

Evictions Spike As Protections Disappear

By Michael Casey

Associated Press

Jada Riley thought she had beaten homelessness.

The 26-year-old New Orleans resident was finally making a steady income cleaning houses during the pandemic to afford a \$700-a-month, one-bedroom apartment. But she lost nearly all her clients after Hurricane Ida hit last year. Then she was fired from a grocery store job in February after taking time off to help a relative.

Two months behind on rent, she made the difficult decision last month to leave her apartment rather than risk an eviction judgment on her record. Now, she's living in her car with her 6-year-old son, sometimes spending nights at the apartments of friends or her son's father.

"I've slept outside for a whole year before. It's very depressing, I'm not going to lie," said Riley, who often doesn't have enough

money to buy gas or afford food every day.

"I don't want to have my son experience any struggles that I went through."

Eviction filings nationwide have steadily risen in recent months and are approaching or exceeding pre-pandemic levels in many cities and states. That's in stark contrast to the pandemic, when state and federal moratoriums on evictions, combined with \$46.5 billion in federal Emergency Rental Assistance, kept millions of families housed.

"I really think this is the tip of the iceberg," Shannon MacKenzie, executive director of Colorado Poverty Law Project, said of June filings in Denver, which were about 24 percent higher than the same time three years ago. "Our numbers of evictions are increasing every month at an astonishing rate, and I just don't see that abating any time soon."

According to The Eviction Lab, several cities are running far

above historic averages, with Minneapolis-St. Paul 91 percent higher in June, Las Vegas up 56 percent, Hartford, Connecticut, up 32 percent, and Jacksonville, Florida, up 17 percent. In Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, eviction filings in July were the highest in 13 years, officials said.

Some legal advocates said the sharp increase in housing prices due to inflation is partly to blame. Rental prices nationwide are up nearly 15 percent from a year ago and almost 25 percent from 2019, according to the real estate company Zillow. Rental vacancy rates, meanwhile, have declined to a 35-year low of 5.8 percent, according to the Census Bureau.

A report last month from the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that a tenant working full time needs to make nearly \$26 per hour on average nationally to afford a

(See **EVICTIONS SPIKE**, P. 2)



NOPLACE TO GO—Jada Riley sits in her car at night with her son Jayden Harris, 6, as she contemplates where she might spend the night. "I've slept outside for a whole year before. It's very depressing, I'm not going to lie," said Riley, who often doesn't have enough money to buy gas or afford food every day. I don't want to have my son experience any struggles that I went through." [Photo by Gerald Herbert/AP]

Conservatives Eye Constitution

By Nicholas Riccardi

Associated Press

DENVER, Colo. (AP)—The fliers piled up in mailboxes in central South Dakota like snow during a high-plains blizzard: "Transgender Sex Education in Schools?" one asked. "Vote Against Sex Ed Radical Mary Duvall for State Senate."

The mailers were part of a \$58,000 campaign against the five-term Republican lawmaker, an enormous sum of money in a place where the cost of running for a statehouse seat is typically in the low five figures. Despite the subject of the attack ads, Duvall was targeted not for her stance on sex education but for her opposition to a longshot bid by some conservatives to force a convention to amend the U.S. Constitution.

"I knew they were angry at me, but I had no idea this was going to be coming during my primary campaign," said Duvall, who ended up losing her race by 176 votes.

Duvall opposed legislation that would have added South Dakota to 19 other states calling for a gathering known as a convention of states, following a plan mapped out by a conservative group that wants to change parts of the United States' foundational document. When that number hits two-thirds of the states—or 34—under the procedure laid out in the Constitution, a convention would meet with the power to amend the 235-year-old document.

The campaign against Duvall was part of a more than \$600,000 push in at least five states earlier this year by the group, Convention of States Action, and its affiliates in Republican primaries to elect sympathetic lawmakers who could add more states to its column. Much of the money comes from groups that do not have to disclose their donors, masking the identity of who is funding the push to change the Constitution.

Mark Meckler, the group's president and former head of Tea Party Patriots, issued a brief statement saying the group was committed to being active in the midterms "in a big way."

For years, Convention of States Action has been a staple of the conservative political scene. But its engagement in primary campaigns marks an escalation at a time when parts of the conservative movement are testing the limits of the nation's political rulebook, pushing aggressive tactics from gerrymandering to voting restrictions.

The track record of the convention group's spending is spotty. In South Dakota, where the group and its affiliates spent more than \$200,000 targeting four state Senate seats, Duvall was the only one of its targets to lose. And the challenger who beat her, Jim Mehlhoff, said in an interview that he thinks the group's intervention hurt him.

"I didn't appreciate the negative tone of their mailers. It probably cost me some votes," said Mehlhoff, a former member

of Pierre's city commission who had his own base of support in

(See **CONSTITUTION**, P. 2)

White House Releases Policy Goals for Sub-Saharan Africa

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA

The White House has released broad new policy goals for sub-Saharan Africa, with the Biden-Harris administration seeking to tie democratic, economic, and security progress to that region and U.S. national security.

"Sub-Saharan Africa plays a critical role in advancing global priorities to the benefit of Africans and Americans," a senior White House official stated.

"The region will factor prominently in efforts to end the COVID-19 pandemic; tackle the climate crisis; reverse the global tide of democratic backsliding; address global food insecurity; promote gender equity and equality; strengthen an open and stable international system; shape the rules of the world on vital issues like trade, cyber, and emerging technologies; and confront the threat of terrorism, conflict, and transnational crime."

In outlining the new strategy, administration officials contended that greater openness and democracy would help counter harmful activities by China, Russia, and other opposition governments.

The administration believes that Beijing views Sub-Saharan Africa as an "arena to challenge the rules-based international order, advance its own narrow commercial and geopolitical interests, and weaken U.S. relations with African peoples and governments."

The policy outlines how the administration believes Russia "views the region as a permissive environment for parastatals and private military companies, often fomenting instability for strategic and financial benefit."

"We're incredibly concerned about the role of Russian mercenaries," one administration official stated.

According to the White House, nearly 70 percent of Africans strongly support democracy.

(See **WHITE HOUSE**, P. 2)



MASKS TO BE REQUIRED AGAIN AT GREAT SMOKY NATIONAL PARK

GATLINBURG, Tenn. (AP)—Masks will once again be required for visitors inside all Great Smoky Mountains National Park buildings due to the high transmission of the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to the park's website, the mask mandate will apply to all visitors regardless of vaccination status.

The policy was put in place to be "consistent with (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidance regarding areas of substantial or high transmission," the website said.

The CDC's website shows that Blount, Cocke and Sevier counties, which encompass the park in Tennessee, are currently considered high risk areas. In North Carolina, Swain and Haywood counties that also connect to the park are considered medium risk.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins say there were roughly 431 cases per 100,000 people in Tennessee over the past two weeks, which ranks 28th in the country for new cases per capita.

NC TEACHERS GROUP CRITICAL OF PROPOSED LICENSE, PAY OVERHAUL

(AP)—Members of North Carolina's leading teacher advocacy group criticized on Tuesday a proposed overhaul of public school instructor pay and licensing, saying that implementing such changes would make existing classroom staffing challenges even worse.

The state Department of Public Instruction released to the State Board of Education in April a "sample" licensure model that stemmed from recommendations made by subcommittees of a state educator preparation and standards commission.

Any final proposal would need formal approval from the state board, and ultimately from the legislature to fund it. But switching from the current licensure and salary model, which largely rewards teachers financially based on years of classroom experience, to one based on performance has the support of Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt and board chairman Eric Davis. They said last week the current model is not attracting enough people to teaching and to stay in the field.

At a news conference, North Carolina Association of Educators members said one solution is to raise all teacher pay through the existing salary schedule framework that currently omits experience-based increases for some of the most veteran teachers for a decade. Existing programs to encourage young people to enter the field also should be expanded and new ones created, NCAE Vice President Bryan Proffitt said.

"Our state already has the policies and pathways that we need to support recruitment and retention, but they lack the execution with fidelity and the necessary funding commitment from the leadership of the General Assembly," Proffitt said outside the state education building.

The DPI proposal would create several licensure levels, each with larger base salaries that ultimately would exceed the maximum salary on the current pay schedule, which is \$54,000 for 25 years of experience. The sample model presented earlier this year envisioned advanced-level teachers, with leadership roles in their schools earning \$73,000.

Moving to advanced licensing levels would depend in part on teachers showing instruction competence and improvement in student test scores. Supporters say the model would reward instructors who create better student outcomes. But Proffitt and others said such performance measures are subjective and flawed and will actually discourage people from making public education a lifetime profession.

"We deserve to be paid for our experience, without jumping through hoops or worrying if this year's paycheck will be different than next year's," said Kiana Espinoza, a Wake County middle school teacher and news conference speaker.

MUSK SAYS TWITTER DEAL COULD MOVE AHEAD WITH 'BOT' INFO

Elon Musk said Saturday his planned \$44 billion takeover of Twitter should move forward if the company can confirm some details about how it measures whether user accounts are 'spam bots' or real

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

FTC Looking To Corral Tech Firms' Data Collection

WASHINGTON (AP) — Whether it's the fitness tracker on your wrist, the "smart" home appliances in your house or the latest kids' fad going viral in online videos, they all produce a trove of personal data for big tech companies.

How that data is being used and protected has led to growing public concern and officials' outrage. And now federal regulators are looking at drafting rules

to crack down on what they call harmful commercial surveillance and lax data security.

The Federal Trade Commission announced the initiative Thursday, seeking public comment on the effects of companies' data collection and the potential benefit of new rules to protect consumers' privacy.

The FTC defines commercial surveillance as "the business of collecting, analyzing and prof-

iting from information about people."

In Congress, bipartisan condemnation of the data power of Meta — the parent of Facebook and Instagram — Google and other tech giants that have earned riches by aggregating consumer information used by online advertisers, has brought national data privacy legislation to its closest point ever to passage.

Around the country, parents'

concern has deepened over the impact of social media on children. Frances Haugen, a former Facebook data scientist, stunned Congress and the public last fall when she exposed internal company research showing apparent serious harm to some teens from Instagram. Those revelations were followed by senators grilling executives from YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat about what they're doing to ensure young users' safety in the wake of suicides and other harms to teens attributed by their parents to their usage of the platforms.

As concerns rise, social media platforms from Snapchat to TikTok to Instagram are adding new features they say will make their services safer and more age appropriate. But the changes rarely address the algorithms pushing endless content that can drag anyone, not just teens, into harmful rabbit holes.

The Democratic members of the FTC said Thursday it's imperative for Congress to pass a new law, but that the agency was taking action in the meantime by issuing the notice of proposed rules.

"Mass surveillance has heightened the risks and stakes of data breaches, deception, manipulation and other abuses," the FTC

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Evictions Spike As Protections Disappear—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

modest two-bedroom rental and \$21.25 for a one-bedroom. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour.

"Landlords are raising the rent and making it very unaffordable for tenants to stay," said Marie Claire Tran-Leung, the eviction initiative project director for the National Housing Law Project.

"Inflation has really shrunk the supply of housing that is avail-

able for people with the lowest incomes," she added. "Without more protections in place, which not all states have, a lot of those families will be rendered homeless."

Patrick McCloud, chief executive officer of the Virginia Apartment Management Association, said the trend is a return to normal. "No one likes evictions, but they are in some ways a reset

to the economy," McCloud said, adding that evictions have been "artificially depressed."

"Housing is based on supply and demand. And when no one moves and you have no vacancies, you have a tight market and prices go up."

Graham Bowman, a staff attorney with Legal Aid Society of Columbus, Ohio, said evictions there are rising—15 percent above historic averages in June alone—at a time when there are fewer places for those forced out to go.

Sheryl Lynne Smith was evicted in May from her two-bedroom townhouse in Columbus after she used her rent money to repair a sewage leak in the basement. Smith, who is legally blind and has a federal housing voucher, fears she won't be able to find anything by September when the voucher expires because of rising housing prices and the eviction on her record.

"It's very scary," said Smith, 53, whose temporary stay at a hotel funded through a state program ends this weekend.

In Boise, Idaho, Jeremy McKenney, 45, moved into his car last week after a judge sided with a property management company that nearly tripled the rent on his two-bedroom house. The Lyft and DoorDash driver will have to rent a hotel room whenever he has custody of his children, 9 and 12.

"It's definitely mind blowing," said McKenney, adding that everything on the market is beyond his reach even after a nonprofit offered to cover the security deposit. "I have never been homeless before. I have always had a roof over my head."

The other challenge is the federal emergency rental assistance that helped keep millions housed during the pandemic has dried up in some jurisdictions or been increasingly rejected by some landlords.

"What really gets me is there is rental assistance and so many landlords just don't want

it. They would rather throw someone on the street than take money," Eric Kwartler, managing attorney of Lone Star Legal Aid's Eviction Right to Counsel Project, which covers Houston and Harris County in Texas. "If you take the money, you can't evict them. They want them out."

The U.S. Treasury said last week that more than \$40 billion of the \$46.5 billion in Emergency Rental Assistance had been spent or allocated.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Virginia have gone through at least 90 percent of their first disbursement. Twelve states and the District of Columbia had used 50 percent of the second allocation, known as ERA2, by the end of May. Three—Idaho, Ohio and Iowa—haven't spent any ERA2 money and two—Nebraska and Arkansas—didn't accept the funds.

"The public health emergency may still be here but the funds to deal with it are rapidly disappearing," said Martin Wegbreit, director of litigation for the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society.

Treasury is encouraging states

and cities to tap other federal stimulus funds to cover the gaps. So far, over 600 state and local governments had budgeted \$12.9 billion in stimulus funds to meet housing needs, including affordable housing development.

Gene Sperling, who oversees President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package, highlighted the success of its rental assistance program, which has reached 7 million mostly low-income households.

But, more needs to be done to ensure the country doesn't return to pre-pandemic times when 3.6 million tenants were evicted annually and "evictions were too often a first resort, not a last resort," he told a forum on eviction reforms at the White House last week.

Some lawmakers said the answer is a permanent rental assistance program. A bill introduced in July would provide \$3 billion annually for rental assistance and fund services to keep families housed. A study commissioned by the National Apartment Association and the National Multifamily Housing Council says the answer is building 4.3 million apartments by 2035.

Other advocates called for

permanent legal protections like right to counsel for tenants or eviction diversion programs to resolve evictions before they reach the courts.

In Richmond, Va., eviction filings in June were 54 percent below historic averages, attributed to rental assistance and more legal representation for tenants in court, Wegbreit said. Similar programs were credited with New Mexico's eviction filings being 29 percent below historic averages in June.

Philadelphia, which passed a law making eviction diversion mandatory through this year, saw filings down 33 percent. The City Council in Philadelphia also approved spending \$30 million over two years for rental assistance.

"We are trying to change the way we look at this issue in Philadelphia, where the only thing you do is go to landlord tenant court or start an eviction," said Catherine Anderson, supervising attorney with Philadelphia Legal Assistance, who oversees the paralegals on the Save Your Home Philly hotline.

Associated Press writers Jesse Bedayn in Denver, Ben Finley in Norfolk, Va., and Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

people.

The billionaire and Tesla CEO has been trying to back out of his April agreement to buy the social media company, leading Twitter to sue him last month to complete the acquisition. Musk countersued, accusing Twitter of misleading his team about the true size of its user base and other problems he said amounted to fraud and breach of contract.

Both sides are headed toward an October trial in a Delaware court. "If Twitter simply provides their method of sampling 100 accounts and how they're confirmed to be real, the deal should proceed on original terms," Musk tweeted early Saturday. "However, if it turns out that their SEC filings are materially false, then it should not."

Musk, who has more than 100 million Twitter followers, went on to challenge Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal to a "public debate about the Twitter bot percentage."

Twitter declined comment Saturday. The company has repeatedly disclosed to the Securities and Exchange Commission an estimate that fewer than 5 percent of user accounts are fake or spam, with a disclaimer that it could be higher. Musk waived his right to further due diligence when he signed the April merger agreement.

Twitter has argued in court that Musk is deliberately trying to tank the deal and using the bot question as an excuse because market conditions have deteriorated and the acquisition no longer serves his interests. In a court filing Thursday, it describes his counterclaims as an imagined story "contradicted by the evidence and common sense."

"Musk invents representations Twitter never made and then tries to wield, selectively, the extensive confidential data Twitter provided him to conjure a breach of those purported representations," company attorneys wrote.

While Musk has tried to keep the focus on bot disclosures, Twitter's legal team has been digging for information about a host of tech investors and entrepreneurs connected to Musk in a wide-ranging subpoena that could net some of their private communications with the Tesla CEO.

NC AG'S STAFF ASKS JUDGE NOT TO RESTORE 20-WEEK ABORTION BAN

(AP)—The North Carolina attorney general's office, representing defendants in a 2019 case that blocked a state law banning most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, has joined plaintiffs in asking a federal court not to restore the ban after the judge suggested his injunction "may now be contrary to law."

Reinstating restrictions in the aftermath of the June U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade would create "significant risk of public confusion" about the availability and legality of abortion services in North Carolina, the attorney general's office argued in a brief filed late Monday in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

Attorney General Josh Stein, an outspoken proponent of abortion access, told reporters last week that he was continuing to recuse himself from the case, despite Republican General Assembly leaders' accusations that his politics were interfering with his duty to defend the law.

Staff attorneys in Stein's office filed the brief without the attorney general's involvement.

"As attorney general, I will do everything in my power to protect women's right to reproductive care because it's the right thing to do and because it's necessary to create the kind of North Carolina we all want," Stein said Wednesday.

A month after U.S. District Judge William Osteen asked all parties in the case to file briefs explaining whether they think his previous ruling retains legal force in the absence of federal abortion protections, both parties said they do not see a strong legal argument for lifting the injunction at this time.

The two district attorneys who are named parties in the case said they "have no intention to exercise that enforcement authority" over the 20-week ban. Stein's office said none of the state's other district attorneys have indicated they would enforce the ban, either.

Though both parties oppose further action in the case, Republican legislative leaders are urging Osteen to move forward. Attorneys for Senate Leader Phil Berger and House Speaker Tim Moore, who are not named parties in the case, argued in a July 27 friend of the court brief that they had "significant interest" to intervene because Stein was avoiding his responsibilities by not seeking enforcement of the blocked 1973 state law.

The doctors who brought the case to court argue that because the legislative leaders are not named parties in the case, they should have to take additional steps for the court to consider their involvement.

"We're confident that Judge Osteen will see through the political posturing of the plaintiffs and the attorney general's office and lift the injunction now that Roe and Casey have been overturned," said Berger spokesperson Lauren Horsch, referring to the two cases struck down by the Supreme Court on June 24.



Conservatives Eye Constitution—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the district before the intervention of Convention of States. "This is South Dakota. People don't like negative campaigns."

Mehlhoff was baffled at the notion that a possible constitutional convention factored so heavily in his race: "Convention of states is not my issue at all," he said.

Supporters of a convention argue it's the best way to amend the Constitution—especially to take power from Congress, which has to approve by a two-thirds vote any proposed amendments that don't come from a convention. Still, no amendments have been implemented through a convention since the Constitution was ratified in 1788.

Backers argue that any amendments that emerge from the convention would have to be approved by even more states than required to call it—three-quarters, or 38 of them—ensuring that the only changes would be measures with broad support. The GOP would have the upper hand in that venue, though, as it controls the legislatures in 30 states.

One liberal group is pushing for a convention to change campaign finance laws that has won backing in four states, while another effort by conservatives seeks one to impose a balanced budget amendment. The Convention of States group is more vague on its goals, stating that it seeks a gathering that could pass amendments only to "limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, impose

fiscal restraints, and place term limits on federal officials."

That alarms many Democrats, who see the push as a partisan effort to write conservative goals into the Constitution. But several conservatives have also balked, fearing that a convention could open the document to changes they wouldn't favor, such as on gun control or campaign spending.

"Lots of things can happen that we can't predict" if there's a constitutional convention, said Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. "A lot of Republicans are temperamentally conservative and don't like taking large leaps into the unknown, and they are going to be seen as dragging their heels."

The convention group has won some successes lately. Earlier this year, it persuaded South Carolina's GOP-controlled Legislature to approve a motion for a convention, making it the 19th state, all Republican-run, to sign on. But it has been stymied in some solidly conservative states such as South Dakota, whose state Senate has repeatedly voted down resolutions for a convention.

Duvall said that's because Republican voters there don't want a constitutional rewrite.

"The majority of my constituents I've talked to say 'No, this is a bad idea and dangerous,'" Duvall said.

Robert Natelson, a retired law

professor who formerly served as an advisor to Convention of States Action, said that's a result of fear-mongering. He has researched historical conventions of states and said they have clear procedures and limitations. They have occurred throughout the country's history with varied records of accomplishment, on subjects ranging from the war of 1812 to how certain Western states would share water from the Colorado River.

"This was a process designed for the people to use," Natelson said. "If you think everything's going well, if you're part of the 15 percent of the population that has a favorable view of Congress, then you don't want a convention."

The movement is using money to combat skepticism. Convention of States Action and its affiliated foundation reported raising more than \$10 million in 2020, according to IRS documents. As nonprofits, the organizations do not need to disclose most of their donors.

The Convention of States' recent spending came through multiple newly created political groups that steered campaign money around the country, largely shielding donors from disclosure.

"They have gone out of their way to set up a web of dark money groups to obscure where the money is coming from and evade reporting requirements," said Arn Pearson, executive director of the Center for Media and De-

mocracy, which filed complaints with authorities in Arizona and Montana against the network's campaign apparatus.

In Montana, the network spent \$126,000 on radio ads and mailers to support two state legislators and a candidate for a state House seat after failing multiple times to get a resolution through the Legislature. The state Commissioner of Political Practices found the group failed to register as a political organization and report its campaign spending.

According to a disclosure report it filed in Michigan, the group also spent more than \$40,000 supporting statehouse candidates there. It spent \$10,000 on statehouse races in North Carolina. A group it formed in Idaho reported spending more than \$100,000 before the state's May 17 primary, including more than \$75,000 against state Rep. Judy Boyle, a conservative who co-wrote a newspaper column with a liberal lawmaker about why a convention of states was a bad idea.

A seven-term lawmaker, Boyle said she'd been warned the group would target her and said their radio ads falsely claimed the local right-to-life group endorsed her opponent.

"I knew then that the group believes the ends justify the means and they would go to any length to smear me, which they did," Boyle said via text message.

She eventually won her election—by six votes.

White House Releases Policy—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Officials said the U.S. strategy intends to increase efforts at fighting terrorism through non-military approaches, but they wouldn't rule out military intervention.

The administration's policy pledges assistance for Africa in dealing with the climate crisis,

and among the overall goals is regaining Africa's trust in U.S. global leadership.

"The strategy is very serious about how do we integrate Africa into other global forums because of the importance of their voice," an administration official stated.

"And it's about thinking more holistically about our military engagement, how it's paired with economic inclusion, political development and democracy, and open societies, as well as trade and investment."

The official continued:

"And then, again, I think one of

the things this strategy realizes is the continent is increasingly urban, increasingly young, and increasingly connected. And so, a number of the policies that we've already started to implement or intend to implement really do reflect that changing landscape."

FTC Looking To Corral—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said.

Agency officials noted that the FTC has brought hundreds of enforcement actions against companies over the last two decades for violations of privacy and data security. They included cases involving the sharing of health-related data with third parties, the collection and sharing of sensitive TV viewing data for targeted advertising, and failure to put in adequate security measures to protect sensitive data such as Social Security numbers.

However, the officials said, the FTC's ability to deter illegal

conduct is limited because it generally lacks authority to seek financial penalties for initial violations of law. That could change if the comprehensive privacy legislation were to clear Congress.

"Firms now collect personal data on individuals at a massive scale and in a stunning array of contexts," FTC Chair Lina Khan said in an online news conference. "Our goal today is to begin building a robust public record to inform whether the FTC should issue rules to address commercial surveillance and data security practices, and what

those rules should potentially look like."

"We are very, very eager to hear from the public," Khan said. Topics of interest could include how companies use algorithms and automated systems to analyze the information they collect, and the potential effects of various data practices.

Khan, who was an outspoken critic of Big Tech as a law professor, was appointed by President Joe Biden last year to head the FTC — an independent agency that polices competition and consumer protection as well

as digital privacy.

The rulemaking proposal was adopted in a 3-2 vote by the five FTC commissioners. Khan and the other two Democrats voted to issue it, while the two Republicans opposed it.

On Tuesday, Snapchat introduced new parental controls in what it calls the "Family Center" — a tool that lets parents see who their teens are messaging, though not the content of the messages themselves. Both parents and their children have to opt into the service.

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Business & Finance

OSHA Investigates Deaths Of Amazon Workers In Jersey

By Haleluya Hadero

AP Business Writer

Federal work-safety investigators are looking into the death of an Amazon worker and an injury that potentially led to the death of another employee, adding to a probe already underway following a third fatality during the company's annual Prime Day shopping event in mid-July.

All three Amazon workers died within the past month and were employed at company facilities in New Jersey.

The new Occupational Health and Safety Administration investigations are putting fresh scrutiny on Amazon's injury rates and workplace-safety procedures, which have long been criticized by labor and safety advocates as inadequate.

Department of Labor spokesperson Denisha Braxton confirmed Thursday that the most-recent fatality took place last week at an Amazon facility in Monroe Township, about 20 miles northeast of Trenton. The second probe is looking into a July 24 accident at an Amazon facility in Robbinsville. The worker involved in that accident died three days later, according to Braxton.

In a statement, Robbinsville Police Chief Michael Polaski said police responded to the warehouse, called PNE5, on July 24 after

receiving a report that a worker fell from a three-foot ladder and struck his head.

Polaski said the worker was conscious and alert when police arrived. But police were told CPR was conducted on the person by other workers prior to their arrival, he said. The person was transported to a hospital and OSHA was notified of the incident on the same day, he added.

Police in Monroe Township didn't immediately reply for a request for comment on the incident there.

The two most recent deaths were first reported by the USA Today Network.

OSHA officials declined to provide additional information about any of the deaths, citing the open investigations. The agency has up to six months to complete each probe.

Sam Stephenson, a spokesperson for Seattle-based Amazon, said in a statement the company was "deeply saddened by the passing of our colleagues and offer our condolences to their family and friends."

"Our investigations are ongoing and we're cooperating with OSHA, which is conducting its own reviews of the events, as it often does in these situations," Stephenson said.

Last month, OSHA launched another investigation into a worker

fatality at an Amazon warehouse in the New Jersey town of Carteret during the company's Prime Day shopping event, which turned out to be the biggest in the company's history. Federal officials haven't released additional details about the death, but news reports have identified the worker as 42-year-old Rafael Reynaldo Mota Frias.

A spokesperson for Amazon said the company's internal investigation into the Carteret death shows it "was not a work-related incident, and instead was related to a personal medical condition."

"OSHA is currently investigating the incident, and, based upon the evidence currently available to us, we fully expect that it will reach the same conclusion," the spokesperson said.

News of the deaths comes amid broader scrutiny into the company's operations. In late July, OSHA officials inspected Amazon facilities in New York, Illinois and Florida after receiving referrals alleging health and safety violations from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

The civil division of the U.S. attorney's office is also investigating safety hazards at Amazon warehouses and "fraudulent conduct designed to hide injuries from OSHA and others," according to a spokesperson for the office.



A DANGEROUS PLACE TO WORK? Three deaths of workers at Amazon "fulfillment centers" (warehouses) in New Jersey were just random accidents, says the internet shopping behemoth. But OSHA isn't so sure, especially after complaints of health and safety violations at the facilities.

MGM, Ring Plan To Put On Reality Show From Viral Doorbell Videos

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—Two Amazon-owned companies—Ring and Hollywood studio MGM—are teaming to create a TV show in the mold of "America's Funniest Home Videos" using viral footage from Ring's doorbell and smart-home cameras.

The half-hour show, called "Ring Nation," will be hosted by actor and comedian Wanda Sykes and premier in syndica-

tion on Sept. 26, MGM said.

The studio noted audiences should expect to see the usual things that go viral—marriage proposals, neighbors saving neighbors and silly animals.

The series showcases Amazon's fusion of its various business arms, this time to highlight what MGM called "interesting moments from communities across the country."

"You have one company that

owns two juggernauts and (has) just figured out how to leverage one against the other," said Robert Passikoff, president of the brand research firm Brand Keys. He noted that unlike scripted movies or shows, a reality series using Ring footage will likely be cheaper to produce.

The show also presents a branding opportunity for the Seattle-based e-commerce and retail giant, which bought Ring in

2018 for \$1 billion and has dealt with rounds of privacy concerns around Ring and its relationship with police departments across the country.

Last month, Amazon revealed it had provided Ring doorbell footage to law enforcement 11 times this year without the user's permission—all in response to emergency requests, according to the company.

MGM, which Amazon pur-

chased for \$8.5 billion, said in a statement Thursday that "Ring Nation" will offer audiences "daily dose of life's unpredictable, heartwarming and hilarious viral videos" shared by people from their cameras.

"Many of these have been previously shared online," Amazon spokesperson Nick Schweers said. "Others were sent directly to the team." Ring Nation secures permissions for each vid-

eo from the owner and anyone identifiable in the video, or from companies that hold the rights to the clips, he said.

Amazon's deal to purchase MGM was closed earlier this year, though the Federal Trade Commission has said it still retains discretion to challenge it. Big Fish Entertainment, a production company owned by MGM, will also be part of the partnership.

Climate Bill Consequences: Could Coal Communities Shift To Nuclear?

By Jennifer McDermott and Mary Katherine Wildeman

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP)—A major economic bill headed to the president has "game-changing" incentives for the nuclear energy industry, experts say, and those tax credits are even more substantial if a facility is sited in a community where a coal plant is closing.

The transformative bill provides the most spending to fight climate change by any one nation ever in a single push. Among the many things it could do nuclear energy experts say it spur more projects like one Bill Gates is planning in Kemmerer, Wyoming. Gates' company, TerraPower, plans to build an advanced, nontraditional nuclear reactor and employ workers from a local coal-fired power plant scheduled to close soon.

Companies designing and building the next generation of nuclear reactors could pick one of two new tax credits available to carbon-free electricity gen-

erators, such as wind and solar. To ensure coal communities have a place in the energy transition, both tax credits include a 10-percentage point bonus for facilities sited where residents have relied on fossil fuel plants or mining—a "sizeable incentive" to locate them there, according to Matt Crozat, senior director for strategy and policy development at the Nuclear Energy Institute.

That could include towns in coal-dependent West Virginia, since the state eliminated a ban on nuclear power plants this year. Or in Maryland, where the state announced a partnership in June to look at repurposing a fossil fuel site for a small nuclear reactor. Or in Montana, where lawmakers are looking at advanced nuclear reactors as a possible replacement for coal boilers.

Staffan Qvist, an expert in energy systems analysis and decarbonization strategies, has extensively researched the feasibility of replacing coal plants with emissions-free alternatives in China and Poland. He found

that coal plants often make ideal sites for advanced, high-temperature nuclear reactors.

"It's a growing trend," Qvist said, "now it's being talked about everywhere." Qvist is also founder of Qvist Consulting Limited in the United Kingdom. "You have a site, you have a grid connection. You have equipment that can remain in use, and you have a workforce that could be retrained."

A design by NuScale Power is the first to be fully certified in the United States and the company is planning to begin operating a small modular reactor in 2029 at the Idaho National Laboratory. The company's chief financial officer, Chris Colbert, said former coal plants are ideal locations for advanced nuclear technology, in part because transmission lines are already in place.

Colbert also said he thinks potential customers will be more interested in the company's small advanced reactors because of the incentives in the bill.

There are nearly \$375 billion in climate incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act. Among them, there's a new tax credit available to any carbon-free electricity generator. That includes new advanced nuclear reactors that begin construction in 2025 or later. Existing nuclear plants that expand their output could get credit for that additional electricity production. The credit is worth at least \$25 per megawatt-hour for the first decade the plant operates, according to NEI, the industry's trade association.

Or, owners of a new carbon-free electricity generator could take advantage of an investment tax credit, worth 30 percent of the amount they paid to build the facility.

The bill also has \$700 million to produce the uranium fuel in the United States that many advanced reactors need. And there's a tax credit for existing nuclear plants worth up to \$15 per megawatt hour from 2024 to 2032. That's enough of a boost that it's highly likely no nuclear plants will close during that period for economic reasons, Crozat said. There are expanded options for how the credit can be used, with direct payments for certain owners, such as municipal utilities.

The incentives are a game changer for the nuclear energy industry, said Jacopo Buongiorno, professor of nuclear science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Buongiorno has studied the future of nuclear energy in a carbon-constrained world.

"This is really substantial," he said as he read the list of tax credits. "This should move the needle in terms of making these technologies economically viable right off the bat."

Buongiorno liked that the credits are available to many carbon-free technologies.

"It's not just nuclear, it's not just solar, it's all of the above, which is what we have been preaching as the right approach for decarbonization," he said. "You need to sort of push everybody here."

But Grant Smith, a senior energy policy adviser at the Environmental Working Group, said tax credits for small modular nuclear units is a waste of taxpayer dollars. They divert resources from commercially-viable emerging technologies,

Smith said, and stokes "the continuing false narrative of cheap, easily-deployed nuclear technology that the sector has been spinning for decades." Smith leads the nonprofit's work on accelerating the transition to renewables.

Georgia has the only nuclear project currently under construction in the U.S. Two traditional large reactors were projected to cost \$14 billion and are now expected to cost more than \$30 billion.

Because of that, Buongiorno said he'd be shocked if there is another order for a traditional large reactor in the U.S. The perception of financial risk, or project risk overall, would be too high, he said.

There are roughly 40 serious concepts in development for the next generation of advanced nuclear reactors worldwide, Qvist said. China was the first to connect one of the next generation of reactors to its grid to produce about 200 megawatts of electricity. A high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor began operating last year.

Kairos Power has applied for

a permit to construct a test reactor in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. GE Hitachi is working on a reactor in Ontario, Canada, and if it's successful, there's a lot of interest in it in the United States, Poland and elsewhere in Europe, Qvist said.

The largest public power company in the U.S., the Tennessee Valley Authority, launched a program this year to develop and fund new small modular nuclear reactors as part of its strategy to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The TVA is focused on GE Hitachi's design.

At least a dozen advanced reactors are projected to come online in the 2020s.

"It's not far off and it's not speculative and it's not on paper," Qvist said. "There are actually a lot of things really happening."

Wildeman reported from Hartford, Conn.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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Sealed proposals will be received until 2:00 PM on August 30, 2022, in NCDPS Central Engineering, 2020 Yonkers Road, Raleigh, NC 27699, Door 4, for the construction of Greene C.I. Roofing Repairs SCO IS 21-22996-01A at which time and place bids will be opened and read. If a bidder elects to mail their bid, we strongly urge that the bid be mailed to ensure receipt at our mailing address 48 hours prior to the bid opening to ensure receipt prior to the designated bid opening date and time.

Complete plans and specifications for this project can be obtained from Rebecca Cunningham, Phone: 919-324-1265, email: rebecca.cunningham@ncdps.gov, 2020 Yonkers Road, Raleigh, NC 27699, Door 4 during normal office hours after June 13, 2022.

A mandatory pre-bid meeting (if not previously attended) will be held at 11:00am on August 15, 2022 at the project site at Greene Correctional Institution, located at 2699 NC Hwy 903, Maury, NC 28554. Additional details noted in the Notice to Bidders.

The state reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all proposals.



NOT WHAT WE EXPECTED—The climate change bill recently sent to President Joe Biden's desk contains incentives for solar, wind and other "green" energy sources, including scaled-down nuclear facilities.

Opinion



“But Her Emails?” Well, Yes.

By Thomas L. Knapp

William Lloyd Garrison Center

“Lock her up!” fared at or near the top of the Most Memorable Rally Chants charts in Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. Turning that election into a referendum on Hillary Clinton—and particularly on the seeming impunity she enjoyed after getting caught illegally storing classified materials on an unofficial server—may have made the difference in securing Trump his four years of residence at the White House.

It was thus no surprise that Democrats responded to MAGA protests over the supposed injustice of an FBI search at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago residence, seeking illicitly retained classified materials, with eye rolls and a smirking “but her emails!”

If you’re looking for hypocrisy, there’s no need to pick a side here — it’s rife on BOTH sides.

Based on then FBI director James Comey’s 2016 press briefing (and later testimony before Congress), it’s fair to say that Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, knowingly and willfully violated 18 US Code §793 (“Gathering, transmitting or losing defense information”) and §1924 (“Unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material”) and that, had she been charged and tried, would have been convicted of those offenses by an impartial jury.

Why wasn’t she so charged, tried, and convicted? Why do today’s Trump-haters write off the whole incident as just vicious political skulduggery?

Because she’s Hillary Clinton.

The Mar-a-Lago search warrant specified one of those same two US Code sections (§793), as well as §1519 (“Destruction, alteration, or falsification of records in Federal investigations and bankruptcy”) and §2071 (“Concealment, removal, or mutilation generally [of government documents]”).

Why does MAGA World object to the investigation resulting in the warrant (and prospectively to any prosecution) as mere political skulduggery?

Because the subject of that investigation is Donald Trump.

Both sides are right, and both sides are wrong.

Yes, there are plenty of raw political machinations going on here. If Hillary Clinton hadn’t run for president, and if Donald Trump hadn’t actually BEEN president, these incidents would have gone down as minor and forgettable scandals, like former Bill Clinton administration official Sandy Berger’s barely remembered theft and destruction of classified documents from the National Archives.

But in BOTH cases, political officials, including Clinton and Trump, should be subject to the same “rule of law” they enthusiastically inflict on the rest of us at every opportunity.

If there’s probable cause to believe that Trump committed a crime, he should be prosecuted for that crime, just like anyone else.

And, the statute of limitations not having yet run on Clinton’s violations of 18 USC §793 (which, as has been bullhorned concerning Trump, is part of the Espionage Act), she should be prosecuted as well.

Perp walks! Orange coveralls! Maybe they can even share a cell, the better to catch up on old times.

Thomas L. Knapp (Twitter: @thomaslknapp) is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism (thegarrisoncenter.org). He lives and works in north central Florida.



DC Delivers Some Good News—Yes, Really

By Ben Jealous

People for the American Way

We could all use some good news out of Washington. I’ve got some. The Senate’s passage of the Inflation Reduction Act this month is good news for families, the economy, the planet, and even our democracy. As I write this, the House is poised to pass the bill too, giving Congress and President Biden a major win this summer. This is a big deal.

For starters, it is the biggest investment in fighting climate change in our country’s history. The bill puts a whopping \$360 billion toward developing affordable, clean energy sources.

It creates tax breaks if you buy an electric vehicle. Supporters say it will slash carbon emissions by 40 percent in just eight years; great news for our kids and grandkids, but also great news for all of us right now. Because not only will we have cleaner air and measurable progress against climate change, the investment in renewable energy generation should save families money on their electric bills. It also means we should suffer less from big ups and downs in oil prices caused by turmoil in unstable parts of the world.

I especially like the parts of the bill that include money for cities being hit particularly hard by climate change and for Native American communities. The harms caused by climate change aren’t shared equally. This legislation recognizes that and does something about it.

The bill also promises to put more money back in families’ pockets by using the government’s bargaining power to lower Medicare prescription drug prices. That is great news for seniors in our communities.

And it tackles a nagging problem we’ve had for years: getting big corporations to pay their fair share in taxes. The bill creates a 15% minimum tax on corporations that make more than \$1 billion in profits.

It gives the IRS more money to collect taxes from big businesses and wealthy people who use loopholes and legal tricks to avoid paying what they owe.

The bill will also put downward pressure on inflation. It may take a little while to see all the effects, but saving families money on health care, prescriptions and energy—while reducing the deficit—is a firm push in the right direction for the economy.

The bill isn’t perfect. Because of the political compromises necessary to get it passed, some important pieces were dropped. For example, it doesn’t extend the federal Child Tax Credit enacted as part of COVID relief, which had a big impact on children living in poverty.

There is more work to be done, but this bill shows what serious, committed public servants—in this case, Senate Democrats—can accomplish when they work together.

If there’s a cloud around this silver lining, it’s that not one Republican senator voted for this bill. Not one. Maybe they’re worried about ticking off the big drug companies, which fought lower drug prices tooth and nail. Maybe they think voters will forget by November. But I don’t think they will.

I don’t think Americans will forget who voted for lower drug prices, clean energy, and making billionaires and corporations pay their taxes—and who didn’t.

We hear a lot about the growing gulf between the two major parties in America. But there’s a difference between politicians and voters. The people of Kansas just voted to protect the right to abortion care under the state constitution in the face of Republican legislators’ efforts to impose a complete ban on abortion. I think there are a lot of people—including Republicans—who need lower drug costs and smaller energy bills—and think the richest people and companies in America should not get a free pass to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

When we step into the voting booth, we are voting for individuals. And those individuals have voting records. This fall, voters get to decide whether our elected representatives are serving us or working against our best interests, our families, and our future. If your member of Congress isn’t putting you first, you can vote them out. If they are doing what’s best for you, you can send them back. And that’s the best news of all.

Ben Jealous serves as president of People for the American Way and Professor of the Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. A New York Times best-selling author, his next book Never Forget Our People Were Always Free will be published by Harper Collins in December 2022.



They Leave Us No Choice

“If voting changed anything, they’d make it illegal.”

—Emma Goldman

Roe v. Wade has been overturned, allowing states to make abortion (i.e. any medical procedure that harms the “unborn” regardless of context) a felony. What other rights get taken away when the government decides a voluntary medical procedure that you agree to is now a crime? You can’t vote anymore because you are a criminal. Another choice has been taken away from you.

Trans men, nonbinary and gender non-confirming folks—all people with wombs are affected by this decision. But abortion has never been the sole issue. This is an assault on the right of every human being to live as we see fit, to do whatever we want to with our own bodies, and to make choices without the threat of discrimination, violence, or incarceration. This decision is so much more than just abortion, just medical autonomy, just the reinforcement of patriarchy: it is the latest iteration of the state’s campaign against all choice, all autonomy, and everyone who is oppressed. Why? To maintain the status quo at all human costs. Thus is the function of the courts.

President Biden insists we must “keep all protests peaceful,” further claiming that “Violence is never acceptable. Threats and intimidation are not speech.”

To set the stage of our immediate electoral future, here are some of the people for whom “peaceful protest” will no longer be an option:

- Women seeking abortions
- Men seeking abortions
- Teenagers of all genders and orientations seeking abortions
- Parents trying to support their kids
- Rape victims
- Victims of domestic abuse
- People with ectopic pregnancies
- Medical professionals who provide reproductive care
- Gestational surrogates
- Sex educators

Let’s not forget the people for whom peaceful protest was never an option:

- Undocumented immigrants
- The unhoused
- Refugees
- Sex workers
- Disabled people
- Children, who have forever existed in a world where their bodies don’t belong to them

Millions of people in this country are denied the vote because the state has made their lives illegal, codifying resistance to systems that want them dead as crimes. The vote itself has yet to be made illegal—perhaps a testament to its inefficacy, if Goldman is to be read literally—but we’re now faced with perhaps a worse situation than Red Emma predicted: while the vote remains legal, individuals are being made illegal. The vote has never been a tool available to all of us, and it sure as hell won’t save those of us whose lives depend on acts that forfeit our access to the ballot box.

“Personally, I’m against the use of state power to impose anyone’s values on others,” a self-described “traditionalist” libertarian might add, “but a life is a life, and I believe life begins at conception.” Let me ask you this: what would you do to defend that life? I’m not asking what it is you want done, I’m specifically asking what would you do as an individual to protect that which you call “life.” Do you debate with pro-choicers in an attempt to convince them of your perspective? Do you show up to a “march for life” rally at risk of being associated with those you insist you disavow? Do you violently interrupt the daily operations of an abortion clinic, disrupting staff in the middle of providing lifesaving care?

As such as it may feel or look like it, you are not defending anyone—especially not the unborn. An abortion clinic under siege by private citizens, cops, and the highest court in the land is going to provide worse care, make poorer decisions, and ultimately harm the unborn fetuses you want so dearly to protect. This isn’t wild speculation, it’s just how stress works; services provided under duress (legal or otherwise) are generally worse than the same services provided in secure environments. Absent attacks from all sides, further consideration can be given to pressing decisions, resources can be managed with greater efficiency, and, most importantly, those using the service can communicate openly without fear. The unborn, believe it or not, benefit from medical institutions (yes, including abortion clinics) operating smoothly. This is why we’re against state intervention in medicine after all; doctors can’t suggest the best medications and provide the best treatment because governments

make certain “bad drugs” illegal, ban “bad procedures,” and strip “bad doctors” of their licenses. Supporting the repeal of Roe v. Wade means supporting regulated medicine, conducted not between doctors and patients (i.e. a voluntary, confidential transaction), but between doctors and a myriad of special interests, external authorities, and the will of a faceless mob who want to reshape society in their image. None of this is in the interest of the unborn, and it’s certainly not a libertarian outcome. Put bluntly, if you are “pro-life,” you have been lied to. You are being used by powerful people to advance a Christian nationalist agenda that will ultimately culminate in unmitigated tyranny, signed off by an unstoppable entity legally accountable to no one.

We, on the other hand, stand for unrestricted freedom, universal liberty, and the complete rejection of governments, corporations, and any individual who claims authority over us—especially in matters so personal as what happens to our own bodies. When the white market denies access to lifesaving medication, we make our own abortion pills; when the government shuts down free and open communication between patients and doctors, we create secure networks of care; when hormone access is restricted, we teach people how to make their own estrogen; when the state makes a choice illegal, we make sure that choice remains possible for everyone.

The right of every living being to absolute bodily autonomy is non-negotiable. Any institution that insists otherwise is begging to be unceremoniously abolished. We have all been aggressed upon by that which the state calls “law.” Don’t be surprised if the disaffected among us decide to respond with acts the state labels “crime.” We always have, and we always will.

Expect resistance.



Libertarians Should NOT Support Texan Secession

By Eric Fleischmann

Center for a Stateless Society

Recently, the Republican Party of Texas released a brand-new platform stating that “Texas retains the right to secede from the United States, and the Texas Legislature should be called upon to pass a referendum consistent thereto” and calls “for the people of Texas to determine whether or not the State of Texas should reassert its status as an independent nation.” On the surface, this may appear to be an ideal situation to many libertarians as it would mean a reduction in the authority of the federal government and would ultimately challenge the legitimacy of the U.S. state. And there is a precedent for pro-secession thinking among libertarians: paleolibertarian Lew Rockwell argues that though “the idea of secession has been systematically demonized among the American public” it is in fact a “libertarian principle” (while not differentiating between state and individual secession), and Clifford F. Thies and José Niño both write favorably of secession through the Mises Institute, forwarding respectively that states have the right to secede under “the inalienable right of secession, the international law of secession, and the US law of secession” and that residents of the U.S. should not “dismiss separatism just because their history textbooks said it’s illegal, racist, or treasonous” and instead see it as a potential solution to “[t]he hyperpolarized state of American politics.” More disturbingly, as Johnathan Blanks identifies, there is even “a strain of libertarian contrarianism that holds that the Confederate States of America were within their ‘rights’ to secede from the Union.” And while I have not witnessed many libertarians come out in support of this specific move by the Texas GOP myself, I—as someone who supports the dissolution of the U.S. Government—would like to preemptively outline in this brief piece why libertarians should not support Texan secession.

First, it must be pointed out that (obviously) the call for secession cannot be viewed in isolation from the Texas GOP’s overall platform, and said platform is filled with extremely hateful and authoritarian stances. It calls for the state government to “enact legislation to abolish abortion by immediately securing the right to life and equal proaction of the laws to all preborn children from the moment of fertilization,” refers to homosexuality as an “abnormal lifestyle choice” while calling for an end to same-sex marriage, and opposes “all efforts to validate transgender identity.” Alongside this, Texas has already become a hotbed for anti-trans legislation, has what essentially amounts to a bounty system for people who get abortions, bans books on race and sexuality from schools, and employs one of the most inhumane and violent border patrols in the country—who have been documented whipping Black migrants from Haiti and systematically separating migrant children from their parents and placing them in cages. This is not even to mention the long history of government-ignored and government-backed White terrorism against BIPOC communities within the state. As a left-wing anti-capitalist anarchist libertarian, I would oppose these things even if they were (somehow) more ‘non-violent’ and not emerging from various levels of government and decay both non-legislative bigotry and anti-state reactionary separatists like national ‘anarchists’ and certain far-right militias. But even from a thin right-libertarian perspective—which holds non-aggression and individual property rights as the only fundamental concerns of libertarianism—there is no good libertarian reason to support Texan secession. All it will do is create another government that already has a history of and plan for the oppression of racial, sexual, and gender minorities.

The truth is that libertarians should not be defending some abstract concept called ‘states’ rights’ at all whether that amounts to banning abortion or outright secessionism. John McClaughry proclaims that “the important goal [for libertarians] is not to preserve inviolate some magical balance of countervailing governmental powers, but to protect and enlarge liberty. ‘States’ rights’ in our time has meant unpunished lynchings, Jim Crow laws, denial of the right to vote, exclusion from occupations, and countless burdens and humiliations inflicted on black Americans by racist state governments.” And Darian Worden goes even further in arguing against secession and in favor of autonomy. He holds that...

[s]eccession splits authority into smaller parts, so authorities impose themselves in more distinct areas. Autonomy denies authority from imposing itself, so liberty can expand in as many areas as possible. Secession creates new states and new opportunities for authority to intrude on the individual. True liberation requires autonomy, breaking down the control of authorities without creating new ones.

As such, this is the distinction between defending the autonomy of territories like the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities, Freetown Christiania, and ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes from the states they exist within and supporting the secession of Texas from the United States. And if libertarians truly support the reduction and even abolition of government, they cannot advocate for the creation of a new independent state if it will only lead to more governmental oppression within its borders.