convicted of crimes against team members as well as the county school board, rather than let the intermediate-level Court of Appeals rule first.

A divided panel of three trial

judges dismissed the lawsuit last December, ruling that a portion of the law that revived for two years only—2020 and 2021—the ability of someone otherwise too late to sue for child sexual abuse claims—was unconstitutional.

Before the 2019 law called the SAFE Act, such abuse victims effectively had until age 21 to file such a lawsuit. The plaintiffs appealed.

In a 4-3 decision announced last Tuesday, the Supreme Court decided the case should bypass the Court of Appeals. The court’s registered Democrats composed the majority. Chief Justice Paul Newby, writing a dissent for the three Republican justices, said

they would have allowed Court of Appeals review first and lamented that multiple bypass motions have been allowed by the court over the last few months in other cases.

“There is no jurisprudential reason for allowing this motion or the others,” he wrote in Tuesday’s order, first reported by the *Asheville Citizen-Times*. No oral argument date was immediately announced.

At the trial court, two of the three judges said the General Assembly was barred from reviving a cause of action after the statute of limitations for such claims expires. The other judge said the two-year window should

be upheld, adding that it should be examined as carrying out a compelling government interest to protect children from abuse that may be disclosed many years later.

Lawyers for the state defending the law and the three students—who are now in their 30s and 40s—had urged the justices in an April legal brief to take up the matter immediately, saying the legal questions were of “exceptional public importance.”

Lawsuits similar to the Gaston County case were filed during the previous two years. The state Supreme Court has approached

(See **NC SUPREME**, P. 2)



### POLICE: NORTH CAROLINA WOMAN ATTACKED, KILLED BY 2 DOGS

GREENSBORO (AP)—A dog attack has left a North Carolina woman dead, according to police.

Trena Peed, 46, of Greensboro was dog-sitting when she was attacked by the two animals early Thursday morning, local news outlets reported.

Greensboro police told TV station WGHP officers shot one of the dogs to stop the attack. The other dog was under quarantine with Guilford County Animal Services, TV station WXII reported.

An investigation is ongoing to determine the legal ownership of each of the animals, according to the news outlets. It wasn’t immediately clear if charges against the dogs’ owner could result.

### WOMAN KILLED AFTER VAN HITS RUNNERS AT GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

LINVILLE (AP)—A woman was killed and at least three people were injured when a van ferrying people to a runners’ race in North Carolina crashed into a crowd, authorities said.

The N.C. State Highway Patrol said Friday that race participants and pedestrians had gathered in a parking lot Thursday evening ahead of “The Bear,” a 5-mile run that is part of the annual Highland Games at Grandfather Mountain.

According to a highway patrol news release, as people were gathered, a van attempted to leave from a parked position and accelerated into the crowd. The driver of the van was identified as James Russell Deni, 80, of Boone.

Julie A. Holderness, 72, of Greensboro, was killed, the patrol said. At least three other people were treated for injuries, while a fourth person refused treatment and declined interview requests from investigators.

The patrol charged Deni with misdemeanor death by vehicle and unsafe movement, the news release said. It’s not known if Deni has an attorney.

Highland Games officials canceled the race, which would have started not far from the crash site and ended atop Grandfather Mountain. The remaining activities associated with the games will continue through Sunday as scheduled, according to a statement from organizers.

### NC COTTAGE ELEVATOR SAFETY AMONG 19 BILLS THAT COOPER SIGNS

(AP)—Mandated safety improvements for elevators inside North Carolina vacation cottages following a child’s death last year are among another 19 bills that Gov. Roy Cooper signed into law on Friday.

With another 11 bills signed on Thursday, Cooper cleared from his desk all but a handful of measures that the General Assembly left him last week when it adjourned.

The Democratic governor now has until Monday night to act on the seven remaining bills, which include spending adjustments to the state budget for the coming year and an effort by Republicans to force local sheriffs to assist federal immigration agents interested in picking up defendants. Any bill that he doesn’t sign or veto by then will become law automatically.

Among Friday’s signed legislation is a law named in memory of Weston Androw, a 7-year-old Ohio boy who died in July 2021 at a vacation rental on the Outer Banks when he became trapped between the elevator car and elevator shaft.

Starting Oct. 1, landlords of these cottages or similar short-term rentals must reduce the gap between landing and car doors for elevators to no more than 4 inches, such as by installing a space guard on the landing door.

The bill also sets minimum force requirements on elevator car doors and gates. The landlord must document the improvements with the state Insurance Department.

“While this action sadly can’t reverse the tragedy that killed Weston Androw, it does mean better protection to prevent future injuries and deaths,” Cooper said in a news release.

Other bills that Cooper signed Friday include the legislature’s annual agriculture measure, and one that makes permanent the ability

(See **RECORD INFLATION**, P. 2)

(See **STATE BRIEFS**, P. 2)

## Trust Wanes, Conspiracy Theories Rise

By David Klepper

Associated Press

Daniel Charles Wilson believes the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were an inside job. The war in Ukraine is “totally scripted” and COVID-19 is “completely fake.” The Boston Marathon bombing? Mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, and Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas? “Crisis actors,” he says.

Wilson, a 41-year-old from London, Ontario, has doubts about free elections, vaccines and the Jan. 6 insurrection, too. He accepts little of what has happened in the past 20 years and cheerfully predicts that someday, the internet will make everyone as distrustful as he is.

“It’s the age of information, and the hidden government, the people who control everything, they know they can’t win,” Wil-

son told The Associated Press. “They’re all lying to us. But we’re going to break through this. It will be a good change for everyone.”

Wilson, who is now working on a book about his views, is not an isolated case of perpetual disbelief. He speaks for a growing number of people in Western nations who have lost faith in democratic governance and a free press, and who have turned

to conspiracy theories to fill the void.

Rejecting what they hear from scientists, journalists or public officials, these people instead embrace tales of dark plots and secret explanations. And their beliefs, say experts who study misinformation and extremism, reflect a widespread loss of faith in institutions like government

(See **TRUST WANES**, P. 2)

## Record Inflation Shrinks Housing Mkt.

By Charlene Crowell

NINPA Newswire Contributor

This summer, temperatures are not the only thing rising above normal.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the nation’s consumer price index (CPI) at the end of May was the largest since December 1981, more than

40 years ago. This key economic measure tracks the change in prices paid by consumers for goods and services for about 93 percent of the total U.S. population.

The most recent report, released on June 10, showed double-digit CPI increases for fuel, food, utilities, and both new and used vehicles.

Even before this data release, many consumers already adjusted their lives to compensate as best they could for \$5 per gallon gas prices, keeping family cars longer, and taking fewer family outings to free up funds for still-rising food prices.

But how much longer can housing remain affordable when prices for both homes and rents

are rising even higher?

Homeownership, historically a reliable building block to family wealth, is more of a challenge today for first-time homebuyers. As of 2022’s first quarter, the median price of an existing single family home grew to \$368,200, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), 15.7 percent higher than a year ago.

Families able to afford a 20 percent down payment on this median-priced home can look forward to a monthly mortgage of approximately \$1,383, which is \$319 more—30 percent higher—than a year ago, according to NAR.

For Black America, however, a history replete with systemic discrimination in education, employment, lending, and housing imposes additional harsh realities that have yet to be effectively addressed.

From 2013 to 2019, after adjusting for inflation, the median household income of Black households increased by just \$800, compared with about \$3,000 for white households and \$3,700 for Latinx households, according to research by the National Equity Atlas that analyzed the nation’s



## STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

for some qualified notaries to perform duties when the applicant is communicating with them by live video. Such exceptions were permitted initially as the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Another of Friday's signed bills also prepares for a Sept. 1 statewide shift from paper death certificates to electronic death records filed by medical examiners and funeral directors.

## NC JUDGE SIGNS OFF ON AGREEMENT OVER COLONIAL GASOLINE SPILL

CHARLOTTE (AP)—A North Carolina judge has signed off on a previously announced agreement between state environmental regulators and Colonial Pipeline for a 2020 gasoline spill in a nature reserve that turned out to be larger than the company initially described.

On Thursday, Superior Court Judge Kimberly Best approved the consent order filed by the Department of Environmental Quality and the company last week in Mecklenburg County court.

Under the agreement, Colonial Pipeline must carry out specific remedies related to the August 2020 spill in the Oehler Nature Preserve near Huntersville, as well as pay nearly \$5 million in penalties and investigative costs.

The company initially reported the size of the spill, which occurred about 14 miles north of Charlotte, at 273,000 gallons but revised the estimate to 1.2 million gallons in January 2021. About 1.4 million gallons of product have been recovered at the site to date, the DEQ said in a news release.

The order stems from a lawsuit last fall in which DEQ called on Colonial to take a number of steps, including the removal, treatment or control any source of petroleum, polyfluoroalkyl—known as PFAS—or other contaminants that have the potential to contaminate groundwater.

Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline, which delivers about 45% of the fuel consumed on the East Coast, said last week that it will “take every appropriate step at the site to remediate it consistent with all regulatory requirements.”

## EARLY VOTING BEGINS FOR JULY 26 CITY, COUNTY ELECTIONS IN NC

(AP)—Early in-person voting began on Thursday for the July 26 local elections for positions to serve in over a dozen North Carolina municipalities or counties.

Voters in Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Hickory, Mooresville and Sanford are choosing mayors, city council members, or both. Mayors Vi Lyles of Charlotte, Nancy Vaughan of Greensboro and Mitch Colvin of Fayetteville are all seeking reelection.

The elections also include runoffs in Cary, New Bern, Rocky Mount and Statesville and for school boards in Franklin and Jackson counties.

And primary nominations will be decided for the Democratic candidate for Wake County sheriff and the Republican candidate for Graham County sheriff. The top two candidates in the May 17 primary in these races advanced to what's called the “second primary.”

Early voting sites will close at 3 p.m. July 23. Some county election boards will open sites the weekend of July 17–18.

People who aren't registered to vote can still sign up and vote at the early voting sites. Mail-in absentee voting is also allowed for those who are already registered.

Municipal elections are usually held in odd-numbered years, but the legislature shifted some to this year because of delays in receiving the 2020 census results needed to redraw district boundaries.

## NORTH CAROLINA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO HEALTHCARE FRAUD

(AP)—A North Carolina woman who controlled two healthcare companies pleaded guilty Wednesday to charges resulting from a scheme in which she collected \$17 million after the companies billed Medicare for medical equipment it never delivered, a prosecutor said.

Tanya Parrish Grant, 51, of Raleigh carried out her scheme through her companies, which provided back, shoulder, knee, and wrist braces and other equipment to Medicare beneficiaries, according to a news release from U.S. Attorney Michael Easley.

The news release said Grant's companies billed Medicare for more than \$50 million between 2014 and 2021. Medicare paid her more than \$17 million, which she used to buy homes in Raleigh and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., a Porsche and several Land Rovers, among other things, prosecutors said.

Grant paid companies in India and Pakistan to provide lists of Medicare patient identities. Her companies then billed Medicare for equipment she claimed to have provided to patients, the news release said.

An investigation also showed that Grant's companies sent bills for 422 people who were dead, and when she was audited, Grant forged physician orders to support the billings.

Grant faces up to 10 years in prison when she is sentenced later this year.

## POLICE: 2 KIDS AMONG 6 WOUNDED IN N.C. DRIVE-BY SHOOTING

CLINTON (AP)—Two children were among six people who were wounded Saturday night in an apparent drive-by shooting, police in eastern North Carolina said.

Officers responded to a home for a report of shots fired around 9:30 p.m. Saturday, the Clinton Police Department said in a news release. They found six people suffering from apparent gunshot wounds.

A preliminary investigation suggests suspects arrived in a car and drove past the home, where people were gathered outside. They circled the block and then opened fire toward the home, striking the victims in what appeared to be a targeted attack, according to the news release.

Injured were four adults, a 12-year-old boy and a 17-month-old boy. They were taken to a hospital and all listed in stable condition, police said.

the Texas law so far.

Bernadette Meyler, a professor at Stanford Law School, said it's not clear whether judgments against out-of-state abortion providers would hold up in courts, especially if they are not advertising their services in states with bans.

But she also said it's not clear that the liberal states are on firm legal ground to protect their residents from any out-of-state litigation.

“Probably, they assume that some of the laws that they're passing won't be upheld or may not be upheld, and they're trying to come up with as much as possible in order to resist the effects of the Dobbs decision,” Meyler said.

The resistance to cooperating with abortion-related investigations could hold up, though, she said. Places that declared themselves “sanctuary cities” and refused to cooperate with federal immigration investigations during former President Donald Trump's presidency were able to carry out similar policies.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, Planned Parenthood President Alexis McGill Johnson said her group and other advocates for abortion access are pushing for the protections. “Everywhere we can push the imagination of what a free and equal world looks like,” she said, “we are working with those governors.”

Connecticut was the first state to pass a law to protect abortion providers, patients and others from legal action taken by other

states. Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont signed it in May, before the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade.

“In accordance with Connecticut law, we will resist any attempt by another state to criminalize or intrude on a woman's private and lawful healthcare decisions,” Connecticut Attorney General William Tong said in a statement last week.

The Democratic governors of Minnesota, New Mexico, Nevada, California and Washington and the moderate Republican governor in liberal Massachusetts all signed executive orders within days of the ruling to prohibit cooperation with other states that might interfere with abortion access.

“Residents seeking access will be protected, providers will be protected, and abortion is and will continue to be legal, safe and accessible, period,” said New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, who has described the order as a preventative measure.

One of the largest abortion providers in Texas announced Wednesday that it's planning to move its operations to bordering New Mexico. Whole Woman's Health announced Wednesday that it is looking to establish a new clinic in a New Mexico city near the state line to provide first- and second-trimester abortions.

The Democratic-controlled Massachusetts House of Representatives approved a bill that aims to protect abortion providers and people seeking abortions

from actions taken by other states. Delaware's Democratic governor signed legislation expanding abortion access, with various legal protections for abortion providers and patients, including out-of-state residents receiving abortions in Delaware.

New Jersey Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy signed two bills Friday that moved swiftly in the Democratic-led Legislature following the ruling. The new laws aim to protect the right of those from outside the state to get abortion services within its borders and bar extradition of people involved in reproductive health care services should they face charges in another state.

Murphy said he was “overwhelmingly angry” that he had to sign the bills, but equally as proud to do so.

“These laws will make New Jersey a beacon of freedom for every American woman,” he said during a signing ceremony in Jersey City, not far from the Statue of Liberty.

In Washington state, the governor prohibited the state patrol from cooperating with out-of-state abortion investigations or prosecutions, but he noted that he didn't have jurisdiction over local law enforcement agencies. The executive in the county surrounding Seattle said Tuesday that its sheriff's office and other executive branch departments will not cooperate with out-of-state prosecutions of abortion providers or patients.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's

office has said the state will refuse non-fugitive extradition for criminal prosecutions around abortion, but said an executive order is not needed.

Some progressive prosecutors around the U.S. have already declared that they won't enforce some of the most restrictive, punitive anti-abortion laws. Police in Nashville on Wednesday released a statement saying they “are not abortion police” a day after the city council passed a resolution calling on the department to make abortion investigations a low priority.

City council members in two other liberal cities in conservative states—New Orleans and Austin, Texas—have made called for similar resolutions.

*Hannah Schoenbaum 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. AP/Report for America corps member Claire Rush also contributed from Portland, Oregon. Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and Schoenbaum reported from Raleigh, North Carolina. Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Jim Anderson in Denver; Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville; and Patrick Whittle in Portland, Maine.*

## States Move To Protect—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Court Eyes Abuse Claim Ext—CONTINUED FROM PAGE

reviving statutes of limitations differently over time, the lawyers wrote.

“Delay and uncertainty about whether lawsuits filed under the revival provision can proceed would perpetuate the very harms that the (SAFE) Act seeks to redress,” according to the brief, signed by state Solicitor General Ryan Park. More than 20 states have passed legisla-

tion in recent years that have revived time-barred civil claims for child sexual abuse, his brief said.

Noah Hock, a lawyer representing the Gaston County Board of Education, contended there was no need for bypassing the Court of Appeals, calling the provision's unconstitutionality a “well-settled legal principle in North Carolina.”

“Well-intentioned as it may have been, the revival window has opened every school, every church, every nonprofit, every youth organization in our state to liability for acts alleged to have occurred decades ago,” Hock wrote.

Gary Scott Goins, the other defendant in and a former wrestling coach at East Gaston High School, was convicted of 17

sex-related crimes in 2014 and sentenced to at least 34 years in prison.

The Republican-controlled legislature approved the SAFE Act unanimously, and it was signed into law by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. The measure also extended going forward the statute of limitations for both criminal and civil claims until a plaintiff reaches age 28.

## Trust Wanes, Conspiracy...—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and media.

A poll conducted last year by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that just 16 percent of Americans say democracy is working well or extremely well. Another 38 percent said it's working only somewhat well.

Other surveys reveal how many people in the United States now doubt the media, politicians, science and even each other.

The distrust has gone so deep that even groups that seem ideologically aligned are questioning each others' motives and intentions.

On the day before Independence Day in Boston this year, a group of about 100 masked men carrying fascist flags marched through the city. Members proudly uploaded videos and photos of the march to online forums popular with supporters of former President Donald Trump and QAnon adherents, who believe a group of satanic, cannibalistic child molesters secretly runs the globe.

Instead of praise, the White supremacists were met with incredulity. Some posters said the marchers were clearly FBI agents or members of antifa—shorthand for anti-fascists—looking to defame Trump supporters. It didn't matter that the men boasted of their involvement and pleaded to be believed. “Another false flag,” wrote one self-described conservative on Telegram.

Similarly, when an extremist

website that sells unregulated ghost guns—firearms without serial numbers—asked its followers about their July 4th plans, several people responded by accusing the group of working for the FBI. When someone claiming to be Q, the figure behind QAnon, reappeared online recently, many conservatives who support the movement speculated that the new Q was actually a government plant.

This past week, when a Georgia monument that some conservative Christians criticized as satanic was bombed, many posters on far-right message boards cheered. But many others said they didn't believe the news.

“I don't trust it. I'm still thinking ff,” wrote one woman on Twitter, referencing “false flag,” a term commonly used by conspiracy theorists to describe an event they think was staged.

The global public relations firm Edelman has conducted surveys about public trust for more than two decades, beginning after the 1999 World Trade Organization's meeting in Seattle was marred by anti-globalization riots. Tonia Reis, director of Edelman's Trust Barometer surveys, said trust is a precious commodity that's vital for the economy and government to function.

“Trust is absolutely essential to everything in society working well,” Reis said. “It's one of those things that, like air, people don't think about it until they realize they don't have it, or they've lost it or damaged it. And then it can

be too late.”

For experts who study misinformation and human cognition, the fraying of trust is tied to the rise of the internet and the way it can be exploited on contentious issues of social and economic change.

Distrust and suspicion offered obvious advantages to small bands of early humans trying to survive in a dangerous world, and those emotions continue to help people gauge personal risk today. But distrust is not always well suited to the modern world, which requires people to trust the strangers who inspect their food, police their streets and write their news. Democratic institutions, with their regulations and checks and balances, are one way of adding accountability to that trust.

When that trust breaks down, polarization and anxiety increases, creating opportunities for people pushing their own “alternative facts.”

“People can't fact check the world,” said Dr. Richard Friedman, a New York City psychiatrist and professor at Weill Cornell Medical College who has written about the psychology of trust and belief. “They're awash in competing streams of information, both good and bad. They're anxious about the future, and there are a lot of bad actors with the ability to weaponize that fear and anxiety.”

Those bad actors include grifters selling bad investments or sham remedies for COVID-19,

Russian disinformation operatives trying to undermine Western democracies, or even home-grown politicians like Trump, whose lies about the 2020 election spurred the Jan. 6 attack.

Research and surveys show belief in conspiracy theories is common and widespread. Believers are more likely to get their information from social media than professional news organizations. The rise and fall of particular conspiracy theories are often linked to real-world events and social, economic or technological change.

Like Wilson, people who believe in one conspiracy theory are likely to believe in others too, even if they are mutually contradictory. A 2012 paper, for instance, looked at beliefs surrounding the death of Princess Diana of Wales in a 1997 car crash. Researchers found that subjects who believed strongly that Diana was murdered said they also felt strongly that she could have faked her own death.

Wilson said his belief in conspiracies began on Sept. 11, 2001, when he couldn't accept that the towers could be knocked down by airliners. He said he found information on the internet that confirmed his beliefs, and then began to suspect there were conspiracies behind other world events.

“You have to put it all together yourself,” Wilson said. “The hidden reality, what's really going on, they don't want you to know.”

## Record Inflation Shrinks—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

100 largest metro areas. Additionally, during these same years, the number of neighborhoods affordable to Black households dropped by 14 percent.

“Shrinking neighborhood affordability and the dearth of affordable neighborhoods that provide the necessary conditions for health, well-being, and economic success in many large metros are reinforcing longstanding patterns of racial segregation and creating new ones,” concludes this report.

Other new research from Freddie Mac sought to identify the causes of soaring home prices and where affordable homes might still be found.

What drove home price growth, and can it continue? Freddie Mac's new report found four factors driving escalating home costs:

Record low mortgage rates in 2020 and 2021 generated a race to beat future rate increases;

Home inventories were limited due to underbuilding on one hand, and below average distressed sales on the other; The number of first-time homebuyers grew due in part to favorable age demographics; and many consumers left high-cost cities for cheaper ones that already had a housing shortage.

Where affordable homes can be found, brings to mind an old adage in real estate, “location, location, location.” “As of February 2022, migration out of the largest 25 cities remains three times higher than the rate pre-pandemic,” states the Freddie Mac report.

“The most significant increase in migration has been to mid-sized metro areas with populations between 500,000 to 1 million, followed by smaller mid-sized metros and smaller metro areas.”

The irony is that today, many consumers are paying more for

fair market rent (FMR) than many monthly mortgages that lead to home equity and wealth.

The down payment—rather than the monthly mortgage note—is the primary barrier to homeownership for many renters. With a rising cost of living, few—if any—dollars remain at the end of a month for many families. And even if a family has managed to save a few hundred dollars or more, home down payments on the private market are tens of thousands of dollars.

Some home lenders may offer adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs) as an alternative to cash-strapped buyers. But the key word in these loans is “adjustable.” When loan interest resets occur, borrowers should plan for higher interest rates. It would also be prudent to remember that the foreclosure crisis of the early 2000s was fueled by high-cost mortgage loans that left millions of Black and Latino home-

owners either without a home or remaining in one with a loan balance larger than its market value.

If this nation really wants to address its affordable housing crisis, then it is time to give Black America a level playing field with access to affordable and sustainable mortgages. It is equally important to diversify new construction housing.

Currently, the vast majority of new construction housing—whether for rent or for purchase—are for higher-income consumers, leaving moderate and low-income families with severely shrinking housing options.

Every family of every income needs a home. Effective housing reforms would offer both access and affordability—not either-or.

*Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.*

## 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.

Phone: 919-834-5558

e-mail: info@caro.news

www.caro.news

Facebook: TheCaroNews

Twitter: TheCaroNews

# Business & Finance

## Musk Abandons Deal To Buy Twitter; They Say They'll Sue

By Barbara Ortutay,  
Tom Krisher and  
Matt O'Brien

Associated Press

Elon Musk announced Friday that he will abandon his tumultuous \$44 billion offer to buy Twitter after the company failed to provide enough information about the number of fake accounts. Twitter immediately fired back, saying it would sue the Tesla CEO to uphold the deal.

The likely unraveling of the acquisition was just the latest twist in a saga between the world's richest man and one of the most influential social media platforms, and it may portend a titanic legal battle ahead.

Twitter could have pushed for a \$1 billion breakup fee that Musk agreed to pay under these circumstances. Instead, it looks ready to fight to complete the purchase, which the company's board has approved and CEO Parag Agrawal has insisted he wants to consummate.

In a letter to Twitter's board, Musk lawyer Mike Ringler complained that his client had for nearly two months sought data to judge the prevalence of "fake or spam" accounts on the social media platform.

"Twitter has failed or refused to provide this information. Sometimes Twitter has ignored Mr. Musk's requests, sometimes it has rejected them for reasons that appear to be unjustified, and sometimes it has claimed to comply while giving Mr. Musk incomplete or unusable information," the letter said.

Musk also said the information is fundamental to Twitter's business and financial performance, and is needed to finish the merger.

In response, the chair of Twitter's board, Bret Taylor, tweeted that the board is "committed to closing the transaction on the price and terms agreed upon" with Musk and "plans to pursue legal action to enforce the merger agreement. We are confident we will prevail in the Delaware

Court of Chancery."

The trial court in Delaware frequently handles business disputes among the many corporations, including Twitter, that are incorporated there.

Former President Donald Trump weighed in on his own social platform, Truth Social: "THE TWITTER DEAL IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE 'TRUTH'". Musk said in May that he would allow Trump, who was banned from Twitter following the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol, back onto the platform.

Much of the drama surrounding the deal has played out on Twitter, with Musk—who has more than 100 million followers—lamenting that the company was failing to live up to its potential as a platform for free speech.

On Friday, shares of Twitter fell 5 percent to \$36.81, well below the \$54.20 that Musk agreed to pay. Shares of Tesla, meanwhile, climbed 2.5 percent to \$752.29. After the market closed and Musk's letter was published, Twitter's stock continued to decline while Tesla climbed higher.

"This is a disaster scenario for Twitter and its board," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives wrote in a note to investors. He predicted a long court fight by Twitter to either restore the deal or get the \$1 billion breakup fee.

On Thursday, Twitter sought to shed more light on how it counts spam accounts in a briefing with journalists and company executives. Twitter said it removes 1 million spam accounts each day. The accounts represent well below 5 percent of its active user base each quarter.

To calculate how many accounts are malicious spam, Twitter said it reviews "thousands of accounts" sampled at random, using both public and private data such as IP addresses, phone numbers, location and account behavior when active, to determine whether an account is real.

Last month, Twitter offered Musk access to its "fire hose" of raw data on hundreds of millions

of daily tweets, according to multiple reports at the time, though neither the company nor Musk confirmed that.

One of the chief reasons Musk gave for his interest in taking Twitter private was his belief he could add value to the business by getting rid of its spam bots—the same problem that he's now citing as a reason to end the deal.

"This whole process has been bizarre," said Christopher Bouzy, founder of research firm Bot Sentinel, which tracks fake Twitter accounts used for disinformation or harassment. "He knew about this problem. It's odd that he would use bots and trolls and inauthentic accounts as a way of getting out of the deal."

On the other hand, Bouzy said, the letter from Musk's legal team makes some valid critiques of Twitter's lack of transparency, including its apparent refusal to provide Musk with the same level of internal data it offers some of its big customers.

"It just seems as if they're hiding something," said Bouzy, who also believes the number of fake or spam Twitter accounts is higher than what the company has reported.

Musk's lawyer also alleged that Twitter broke the agreement when it fired two top managers and laid off a third of its talent-acquisition team.

The sale agreement, he wrote, required Twitter to "seek and obtain consent" if it deviated from conducting normal business. Twitter was required to "preserve substantially intact the material components of its current business organization," the letter said.

Musk's flirtation with buying Twitter appeared to begin in late March. That's when Twitter said he contacted members of its board—including co-founder Jack Dorsey—and told them he was buying up shares of the company and was interested in either joining the board, taking Twitter private or starting a competitor.

Then, on April 4, he revealed in a regulatory filing that he had



**WON'T DO IT**—After hemming and hawing for a couple of months, Elon Musk on Friday said that Twitter wasn't forthcoming on the number of fake or bot accounts, and still won't tell him. Under those circumstances, he said, he couldn't go through with the deal to buy the company. Twitter responded: "Right or wrong, we had a deal," and promised to sue.

became the company's largest shareholder after acquiring a 9 percent stake worth about \$3 billion.

At first, Twitter offered Musk a seat on its board. But six days later, Agrawal tweeted that Musk would not be joining the board after all. His bid to buy the company came together quickly after that.

When Musk agreed to buy Twitter for \$54.20 per share, he inserted a "420" marijuana reference into his price. He sold roughly \$8.5 billion worth of shares in Tesla to help fund the purchase, then strengthened his

commitments of more than \$7 billion from a diverse group of investors including Silicon Valley heavy hitters like Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison.

Inside Twitter, Musk's offer was met with confusion and falling morale, especially after Musk publicly criticized one of Twitter's top lawyers involved in content-moderation decisions.

Groups opposing the takeover from the outset—including those advocating for women, minorities and LGBTQ people—cheered Friday's news.

"Despite what Musk may claim, this deal isn't ending be-

cause of Twitter bots or spam accounts. This deal is collapsing because of Elon Musk's own erratic behavior, embrace of extremists and bad business decisions," said Angelo Carusone, president of Media Matters, a left-leaning nonprofit watchdog group that's been critical of Musk's Twitter bid.

Musk, he said, "made it clear that he would roll back Twitter's community standards and safety guidelines, which would turn the platform into a fever swamp of dangerous conspiracy theories, partisan chicanery and White supremacist radicalization."

## Canada Outage Leaves Many Without Mobile, Internet Service

TORONTO (AP)—A widespread network outage left many Canadians without mobile and internet service for most of Friday, disrupting police, business and court services as crowds flocked to work at coffee shops with Wi-Fi.

Rogers Communications Inc. said it started restoring service late in the day and said its teams "are working hard to get everyone back online as quickly as possible."

The outage began early in the morning and stretched into the evening, interrupting services across retailers and credit card processors, police and courts, airlines and train networks.

The company offered no explanation for what caused the outage, how many customers were impacted or where they were located.

"We know how much you rely on our networks. Today we have let you down. We are working to make this right as quickly as we can. We will continue to keep you updated, including when services will be back online."

Toronto's Go Transit said in a tweet that parts of its system were affected by the outage and fares could not be purchased using debit or credit cards. E-tickets may also be unavailable, it warned.

Police in Toronto and Ottawa warned of connection problems when Canadians called 911.

"If your call fails, please try again, or call from a landline or cellphone with another provider," Ottawa Police said on Twitter.

The outage forced the postponement of The Weeknd's tour stop at Toronto's Rogers Centre. The Toronto date was one of only two set for Canada.

Scarborough Health Network, which operates three hospitals and eight satellite sites in Toronto, requested physicians and staff to head to their workplaces for any on-call shifts until the disruption is resolved.

In Quebec, Peter Nygard's Montreal court appearance on sex-related charges was put off because the fashion mogul, who is detained in a Toronto jail, couldn't connect by video conference. His bail hearing will

now take place next week.

Service Canada tweeted it too was impacted by outage, with call centers and offices, including ones that issue passports, affected. The outage stands to exacerbate passport delays that have left Canadians lined up outside Service Canada offices for lengthy periods of time as the government works through a backlog.

Canada Border Services Agency warned that people may not be able to complete submissions through the ArriveCAN app—a mandatory requirement for all cross-border travelers.

Many retailers and businesses had trouble accepting payments because Interac, which processes electronic financial transactions, said its online and check-out debit offerings and e-transfer services were impacted.

As a result, the Confederation Bridge, which links the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, was unable to accept debit cards Friday morning. Canada's Wonderland in Vaughan, Ontario, said amusement park goers could only pay with credit cards.

## Media Scramble To Remove Videos

By Kelvin Chan

AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP)—Twitter, Facebook parent Meta and other social media companies scrambled Friday to police videos on their platforms of the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that break rules on harmful content.

Multiple videos of the attack by a gunman who fired a homemade, double-barreled weapon twice at Abe circulated on social media. Some only show the moments before and after the attack while others showed both shots.

Abe, who stepped down in 2020, was shot moments into a speech, airlifted to hospital, and later pronounced dead. Police arrested the suspected gunman at the scene.

Twitter said its enforcement

teams were working to "address harmful content" relating to the attack by "proactively removing" material that violates its rules, which include restrictions on sensitive media including graphic violence.

Twitter urged users to flag up any potentially sensitive material of the attack so it can take action. Videos of the attack could still be found easily on Twitter many hours after the attack.

Meta said it was deleting videos depicting the moment of the attack and had disabled the suspect's Facebook and Instagram accounts.

"We are deeply saddened and shocked at the passing of the former Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe," Meta said in a prepared statement.

"We do not and will not tolerate any violent behavior on our

platform. To keep our platform a safe place to connect, we are working to remove any violating content related to the incident," it said.

Meta said it took action under its policy on dangerous individuals, and that it's labelling still photos of the attack as "disturbing."

YouTube said its systems are giving prominence to videos related to the attack from "authoritative sources" such as news organizations, the video sharing site said, adding that it will remove any content that breaks its rules, which include a ban on violent or graphic content.

TikTok said it's working to rapidly "identify content, accounts and hashtags related to this tragic incident" and removing any content and accounts that violates its rules.

## NHTSA To Investigate Deadly Fla. Tesla Crash

By Tom Krisher

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT, Mich. (AP)—The U.S. government's auto safety watchdog is sending investigators to another Tesla crash, this time one that killed two people along Interstate 75 in Florida.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration confirmed

Friday that it sent a Special Crash Investigations team to probe the Wednesday crash into the back of a semi-trailer at a rest area near Gainesville.

The agency would not say if the Tesla was operating on one of the company's partially automated driving systems.

The 2015 model year Tesla was traveling on Interstate 75 about

2 p.m. Wednesday when, for an unknown reason, it exited into a rest area. It then went into the parking lot and hit the back of a parked Walmart Freightliner tractor-trailer, the Florida Highway Patrol said in a release.

The driver and passenger, both from Lompoc, Calif., were pronounced dead at the scene.

Highway Patrol Lt. P.V. Riordan said Friday night in an email that his agency will determine whether any partially automated features were in use. "That is a consideration that will be explored during our investigation," he said.

A message was left Friday seeking comment from Austin, Texas-based Tesla.

NHTSA is investigating 37 crashes involving automated driving systems since 2016. Of those, 30 involved Teslas, including 11 fatal crashes that have killed a total of 15 people.

The agency also said in documents that it's investigating a fatal pedestrian crash in California involving a Tesla Model 3 that happened this month. It also sent a team to probe a Cruise automated vehicle crash in California that caused a minor injury in June.

NHTSA also has been investigating Teslas on Autopilot crash-

ing into parked emergency vehicles. In a separate probe, the agency is looking at Teslas on Autopilot braking for no apparent reason.

Last week, newly confirmed NHTSA Administrator Steven Cliff told The Associated Press that the agency is intensifying efforts to understand the risks posed by automated vehicle technology so it can decide what regulations may be necessary to protect drivers, passengers and pedestrians. He also says automated systems such as automatic emergency braking have huge potential to save lives.

In June, NHTSA released data from automakers and tech companies showing nearly 400 crashes over a 10-month period involving vehicles with partially automated driver-assist systems, including 273 with Teslas.

The agency cautioned against using the numbers to compare automakers, saying it didn't weight them by the number of vehicles from each manufacturer that use the systems, or how many miles those vehicles traveled.

Automakers reported crashes from July of last year through May 15 under an order from the agency, which is examining such crashes broadly for the first



## Classifieds



### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety has the following contract in Edgecombe County out for bid: C-11491 Edgecombe YDC Retrocommissioning. The bid opening is scheduled for: Thursday, 07/28/2022. To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/AGENCY/PDF/148905100.pdf>



### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety has the following contract in Greene County out for bid: C-11488 Greene CI Roofing Repairs. The bid opening is scheduled for: Thursday, 08/04/2022. To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/AGENCY/PDF/14886800.pdf>

# Opinion



## Time For A Convention Of The People, By The People And For The People

By Kary Love

PeaceVoice

Jefferson often conceded the Declaration of Independence did not state any new ideas but those that had long circulated amongst English and Colonial thinkers. One critical idea was that all power resided in the people, and the people had rights that preceded government. Government was given certain limited powers by the people, while the people retained all their rights, and government had a duty to preserve and protect those rights while remaining within the limits of power granted. If government were derelict in that duty, the power and the rights returned to the people who were empowered to “alter or abolish” the government and establish a new one better able to protect their rights and less able to abuse its powers.

Jefferson and other liberty thinkers of the American colonies were familiar with the writing of the “great republican martyr” Algernon Sidney who in his “Discourse Concerning Government” had said:

“[A]ll human constitutions are subject to corruption, and must perish, unless they are timely renewed and reduced to their first principles,” and that “Good governments admit of changes in the Superstructures, whilst the Foundations remain unchangeable.”

Ninety years after Sydney, another republican writer who influenced Jefferson and others of the time, James Burgh, wrote:

“All lawful authority, legislative and executive, originates from the people. Power in the people is like the light in the sun, native, original, inherent, and unlimited by anything human. In governors (those given power in government), it may be compared to the reflected light of the moon; for it is only borrowed, delegated, and limited by the intention of the people, whose it is and to whom governors are to consider themselves responsible, while the people are answerable only to God... And happy is that people, who having originally so principled their constitution, that they themselves can without violence to it, lay hold of its power, wield it as they please, and turn it, when necessary, against those to whom it was entrusted, and who have exerted it to the prejudice of its original proprietors (the people).”

And so, Jefferson stood on the shoulders of giants. Because the American Constitution was built upon the Declaration of Independence, reason compels the conclusion, that if government becomes destructive of the rights of the people, the people can form in convention and redress and reform the destruction. Burgh predicted such a result may follow from the tendency of constitutions to be corrupted by long exercise of power by those entrusted with power by the people, because humans have a foot of clay, and will use power for self-interest:

“in planning a government by representation, the people ought to provide against their own annihilation. They ought to establish a regular and constitutional method of acting by and from themselves, without, or even in opposition to, their representatives if necessary.”

Knowing elected representatives could be carried away by power and use it against the “natural, inalienable rights” of the people, Jefferson himself wrote a Constitution for the State of Virginia, enabling the people to call conventions to restore the bounds of legitimate governance should those elected default and usurp power to the detriment of the people.

The Declaration of Independence proclaims this power resides in the people despite opposition by their government. It is in fact when government has gone so far in its abuses that its corruption purports to deny such power to the people that such power is precisely at its most necessary and its exercise most proper.

It appears America is approaching that juncture, the clash between government unmoored from the anchor of the Constitution and its invasion of the inalienable rights of the people.

The recent reduction of more than one-half of the American people to a form of enslavement known to Black female slaves before the Civil War, forced reproduction, has returned. A surprising upswelling of American revolutionary spirits has erupted across the nation in revulsion at this restoration of slavery, especially repugnant as it emerged from the Supreme Court which, with its life tenure, is supposed to act as a bulwark, a check and balance, against the invasions of the legislative and executive branches more amenable to political considerations of the moment.

Although it is impossible to list the entire tsunami of invasions of the rights of the people occurring almost daily, just the last several days have seen these emerge: in addition to overturning *Roe v. Wade*, immunity from civil rights lawsuits for all federal agents, and including local police who have been “federalized,” continued evisceration of the right against double jeopardy.

This follows prior invasions such as passing laws subjecting the people to all manner of invasive searches and surveillance, censoring our speech and stifling our expression, declaring Americans anti-government extremists for daring to disagree with its dictates, incarcerating persons for criticizing government policies on social or other media, and encouraging Americans to spy and snitch on their fellow citizens, and allowing government agents to grope, strip, search, taser, shoot and kill people with impunity in violation of the supreme law applicable to all.

More egregious, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which supposedly exists solely to preserve the lives and liberty of the people in America, has declared much of America itself a “Constitution Free Zone” anywhere with 100 miles of an ocean, great lake or other border, thus transforming much of the nation where most the population resides unprotected by the “supreme law” every agent of the DHS has sworn to uphold.

The plain hypocrisy of swearing an oath to the Constitution while simultaneously declaring it inapplicable to most Americans gives rise to serious questions as to the legitimacy and fidelity to the rule of law of such DHS agents, and their governmental enablers. Does it not follow from the bald and duplicitous erection of “Constitution Free Zones,” that government appears to be at war with the people and their fundamental rights?

But the most threatening invasion of all involves the peoples’ needs to “provide against their own annihilation.” The Constitution, being human, has been subject to corruption, but none so deadly to the right to life as the delegation, unlawful and immoral, from the Congress to the President. That delegation includes the horrific power to unilaterally launch nuclear war, devoid of all checks and balances.

The exercise of that power, by a president tantrumming and demanding the nuclear football rather than tossing a plate of food against a White House wall, actually would result in the peoples’ annihilation.

The delegation of the war power is effectively the victory of George III (and all his predecessor Kings, Emperors, Czars and Caesars) over the principles of the Declaration of Independence, it transforms the servant of the people and the law, the President, into a monstrous tyrant exceeding any in history, which can only be prop-

erly identified as the Nuclear Dictator. A moral people, confronted with such a satanic result, are called upon to reflect: has our constitution been so degraded, so deformed, so contrary to our lives and liberty, that we must alter or abolish it or default on our duty to our progeny to pass on to them “the blessings of liberty?”

So, like the sun, the power of light, of liberty, of life, redounds to the people. The day is come to honestly admit, our Constitution, like all before it, has succumbed to corruption and no longer exists in any honest fidelity to its first principles: rather it threatens the annihilation of the people themselves.

The DOI was intended as a Universal Declaration of Inalienable Human Rights, encompassing all the people of the world, and as the degeneration into Nuclear Dictatorship threatens all humankind, it is clearly the duty of humanity to join the movement to declare a new dawn, from the original light, the sun of the peoples’ power.

A Peoples’ Convention to restore their power, their inalienable rights and renounce and repudiate the corruption of self-interest, the unequal application of law, and the efforts to reimpose a state of enslavement upon many by the few, is necessary and must be shortly convened.

It is folly to expect those currently using power for their selfish benefit to relinquish their power having so long abused it for self-interested ends. Elections have failed to curb this trend.

Some, so frustrated by grievances long endured, resorted to mistaken violent insurrection on January 6, 2021. Such violence is anathema to self-governing people and smacks of the despotic, as we have the peaceable and lawful power to reform the Constitution.

Too long have We the People lived in the reflected light of the moon. We owe to our children a new sunrise illuminated by the power and the rights of the People. Power to the People: convene a Peoples’ Constitutional Convention to remedy the extant defects consistent with the true meaning of July 4.

Kary Love, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a Michigan attorney.



## The Lost Conversation

By Winslow Myers

The War Preventive Initiative

Eight days of rafting down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon with my daughter promised to be an exceptional experience. Introducing myself to a fellow voyager, a Texan, I joked that surely Texas wasn’t really planning to secede, because it would be a pain to have to obtain a visa to visit Austin. This didn’t seem to go over very well. Perhaps I had overreached. I retreated for the rest of the trip into an affable neutrality.

Turns out others did the same. There would be an occasional dig at Biden’s senility, or a whisper about Trump’s criminality, but soon a taboo began to govern the otherwise warm and caring sociability of our group. Even though we were a diverse assembly of 30 people, gay and straight, Black and White, aged 9 to 81, a freewheeling dialogue about politics or religion in the group at large was strictly off the conversational table. In spite of us all being citizens of one country floating down wild rapids together in our country’s most magnificent national park, on a deeper level we remained as alienated as groundhogs and gardeners.

And that was fair enough as far as it went: people had paid for a challenging outdoor adventure, not a seminar on current events or conflicting epistemologies. Both of which continued to unfold at top speed without us. While we were without internet in the Canyon, Roe was overturned, and the poised young assistant to Mark Meadows tied the ex-President ever closer to the planning of the January 6th insurrection.

Progressives opened political conversations among themselves and no doubt conservatives did also. But because I find loyalty to the ex-President or to gun rights so mysterious, as a progressive I would have welcomed some sort of dialogue with opposing views, though we all sensed it was a bridge too far.

What we did have in common was the experience of the river and the canyon. Sleeping outside in the dry 90 degree heat at night, we shared the closeness of the stars ringed by looming black towers of stone, stars that included a spiral arm of the Milky Way, a faint mist of light that feathered across the more familiar constellations.

One of our participants was heard to assert that creation began 6000 years ago. During a hike up a small side-canyon, our guides pointed out a visible manifestation of the Great Unconformity, where quartz-like crystals rested directly on schist, indicating a geological gap, an erosion of evidence of a billion and a half years of change. My daughter, a trained biologist, was over the moon to have found a small rock with fossil ancestors of sea stars compressed into it before there was even a canyon at all but only layers of sediment spread out under a vast shallow sea.

The scientific evidence of a 13.85 billion-year unfolding from matter to cellular life to mammals with a capacity to care for their offspring seems to erase a lot of unnecessary conflict between science and religion—again a rich possible theme for a dialogue that never was. The factions in our group seemed fatally inhibited, perceiving each other as an immovable “they.”

Still, there were unmistakable “we” experiences. Midway down the river came one that topped even the raft-swallowing green rapids and the mile-high stepped cliffs glowing in the morning sunlight. We had stopped at yet another dry side-channel. After a short hike up through narrowing walls of smooth stone, with no advance warning, we came upon a string quartet playing Elgar! Waterproofing their instruments, the musicians had arrived safely by raft to concertize in this most wildly improbable of venues.

The music drew us into the larger conversation of the universe with itself: an enigmatically self-organizing system had crushed and melted and swirled titanic masses of rock, which over hundreds of millions of years sank below and rose again above great seas, leaching out elements that combined into the first forms of cellular life—life that became self-sentient and sawed down other woody forms of life to fashion cellos to play notes derived from harmonies already built into the cosmos, harmonies drawn forth into distinct combinations by the mind of Bach or Elgar, now conveyed to insect-bitten, sweaty river voyagers by these generous performers.

Call this unfolding creative process God or Evolution or what you will, we were in it together, regardless of the lack of a conversation that might have led to some affirmation of our group’s interdependence as citizens of one country, or at least as humans on one planet. Secession from the universe is not an option—even for Texas.

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



## China’s Surveillance State And Its Meaning For Us

By Mel Gurtov

Portland State University

In a recent commentary, I discussed the visit to China of the UN’s chief human rights official on what proved to be a seriously misguided and rather naïve attempt to improve the conditions of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang province. An important element in that mass internment of innocent civilians is China’s ubiquitous surveillance system, which has facilitated the roundup of Chinese Muslims.

That system is not confined to the Uyghurs. It is a many-layered nationwide network designed to collect personal data for police and security units on every Chinese citizen whose behavior or personal characteristics might be troublesome to the authorities. In a word, no one is above suspicion.

Now, a *New York Times* investigative group has acquired over a “hundred thousand [Chinese] government bidding documents. They call for companies to bid on the contracts to provide surveillance technology, and include product requirements and budget size, and sometimes describe at length the strategic thinking behind the purchases.”

The documents make perfectly clear why China is often called the “surveillance state”: Its facial recognition technology, DNA analysis, and other tools that intrude into people’s identity go far beyond anything other countries use—or George Orwell imagined.

We already knew some dimensions of the Chinese surveillance system before the *Times* report. For instance, various sources told of Chinese hackers embedding malware in smartphones to track Uyghurs’ movements and conversations, even when they left China.

China’s ministry of public security announced plans to obtain the DNA via blood samples of tens of millions of male adults and children, with Xinjiang and Tibet the starting point for creating a data base to cover virtually the entire population.

Cameras with facial recognition capability are literally everywhere. Western publications on genetics abetted Chinese efforts to identify Uyghurs (as well as Tibetans) by carrying many articles that “had a co-author from the Chinese police, the military, the judiciary or some such government institution,” according to a Belgian geneticist.

The *Times* report based on contract bidding adds a good deal to this picture. Facial recognition cameras are now installed in private as well as public places. They are capable of collecting voice and iris prints, and race and gender information for inclusion in an ever-expanding data base. Phone tracking not only gives a person’s location but also usernames and certain activities, such as social connections and personal habits.

What do the Chinese authorities have to say about criticisms of the surveillance state?

On one hand, they defend it by insisting it’s necessary to protect against terrorism and crime. There are no abuses of human rights in Xinjiang, only “reeducation” to bring its ethnic majority into the modern age.

On the other hand, the authorities say the criticisms are based on “misinformation and disinformation,” leading to sanctions on Xinjiang products that seek to “contain China’s growth,” disrupt “the international trade order and destabilize global industrial and supply chains.”

As the UN’s recent mission found out, it is impossible to conduct an impartial on-the-spot investigation of either China’s defense or the inhumane punishments it is carrying out.

One action the international community can take is to name and shame the perpetrators of genocide in Xinjiang and Beijing.

Governments can also intercede with technological firms that enable the Chinese to collect and upgrade their surveillance.

Banning the import of products of forced labor, as the U.S. has now done with all Xinjiang-based exports, is another step.

To date, these steps have had limited success, demonstrating anew the difficulties in defending human rights when the means of repression are a matter of global commerce.

Think that the Chinese surveillance state is of no consequence for us? Intrusive technologies imbedded in social media are already part of our daily lives, monitoring our movement, personal tastes, social views, and even future plans.

Closed-circuit cameras track ordinary citizens and criminals alike. Now, consider how the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision might deepen the surveillance state here. If, for example, women must cross state lines, in violation of local law, to obtain an abortion or pills to induce abortion, will they be subject to official tracking for prosecution? Might every pregnant woman in a red state be forced to install a tracking device on her phone? Might anti-abortion states be able to access apps some women use to track their menstrual cycles, nabbing those women believed to be in the early stages of pregnancy?

Police already access email and text messages in cases where a woman is thought to have ended a pregnancy under questionable circumstances. The door will now be open in some states to bringing criminal charges based on cell phone data for an abortion in the first weeks of pregnancy.

I’m inclined to say that in states where abortion is outlawed—and, even worse, if the Supreme Court makes abortions illegal nationwide—the tools of a police state will be endorsed as necessary for full implementation of the law, just as in China.

The Chinese already use apps in cell phones to monitor and quarantine citizens who show signs of COVID. As Xi Jinping said, “Big data should be used as an engine to power the innovative development of public security work and a new growth point for nurturing combat capabilities.” You can bet that some American politicians believe the same, and have particular targets in mind—for starters, racial minorities, human rights protesters, and investigative journalists.

In China, ordinary people have no recourse if the surveillance system catches them. The days of private lawyers occasionally able to defend people in court are numbered. The police are all-powerful; few safeguards of privacy exist. Xi Jinping has provided a model of high-tech authoritarianism that can exist side by side with consistent economic growth.

We should beware.

Mel Gurtov is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Portland State University and blogs at *In the Human Interest*.