

Biden Inspects Border In Face Of GOP Criticism

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — President Joe Biden walked a muddy stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border and inspected a busy port of entry Sunday on his first trip to the region after two years in office, a visit shadowed by the fraught politics of immigration as Republicans blame him for record numbers of migrants crossing into the country.

At his first stop, the president observed as border officers in El Paso demonstrated how they search vehicles for drugs, money and other contraband. Next, he traveled to a dusty street with abandoned buildings and walked along a metal border fence that separated the U.S. city from Ciudad Juarez.

His last stop was the El Paso County Migrant Services Center — but there were no migrants in sight. As he learned about the services offered there, he asked an aid worker, “If I could wave the wand, what should I do?”

Biden’s nearly four-hour visit to El Paso was highly controlled. He encountered no migrants ex-

cept when his motorcade drove alongside the border and about a dozen lined up on the Ciudad Juárez side. His visit did not include time at a Border Patrol station, where migrants who cross illegally are arrested and held before their release.

The visit seemed designed to showcase a smooth operation to process legal migrants, weed out smuggled contraband and humanely treat those who have entered illegally, creating a counter-narrative to Republicans’ claims of a crisis situation equivalent to an open border.

But his visit was likely do little to quell critics from both sides, including immigrant advocates who accuse him of establishing cruel policies not unlike those of his hard-line predecessor, Donald Trump.

In a sign of the deep tensions over immigration, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, handed Biden a letter as soon as he touched down in the state that said the “chaos” at the border was a “direct result” of the presi-

dent’s failure to enforce federal laws. Biden later took the letter out of his jacket pocket during his tour, telling reporters, “I haven’t read it yet.”

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy dismissed Biden’s visit as a “photo op,” saying on Twitter that the Republican majority would hold the administration “accountable for creating the most dangerous border crisis in American history.”

El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego welcomed Biden’s visit, but said a current lull in arrivals prevented the president from seeing how large the group of newcomers has been.

“He didn’t get to see the real difficulties,” said Samaniego, who was in the local delegation that greeted Biden. “It was good that he was here. It’s a first step. But we still need to do more and have more time with him.”

Elsewhere in El Paso where Biden did not visit, hundreds of migrants were gathered Sunday

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



Former Columbia, SC City Councilman Brian DeQuincey Newman Remembered

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Brian DeQuincey Newman was 40 years old when he died Wednesday. According to friends, it was due to a blood clot in the heart.

As the great-nephew of civil rights leader the Rev. I. DeQuincey Newman, Brian became the youngest person ever elected to the Columbia City Council. He also served as an assistant solicitor with the Fifth Circuit Solicitor’s Office and chaired the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority’s board of directors.

Before his untimely death, friend and former fellow council member Tameika Isaac Devine said he was involved in develop-

ment work in Atlanta. She said he was living life on his terms and enjoying every minute.

“Brian was an amazing young man. He was very caring, very smart, had an amazing smile, and could really light up a room,” Devine said.

Devine said Newman’s legacy is so much more than his accomplishments.

“He had so many opportunities, was so bright, and didn’t limit himself to one area or another but just looked at where he could give back,” Devine said.

That selfless, caring spirit was also something a close friend, State Representative Todd Rutherford, admired as well.



“He was the kind of person that if he met you, you were his friend, and if you were his friend, you were his family, and

that’s how he treated everybody,” Rutherford said.

The one thing he hopes people are reminded of in Newman’s death is that we are never promised tomorrow.

“One of the most common things I remember Brian saying was ‘YOLO’ [You Only Live Once]. He lived every day like it was his last, and he believed that you should as well,” said Rutherford with a smile.

Funeral arrangements have been set for Brian D. Newman.

A viewing will be held at 10 a.m. Monday morning. His funeral service will follow at 11 a.m. at the Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia.



EX-SEN. BURR: SEC PROBE INTO TRADING OVER WITH ‘NO ACTION’

(AP)—The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has concluded its investigation of former North Carolina Sen. Richard Burr related to investment sales early in the coronavirus pandemic without taking any action, Burr said on Friday.

Burr, a Republican who didn’t seek reelection in November after three Senate terms, and Gerald Fauth, the brother of Burr’s wife, had been scrutinized for potential insider trading by the SEC. Fauth’s attorney said separately Friday that the SEC probe of his client is also over with no such trading found.

Burr and other members of Congress had been the focus of public criticism for aggressive trading in early 2020, before the economic threat from the virus was widely known.

Burr had already been cleared of wrongdoing by the Justice Department of President Donald Trump’s administration for offloading \$1.6 million from his portfolio in January and February 2020. But the SEC continued to investigate, according to federal court filings made public in fall 2021.

“This week, the SEC informed me that they have concluded their investigation with no action,” Burr said Friday in a written statement released by his lawyer. Burr, who formally left the Senate on Tuesday as GOP Ted Budd was sworn in to succeed him, said he was “glad to have this matter in the rearview mirror as I begin my retirement from the Senate following nearly three decades of public service.”

Fauth attorney Joseph Warin said separately: “The SEC has closed its investigation into our client. We are thrilled that the SEC and the DOJ appropriately closed their investigations without any findings of insider trading.”

An SEC spokesperson said later Friday that the agency doesn’t comment on the opening or closing of a possible investigation.

A letter dated Wednesday from an SEC regional official to Warin said that “based on the information we have as of this date, we do not intend to recommend an enforcement action ... against Mr. Fauth.”

Both Burr and Fauth were being investigated under the STOCK Act, which makes it illegal for members of Congress to act on inside information gained through their official duties to benefit financially.

Burr drew significant attention because he was captured in a recording privately warning a group of influential constituents in early 2020 to prepare for economic devastation. Burr denied trading on private information, but he stepped aside from his position as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee after the FBI obtained a search warrant to seize a cellphone.

Additional court filings stemmed from the case that had been brought by the SEC to force Fauth, who is a member of the National Mediation Board, to comply with a subpoena. The agency argued that his close relationship with Burr and a phone call between the two, followed by calls to Fauth’s brokers, made Fauth’s testimony critical. Fauth had repeatedly cited his health as a reason for not complying with the SEC’s request for him to testify.

Burr, from Winston-Salem, was elected to the U.S. House in 1994, where he served for 10 years until he defeated Democrat Erskine Bowles in the 2004 Senate race to succeed then-Sen. John Edwards. The mediation board upon which Fauth serves helps resolve disputed labor-management conflicts within the railroad and airline industries.

SOUTHERN LAW FIRMS COMBINE TO CREATE COAST-TO-COAST OFFICES

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—Two major Southern law firms are merging into one firm that will have offices on both coasts and more than 550 attorneys.

The attorneys leading both Alabama-based Maynard Cooper & Gale and South Carolina-based Nexsen Pruet said their similar philosophies and a trend toward companies wanting to deal with bigger law firms led them to combine.

“More and more clients are asking for fewer law firms in their roster,” Nexsen Pruet Chairman Leighton Lord told The Associated Press.

Lord will be the President and Chief Strategy Officer for the new Maynard Nexsen firm. Jeff Grantham, who is managing shareholder of Maynard Cooper & Gale, will serve as the new firm’s CEO, the combined company announced Thursday.

“The ability to have a bigger bench and a bigger team allows you to be able to handle bigger matters,” Grantham said.

Grantham and Lord met while at law school at Vanderbilt University and each said they admired the other’s law firm from afar. Sev-

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

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

The Best Of Consumer Electronics, '23

By Adriana Morga, James Brooks and Cara Rubinsky

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP)—Tech companies showed off their latest products last week at CES, formerly known as the Consumer Electronics Show.

The show officially opened Thursday, with crowds of investors, media and tech workers streaming into cavernous Las Vegas venues to see the latest tech from big companies and startups alike.

Here are some highlights: **‘TALKING’ PETS**

Have you ever wondered what your dog would say if it could speak to you?

FluentPet promises the next best thing—buttons the company says you can train your pet to push if it’s hungry, needs to go outside or wants to play.

The buttons come in a hexagonal-shaped plastic mat called a hextile. Hextiles can be connected to each other to form a bigger collection of buttons.

“We find that actually when dogs kind of know that they’re being understood because they have the precision and specificity of the buttons, then they complain less because they’re no longer wonder-

ing whether they actually communicated what they wanted to,” said Leo Trotter, FluentPet CEO.

At CES, the company announced FluentPet Connect, a new app that notifies owners when their dog presses a button and collects data on how the buttons are used.

Fluent Pet’s starter kit comes with hextiles, a speaker and six buttons for \$159.95. The app does not require a subscription.

A HIGH-TECH STROLLER

Canadian startup Gluxkind’s smart stroller is designed to make life easier for parents on the go.

The AI-powered stroller has a

sensor that can tell when you’ve picked up a fussy baby, at which point it will roll in front of you while you walk without you having to touch it.

When the baby is in the stroller, you need to keep your hands on it, but the battery will help propel it, making it easier to push uphill. It stops automatically if it gets too far away from whoever is pushing it. It can also rock a baby back and forth.

The battery lasts for about eight hours and takes two to four hours to charge.

“I looked into the stroller mar-

(See **BEST OF CES**, P. 2)

Drugstores Make Slow Headway On Staffing

By Tom Murphy

AP Health Writer

Joan Cohrs missed her chance to grab a prescription at her usual drugstore by about 30 seconds.

Cohrs walked up to the counter of an Indianapolis CVS pharmacy shortly after a metal curtain descended, closing it for lunch. She didn’t mind. The 60-year-old said she feels compassion for people

in health care. “They definitely need a break,” said Cohrs, who was working at an assisted living facility when COVID-19 hit. A rush of vaccines, virus tests

and a busy flu season started overwhelming pharmacies more than a year ago, forcing many to temporarily close when workers weren’t available.

Major drugstore chains have raised pay and dangled signing bonuses to add employees. They’re also emphasizing the lunch breaks and sending routine prescription work to other locations to improve conditions in their pandemic-battered pharmacies.

Still, temporary closures persist, and experts say bigger changes are needed.

“There isn’t a shortage of pharmacists. There’s just a shortage of pharmacists who want to work in those high-stress environments that aren’t adequately resourced,” said Richard Dang, an assistant professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of Southern California.

Drugstores rely on pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to fill prescriptions, answer phones, work the drive-thru window, administer vaccines and give tests. They also ask them to man-



DOING THEIR BEST—Christina McGowan fills orders at the Table Rock Pharmacy in Morganton. Drugstore chains are still trying to find enough employees to put a stop to temporary pharmacy closures. [AP Photo by Chris Carlson]

Biden Inspects Border In Face Of GOP —CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

outside the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, where they have been sleeping outdoors and receiving three meals a day from faith groups and other humanitarian organizations.

The migrants included several pregnant women, including Karla Sainz, 26, eight months along. She was traveling in a small group that included her 2-year-old son, Joshua. Sainz left her three other children back home in Venezuela with her mother.

"I would ask President Biden to help me with a permission or something so we can work and

continue," she said.

Juan Tovar, 32, one of several people in her group, suggested he also had political reasons for leaving his home country.

"Socialism is the worst," he said. "In Venezuela, they kill us, they torture us, we can't talk bad about the government. We are worse off than in Cuba."

Noengris Garcia, also eight months pregnant, was traveling with her husband, teen son and the small family dog from the tiny state of Portuguesa, Venezuela, where she operated a food stall.

"We don't want to be given money or a house," said Garcia, 39. "We just want to work."

Asked what he's learned by seeing the border firsthand and speaking with the officers who work along it, Biden said: "They need a lot of resources. We're going to get it for them."

El Paso is currently the biggest corridor for illegal crossings, in large part due to Nicaraguans fleeing repression, crime and poverty in their country. They are among migrants from four countries who are now subject to quick expulsion under new rules enacted by the Biden administration in the past week that drew strong criticism from immigration advocates.

Biden's recent policy announcements on border security and his visit to the border were aimed in part at blunting the impact of upcoming investigations into immigration promised by House Republicans. But any

enduring solution will require action by the sharply divided Congress, where multiple efforts to enact sweeping changes have failed in recent years.

From Texas, Biden headed south to Mexico City, where he and the leaders of Mexico and Canada will gather on Monday and Tuesday for a North American leaders summit. Immigration is among the items on the agenda.

The numbers of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has risen dramatically during Biden's first two years in office. There were more than 2.38 million stops during the year that ended Sept. 30, the first time the number topped 2 million. The administration has struggled to clamp down on crossings, reluctant to take measures that would resemble those of Trump's administration.

The policy changes announced this past week are Biden's big-

gest move yet to contain illegal border crossings and will turn away tens of thousands of migrants arriving at the border. At the same time, 30,000 migrants per month from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela will get the chance to come to the U.S. legally as long as they travel by plane, get a sponsor and pass background checks.

The U.S. will also turn away migrants who do not seek asylum first in a country they traveled through en route to the U.S. Migrants are being asked to complete a form on a phone app so that they they can go to a port of entry at a pre-scheduled date and time.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters aboard Air Force One that the administration is trying to "incentivize a safe and orderly way and cut out the smuggling organizations," saying the policies are "not a ban at all" but an

attempt to protect migrants from the trauma that smuggling can create.

The changes were welcomed by some, particularly leaders in cities where migrants have been massing. But Biden was excoriated by immigrant advocate groups, which accused him of taking measures modeled after those of the former president. Administration officials disputed that characterization.

For all of his international travel over his 50 years in public service, Biden has not spent much time at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The only visit that the White House could point to was Biden's drive by the border while he was campaigning for president in 2008. He sent Vice President Kamala Harris to El Paso in 2021, but she was criticized for largely bypassing the action, because El Paso wasn't the center of crossings that it is now.

STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

eral years ago, they started meeting to discuss their businesses and the merger talk grew from there.

Each firm had several offices in fast growing regions. Maynard Cooper & Gale handled financial services litigation and newer internet services laws in fast growing areas including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Texas and California.

Nexsen Pruet handled many construction, labor, legislative and international business cases from its base along the southern East Coast.

The new firm will have about 550 attorneys and 23 offices in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington, D.C.

BESHEAR CHOSEN TO CO-CHAIR APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP)—Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear has been chosen to serve as the 2023 states' co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

In the role, Beshear will work with federal co-chair Gayle Manchin and other governors to boost economic growth across 423 counties in 13 states, the Appalachian Regional Commission said Wednesday in a media release. In addition to facilitating investments, the states' co-chair also hosts the commission's annual conference.

The ARC said it invested nearly \$240 million in the region last year, which attracted nearly \$1.6 billion in private investments. The projects funded will create or retain more than 22,000 jobs and provide training for new opportunities in emerging sectors.

"I am honored to have been chosen by governors of both parties to co-chair the Appalachian Regional Commission," Beshear said. "ARC investments are building better lives for current and future generations here in Kentucky and across the ARC region."

Manchin, the wife of West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, said she welcomes Beshear and looks forward to collaborating with him and other governors "as we advance ARC's mission to bring economic parity and transformational opportunities to the region's 26 million people."

NEW BIDEN-PICKED MAJORITY SWORN IN FOR FEDERAL UTILITY

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—A new board majority appointed by President Joe Biden to oversee the nation's largest public utility has officially been sworn into office.

The Tennessee Valley Authority says the six Biden nominees took the oath of office Wednesday from a federal magistrate judge in Knoxville.

The new board members at the federal utility are Beth Geer of Brentwood, Tenn.; Bobby Klein of Chattanooga, Tenn.; Michelle Moore of Midlothian, Va.; Bill Renick of Ashland, Miss.; Joe Ritch of Huntsville, Ala.; and Wade White of Eddyville, Ky.

The U.S. Senate confirmed them last month. Some had been awaiting confirmation since spring 2021.

The new members join former President Donald Trump's three remaining appointees to fill out the nine-member board.

The next quarterly meeting of the board will take place in Muscle Shoals, Ala., on Feb. 16.

The utility is reviewing power generation failures that led to its decision to resort to rolling blackouts on Dec. 23 and 24.

HARDISTER JOINS N. CAROLINA LABOR COMMISSIONER FIELD FOR '24

GREENSBORO (AP)—A second North Carolina legislator is running for state labor commissioner in 2024, as Rep. Jon Hardister announced his candidacy on Wednesday.

The Guilford County Republican said he decided to run after current GOP Commissioner Josh Dobson announced last month he wouldn't seek a second four-year term.

Hardister, who won a sixth House term in November, is the House majority whip. He said he still plans to serve out his latest two-year term in the General Assembly.

"My passion for public service has remained strong over these years, and I now believe it is time to elevate my service to a new level," Hardister said in a news release. Hardister is in the marketing field, having worked for his family's mortgage brokerage business.

Second-term GOP Rep. Ben Moss of Richmond County already announced two weeks ago his bid to succeed Dobson.

"The last 20-plus years of my life have set the stage to uniquely qualify me to cut through bureaucracy and make the government work better for the people," Moss, who has been a CSX railroad engineer, said in a news release.

Formal candidate filing for the March 2024 primary begins this coming December.

Best of CES '23 —CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ket and were really surprised that we didn't find anything that has some kind of level of automation or motorization present," said Anne Hunger, who co-founded the company with husband Kevin Huang after their daughter was born in 2020.

The company is currently taking pre-orders for the stroller and hopes to deliver them beginning in July. Prices start at \$3,300.

A CALMING PILLOW

Need a break? Japan's Yukai Engineering says its robotic fu-

lly pillow can help users relax by mimicking the rhythm of breathing.

The soft, fluffy pillow gently expands and contracts, vibrating as you hold it against your stomach. The idea is that you'll breathe more slowly and deeply as your breath starts to synch with the movement of the pillow.

It was developed based on research done at the University of Tokyo.

Yukai CEO Shunsuke Aoki said the pillow can help remote workers who struggle to switch off

from their jobs.

The version on display at CES is a prototype. The company is looking for partners and hopes to start producing it this year.

ROBOT DOG

Meet Dog-E, the excitable robot dog.

Unveiled by toy maker WowWee, Dog-E has more than a million possible combinations of lights, sounds and personality traits.

Dog-E begins as a blank canvas and develops its personality as you set it up.

The app-connected toy has audio sensors to hear sounds, touch sensors on its sides and body, and a tail that you can program to display lighted icons and messages when it wags.

Jessica Kalichman from WowWee says it's a good option for those who can't commit to owning a real pup, or perhaps for those with allergies.

"I do think for anyone that's either not ready to have a dog yet, this is a great test to take care of it, learn to feed it, nurture it, and really have that trial run for a

Drugstores Make Slow —CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

age a growing amount of patient health. Pharmacists in many stores now help people quit smoking and monitor their blood sugar. And companies like Walgreens are pushing them to work more with primary care doctors.

Pharmacists also can now test for COVID-19 and then prescribe medicine, a process that might take 20 minutes or more.

Giving pharmacists a chance to have a bigger impact on public health is "awesome," said Stefanie Ferreri, a University of North Carolina pharmacy professor. But she added that "the workforce wasn't quite ready."

Pharmacies, like other businesses, were hurt earlier in the pandemic because employees who got COVID-19—or those in close contact with someone who did—had to miss work for a few days. Stress also left many pharmacists and technicians feeling burned out and looking for other jobs, industry observers say.

The number of job postings for retail pharmacists rose 63 percent from 2020 to 2021, according to the Pharmacy Workforce Center, a non-profit that tracks openings.

Walgreens leaders said Thursday that they added a net total of 600 pharmacists in the recently completed fiscal first quarter. But staff shortages still force the chain to reduce hours at some pharmacies.

A company representative decline to elaborate, calling it a fluid situation.

In addition to employee shortages, drugstores also are dealing with thin prescription reimbursement. That makes it hard to raise pay to compete for employees, said Douglas Hoey, CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association.

"When just about everything goes up in price, pharmacies are still getting paid as if it was 2019 or 2018," he said.

Walgreens is opening process-

ing centers to help fill some of the routine prescriptions that stores get from patients with chronic conditions. Company leaders expect these centers to eventually take over about half the prescription volume from their stores.

The company also said in October it would eliminate all "task-based" measurements that are part of performance reviews for pharmacy employees.

CVS Health is trying to spread data entry and prescription verification work to different locations to ease the load at busy stores.

The company also started emphasizing the half-hour lunch breaks in February.

Those have limited value, according to Bled Tanoe, a former Walgreens pharmacist in Oklahoma City. She said customers often arrive just before the pharmacy closes, eating into the break time.

And store employees frequently catch up on work during that break.

Tanoe, 35, said she left drugstores in 2021 to work at a hospital because the demands were getting "impossible." She and others say bolder steps are needed to improve the pharmacies. Pharmacists should have the ability to temporarily close counters or cancel some vaccination appointments when workloads get overwhelming, Tanoe said.

"A pharmacist whose license is on the line has to be the one to navigate and to dictate what is happening in the pharmacy on a daily function," she said.

Dang noted that a relatively new California law prevents chain drugstores from establishing quotas for how many prescriptions a pharmacist must fill during a shift.

He also said drugstores simply need more employees behind the counter if they add services.



He noted that the bigger chains are more prone to running drugstores with only one pharmacist.

At least one has to be on duty for a pharmacy to operate.

Ferreri would like to see more drugstores set appointments for regulars. That gives pharmacists predictable workloads and more time to fill and check prescriptions. It also reduces trips for customers and can help them keep track of refills.

These appointments ease stress, said Jessi Stout, owner of Table Rock Pharmacy in Morganton, North Carolina.

"It's not like the patient's in, waiting for you to fill 15 prescriptions at once," she said.

One of Stout's regulars, Debra Bowles, calls the free program "priceless."

She refills about six prescriptions every month and has her mom enrolled in a similar program at another pharmacy.

"It makes taking care of people who cannot take care of them-

selves much easier," the 65-year-old said.

While some pharmacies are changing how they operate, customers also can help. Ferreri recommends giving drugstores a few days to refill a prescription instead of waiting until the last pill.

Patience also is needed, said Brigid Groves, an executive with the American Pharmacists Association. She said they hear more about customers taking out their frustrations on pharmacy employees over delays or medicine shortages.

"I think on both sides of the counter, we need to all have grace and realize this is a very challenging and stressful time for everyone," she said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

FTC Proposes Ban Noncompete Clauses

The Federal Trade Commission proposed a rule Thursday that would ban U.S. employers from imposing noncompete clauses on workers, a sweeping measure that could make it easier for people to switch jobs and deepen competition for labor across a wide range of industries.

The proposed rule would prevent employers from imposing contract clauses that prohibit their employees from joining a competitor, typically for a period of time, after they leave the company.

Advocates of the new rule argue that noncompete agreements contribute to wage stagnation because one of the most effective ways to secure higher pay is switching companies. They argue that the clauses have become so commonplace that they have swept up even low-wage workers.

Opponents argue that by facilitating retention, noncompete clauses have encouraged companies to promote workers and invest in training, especially in a tight labor market. The public has

60 days to submit commentary on the rule before it takes effect.

During a Cabinet meeting, President Joe Biden called the FTC action "a huge step forward in banning non-compete agreements that are designed simply to lower people's wages."

"These agreements block millions of retail workers, construction workers and other working folks from taking better jobs and getting better pay and benefits in the same field," Biden said.

The FTC has moved aggressively to curb the power of major corporations under Chair Lina Khan, a legal scholar and Washington outsider whose appointment by Biden signaled a tough antitrust stance.

The agency estimates that the new rule could boost wages by nearly \$300 billion a year and expand career opportunities for about 30 million Americans.

"Noncompetes block workers from freely switching jobs, depriving them of higher wages and better working conditions, and

depriving businesses of a talent pool that they need to build and expand," Khan said in a prepared statement.

The FTC's proposal comes amid an already competitive job market, particularly in industries that suffered mass layoffs during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and have since struggled to recall their workers. Many workers remain on the sidelines, holding out for better pay, coping with lingering childcare or health issues, or opting for early retirement.

"There is a potential that it will contribute to the 'great resignation' that everyone is talking about to some degree, but employers are simply losing one of the tools in their toolbox and there are other ways to retain top talent," said Vanessa Matis-McCreedy, associate general counsel and director of human resources for Engage PEO, which provides HR services for small- and medium-sized companies. "You will see a lot of businesses trying to retain top talent via raises or other fringe benefits."

Employers nationwide are still hiring and layoffs are historically low, despite high-profile job cut announcements from companies such as software provider Salesforce, Facebook's parent company Meta, and Amazon. The government is expected to announce Friday that employers added a solid 200,000 jobs last month, and that unemployment remained 3.7%, near a half-century low.

A 2019 analysis by the liberal Economic Policy Institute estimated that 36 million to 60 million workers could be subject to noncompete agreements, which the group said companies have increasingly adopted in recent years.

While such agreements are most common among higher-paid workers, the study found that a significant number of low-wage workers were subjected to them. The study found that more than a quarter of responding establishments where the average wage is less than \$13 an hour use noncompetes for all their workers.

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

What Is ChatGPT And Why Are School Systems Blocking It?

By Matt O'Brien

AP Technology Writer

Ask the new artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT to write an essay about the cause of the American Civil War and you can watch it churn out a persuasive term paper in a matter of seconds.

That's one reason why New York City school officials this week started blocking the impressive but controversial writing tool that can generate paragraphs of human-like text.

The decision by the largest U.S. school district to restrict the ChatGPT website on school devices and networks could have ripple effects on other schools, and teachers scrambling to figure out how to prevent cheating. The creators of ChatGPT say they're also looking for ways to detect misuse.

The free tool has been around for just five weeks but is already raising tough questions about the future of AI in education, the tech industry and a host of professions.

WHAT IS CHATGPT?

ChatGPT launched on Nov. 30 but is part of a broader set of technologies developed by the San Francisco-based startup OpenAI, which has a close relationship with Microsoft.

It's part of a new generation of AI systems that can converse, generate readable text on demand and even produce novel images and video based on what they've learned from a vast database of digital books, online writings and other media.

But unlike previous iterations of so-called "large language models," such as OpenAI's GPT-3, launched in 2020, the ChatGPT tool is available for free to anyone with an internet connection and designed to be more user-friendly. It works like a written



dialogue between the AI system and the person asking it questions.

Millions of people have played with it over the past month, using it to write silly poems or songs, to try to trick it into making mistakes, or for more practical purposes such as helping compose an email. All of those queries are also helping it get smarter.

WHAT ARE THE PITFALLS?

As with similar systems, ChatGPT can generate convincing prose, but that doesn't mean what it says is factual or logical.

Its launch came with little guidance for how to use it, other than a promise that ChatGPT will admit when it's wrong, challenge "incorrect premises" and reject requests meant to generate offensive answers. Since then, however, its popularity has led its creators to try to lower some people's expectations.

"ChatGPT is incredibly lim-

ited, but good enough at some things to create a misleading impression of greatness," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said on Twitter in December.

Altman added that "it's a mistake to be relying on it for anything important right now."

"It's a preview of progress; we have lots of work to do on robustness and truthfulness."

CAN IT BE USED FOR WRITING SCHOOL PAPERS?

This is what ChatGPT said when The Associated Press asked it to answer that question in all caps from the perspective of a principal shouting a brief message through a school's PA system:

"DO NOT USE CHATGPT OR ANY OTHER AUTOMATED WRITING TOOL FOR SCHOOL PAPERS. THIS IS CHEATING AND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. IF YOU ARE CAUGHT USING CHATGPT OR ANY OTHER AUTOMATED WRITING TOOL

FOR SCHOOL PAPERS, THERE WILL BE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES."

But when asked to answer the same question on its own, ChatGPT offered this more measured warning: "As a general rule, it is not appropriate to use ChatGPT or any other automated writing tool for school papers, as it is considered cheating and does not benefit the student in the long run."

WHAT DO SCHOOLS SAY?

Many school districts are still scrambling to figure out how to set policies on if and how it can be used.

The New York City education

department said Thursday that it's restricting access on school networks and devices because it's worried about negative impacts on student learning, as well as "concerns regarding the safety and accuracy of content."

But there's no stopping a student from accessing ChatGPT from a personal phone or computer at home.

"While the tool may be able to provide quick and easy answers to questions, it does not build critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic and lifelong success," said schools spokesperson Jenna Lyle.

HUMAN OR AI?

"To determine if something was written by a human or an AI, you can look for the absence of personal experiences or emotions, check for inconsistency in writing style, and watch for the use of filler words or repetitive phrases. These may be signs that the text was generated by an AI."

That's what ChatGPT told an AP reporter when asked how to tell the difference.

OpenAI said in a human-written statement this week that it plans to work with educators as it learns from how people are experimenting with ChatGPT in the real world.

"We don't want ChatGPT to be used for misleading purposes in schools or anywhere else, so we're already developing mitigations to help anyone identify text generated by that system," the company said.

DOES THIS THREATEN

GOOGLE?

There's been some speculation that ChatGPT could upend the internet search business now dominated by Google, but the tech giant has been working on similar technology for years—it's just more cautious about releasing it in the wild.

It was Google that helped jumpstart the trend for ever-bigger, ever-smarter AI language models that could be "pre-trained" on a wide body of writings. In 2018 the company introduced a system known as BERT that uses a "transformer" technique that compares words across a sentence to predict meaning and context. Some of those advances are now baked into Google searches.

But there's no question that successive iterations of GPT—which stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer—are having an impact. Microsoft has invested at least \$1 billion in OpenAI and has an exclusive license to use GPT-3.

HEY CHATGPT, CAN YOU PUT ALL THIS IN A RAP?

ChatGPT's just a tool, But it ain't no substitute for school. You can't cheat your way to the top, Using a machine to do your homework, you'll flop. Plagiarism's a no-no, And ChatGPT's text is not your own, yo. So put in the work, earn that grade, Don't try to cheat, it's not worth the trade.

Biden Praises Dec. Jobs Report

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Senior National Correspondent

In December, the United States added 223,000 jobs, exceeding expectations by more than 21,000, and the unemployment rate fell to 3.5 percent.

The unemployment rate has dropped to its lowest level in 54 years.

Last year, 4.5 million new jobs were created. President Joe Biden stated that his first two years in office saw the highest levels of job growth in history.

"We are witnessing the transition to steady and stable growth that I have been predicting for months," Biden said.

"We still have work to do to bring down inflation and help American families feeling the cost-of-living squeeze. However, we are on the right track."

According to the White House, the unemployment rate for Black and Hispanic Americans has dropped to near-record lows.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for disabled people hit a new low, while hourly wages for all workers rose slightly in December after five months of increases in real wages.

Manufacturing employment in-



created by 8,000 jobs last month, bringing the total number of manufacturing jobs created since Biden's election to 750,000.

In addition, administration officials say that people in their prime working years have continued to join the workforce faster than in previous recoveries.

"These historic job and unemployment gains are giving workers more power and breathing room for American families," Biden said. "Real wages are up in recent months, gas prices are down, and we are seeing welcome signs that inflation is coming down as well. It's a good time to be an American worker."

"We have more work to do, and we may face setbacks along the way," the president said, "but it is

clear that my economic strategy of growing the economy from the bottom up and middle out is working."

"We are just getting started," he said. "This month, we are capping the cost of insulin for seniors at \$35 per month. We are lowering energy and utility bills for Americans," Biden said.

"And shovels are hitting the ground all around the country to rebuild our infrastructure, supply chains, and manufacturing here at home."

"That is how we will build an America in which we can all be proud, where working families have good jobs and more breathing room, and the economy grows from the bottom up and middle out over time."

Musk: I Can't Get A Fair Trial

By Christopher Rugaber

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP)—Elon Musk has urged a federal judge to shift a trial in a shareholder lawsuit out of San Francisco because he says negative local media coverage has biased potential jurors against him.

Instead, in a filing submitted late Friday—less than two weeks before the trial was set to begin on Jan. 17—Musk's lawyers argue it should be moved to the federal court in the western district of Texas. That district includes the state capital of Austin, which is where Musk relocated his electric car company, Tesla, in late 2021.

The shareholder lawsuit stems from Musk's tweets in August 2018 when he said he had sufficient financing to take Tesla private at \$420 a share—an announcement that caused

heavy volatility in Tesla's share price.

In a victory for the shareholders last spring, Judge Edward Chen ruled that Musk's tweets were false and reckless.

If moving the trial isn't possible, Musk's lawyers want it postponed until negative publicity regarding the billionaire's purchase of Twitter has died down.

"For the last several months, the local media have saturated this district with biased and negative stories about Mr. Musk," attorney Alex Spiro wrote in a court filing. Those news items have personally blamed Musk for recent layoffs at Twitter, Spiro wrote, and have charged that the job cuts may have even violated laws.

The shareholders' attorneys emphasized the last-minute timing of the request, saying, "Musk's concerns are unfound-

ed and his motion is meritless."

"The Northern District of California is the proper venue for this lawsuit and where it has been actively litigated for over four years," attorney Nicholas Porritt wrote in an email.

The filing by Musk's attorneys also notes that Twitter has laid off about 1,000 residents in the San Francisco area since he purchased the company in late October.

"A substantial portion of the jury pool... is likely to hold a personal and material bias against Mr. Musk as a result of recent layoffs at one of his companies as individual prospective jurors—or their friends and relatives—may have been personally impacted," the filing said.

Musk has also been criticized by San Francisco's mayor and other local officials for the job cuts, the filing said.

Southwest Airlines' Strong 2022 Turnaround Soured By Holiday Debacle

By David Koenig and Michelle Chapman

AP Business Writers

DALLAS, Texas (AP)—Southwest Airlines is anticipating a money-losing fourth quarter after a winter storm and technology meltdown led to nearly 17,000 canceled flights and stranded hundreds of thousands of holiday travelers.

The cancellations will result in a pretax hit of \$725 million to \$825 million from lost revenue, plus extra costs, including reimbursements for travelers and premium pay for employees, Southwest said Friday in a regulatory filing.

The storm and slow recovery was a devastating turn financially and reputationally for the Dallas-based carrier, which led all U.S. airlines in profit during the first

nine months of 2022, a year of recovery for the pandemic-battered airline industry.

The massive disruptions started with a winter storm that hit much of the country before Christmas. They snowballed when Southwest's outdated crew-scheduling technology was overwhelmed, leaving crews and planes out of position to operate flights. Managers and a cadre of volunteer em-

ployees at company headquarters were forced to manually reassign pilots and flight attendants to flights.

It took Southwest eight days to recover just before the New Year's Day weekend, while other major airlines were up and running quickly after the storm passed.

Southwest said in the filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that it canceled more than 16,700 flights between Dec. 21 and Dec. 31, causing a loss of \$400 million to \$425 million in revenue. In early December, before the meltdown, Southwest projected fourth-quarter revenue would rise by up to 17 percent over the same period in 2019, before the pandemic.

The airline said that expenses increased due to reimbursements to customers for out-of-pocket costs—the company has promised to cover "reasonable" bills for hotel rooms, meals and alternate transportation—along with the estimated value of frequent-flyer points it offered to customers, and premium pay and additional compensation for employees.

Analysts generally said Southwest's estimate was toward the high end of their expectations but not shocking. Southwest's shares gained 4.6 percent, and other U.S. airlines rose too, on a strong day for the stock market.

Since it resumed a normal schedule on Dec. 30, Southwest's cancellations and flight delays have dropped sharply, roughly in

line with other major U.S. airlines. The company is working on repairing its damaged reputation.

"I don't know how many times I have, and can, apologize to our customers, but it's not enough because we messed up," CEO Robert Jordan said in an interview Thursday. "But the storm was historic in the number of places it hit, the length of time it stayed, the temperatures."

Jordan said the airline has processed 75 percent of refund requests, is shipping lost bags to customers at no cost, and has hired an outside company to vet reimbursement requests.

Plenty of customers are complaining about the pace of reimbursements, which Southwest admits could take several weeks.

Bryce Burger said three of his family's six bags were finally returned Friday, and they got refunds, \$1,500 in vouchers for future flights, and 25,000 frequent-flyer points apiece. He is still waiting to hear if Southwest will cover the \$7,500 cost of a cruise that they missed.

Burger, who owns a dental-implant company in Denver, said he will still fly on Southwest because he has a pass that lets a companion fly free, "but they will not be my first choice, no."

Jordan said Southwest spends about \$1 billion a year on technology and is reviewing how systems performed before making decisions on IT spending priorities.

Company officials have disputed

union leaders' claims that the company hasn't invested enough to update technology, although they concede that the crew-scheduling systems did not get as much attention as other IT spending including aircraft-maintenance operations.

"One could criticize us for prioritizing ground operations and technical operations over crew operations when we started, but at the time that seemed like a proper sequence. Obviously it bit us in retrospect," Chief Operating Officer Andrew Watterson said last week, "but there was significant modernization work going on."

Southwest has not indicated whether the disaster will cause it to increase spending on technology, although analysts said that was likely. JP Morgan Chase analyst Jamie Baker said a "modest" increase seemed reasonable.

"We have no expertise in crew scheduling software, but if an airline can't feasibly operate red-eyes (overnight flights) or tell you if your bag has been loaded, our base assumption is that systems aren't state of the art," Baker wrote in a note to clients. He said the level of Southwest's technology was not surprising, given that it is a low-cost airline that likes to keep things simple.

Southwest is now on Washington's radar screen. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has vowed to hold the airline accountable, although he has been vague on specific actions he might take.



THE NIGHTMARE ISN'T OVER—A woman walks through unclaimed bags at Southwest Airlines baggage claim at Salt Lake City International Airport Dec. 29, 2022. The airline was forced to cancel more than 16,700 flights over the holidays and pay millions in rebates to frustrated customers.

Opinion



Get Ready, Congress: Here Comes Gen Z

By Svante Myrick

People for the American Way

When 25-year-old Maxwell Frost of Florida takes his seat in the U.S. House this month, he will be the nation's first Gen Z member of Congress. That—in and of itself—is a major milestone and accomplishment. And what makes it even better is that Frost is a young Black man who won on a great platform focused on ending gun violence, addressing climate change and providing universal health care.

I can't wait to see what Frost accomplishes in Congress. And I'm equally excited about what other folks in his generational cohort will bring to Congress when they arrive. There's just no question that young people who have formed their entire identities in the 21st Century will transform government.

These are young people who have spent their whole lives being connected, via the internet, to people and events around the globe. Studies show this gives them greater acceptance of diverse cultures, and contributes to a higher level of empathy and sensitivity toward others. Past generations grew up acutely aware of the struggles of folks in their own neighborhood; to Gen Z, the challenges people face in Asia or Central America are as real as the ones they face in Florida. This is a deeply valuable perspective to bring to a high position in government.

This is also a generation deeply motivated from their personal experiences to address the horror of gun violence and school shootings, which gives me hope that as more of them enter Congress, sensible gun safety legislation will finally win out. It's a generation that grew up with Obamacare, creating a minimum expectation for what the government can and should do to ensure health care for people. It's a generation that cannot afford to buy homes, and will demand changes in housing policy. And it's a generation faced with harsh economic realities created by corporate greed and economic injustice across the board, which could play out in the push not only for a higher minimum wage but for a whole range of other economic policy changes as well.

On a personal level, harsh economic realities have already hit home for Maxwell Frost. A lot has been written about his inability to rent an apartment in Washington because he was forced to finance much of his campaign with credit cards, affecting his credit rating. I can relate. When I was 24, I left a job, cashed in my savings and my (tiny) 401K to run for mayor of Ithaca. It was a huge gamble that I'm glad to say paid off—but like Frost, I came into office without financial security.

And I want to say two things about that. The first is that yes, we need more elected officials who understand what financial insecurity is like. But second, we need to make it possible for more young people without family wealth to consider running for office in the first place. That means raising the pay for the local offices where most young public servants get their start, so they can afford to consider public service as a career. And it means finally changing campaign finance laws so candidates don't have to come up with a small fortune just to be competitive in an election.

This is all possible, and I'd like to say probable, as more young people enter the political sphere. I love the creativity of young elected officials who are not wedded to the status quo or traditional ways of doing things. Maxwell Frost is the first Gen Z member of Congress, but he won't be the last. Celebrating that is a great way to start the new year.

Svante Myrick is President of People For the American Way. Previously, he served as executive director of People For and led campaigns focused on transforming public safety, racial equity, voting rights, and empowering young elected officials. Myrick garnered national attention as the youngest-ever mayor in New York State history.



2023 Political Prediction: Donald Who?

By Thomas L. Knapp

William Lloyd Garrison Center

A peremptory order from former U.S. President Donald Trump appeared on his personal social media platform on January 4: "[I]t's now time for all of our GREAT Republican House members to VOTE FOR KEVIN, CLOSE THE DEAL, TAKE THE VICTORY."

Effect: Zero. Rebellious Republicans—including some of the Trumpier than Trump variety—continued to vote against electing Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) as the new Speaker of the House.

Whatever one thinks of McCarthy, or of who should be elected Speaker, or of the consequences of continued delay in choosing someone, Trump's decreasing influence over the Republican Party seems worthy of note.

With at least some justification, many Democrats credited—and, more importantly, many Republicans blamed—Trump for the 2022 midterm election's Mysterious Vanishing Red Wave. Democrats increased their majority in the U.S. Senate instead of losing that majority, and Republicans seized a slim, rather than fat, majority in the House.

His 2024 presidential campaign announcement, shortly after the midterm trickle, came off more as a wet firecracker than an explosive development.

Even some of his staunchest supporters met his next major "major announcement"—Donald Trump superhero trading card NFTs!—with a mixture of scorn and disbelief. Although the NFTs quickly sold out at \$99 a pop (putting more than \$4 million in Trump's pocket), then rocketed in price on the secondary market, they've since lost about 75 percent of that early value.

Ever since the GOP's 2018 midterm losses, we've heard the question—and the plea—on a near-daily basis: When, oh when, will Republicans abandon Donald Trump?

Scandals weren't enough. His supporters in the electorate made it clear that his values and behavior were irrelevant in the face of their desire to "own the libs."

Policy differences weren't enough. His supporters in Congress made it clear that they'd discard any and all supposed Republican principles on command, or at least continue to back him if HE did so.

Even two impeachments and several publicly confessed crimes weren't enough. His supporters in the electorate and in Congress made it clear they considered him above the law.

Losing (or at least not winning very much) in the 2018 midterms, the 2020 presidential election, and the 2022 midterms didn't LOOK like it was enough, at least until now.

And even now, I think there's a bigger factor: Boredom.

It's taken six years, but Trump's whiny, spoiled, sore-loser shtick finally feels less like a rallying cry for angry Americans and more like the persistent, annoying buzz of a gnat in one's ear on a hot summer day.

My prediction: By the end of 2023, the boilerplate GOP response to Donald Trump's name (which Democrats will of course continue to invoke as often they think politically profitable) will be "Donald who?"

Personally, I think that's a good thing.

On the other hand, forgetting Trump isn't the same thing as letting go of TrumpISM as either touchstone or bete noire. That's going to take longer.

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.



When America Fixes Its Racism

By Leslie D. Gregory, PA-C

Right to Health

When we fix racism we'll save or recoup the \$16 trillion estimated to be lost in just this century, not accounting for the \$2.4 billion related to health disparities. That money could go to healthcare for all or universal minimum wage or college.

When we fix racism there'll be no more accelerated (police) violence against people of color, our dog whistle fears will be eliminated, and we can finally start talking substantively about gun control.

When we fix racism there will no longer be a need to elect a malignant narcissist to comfort the privileged who he frames as victims, which reinforces false and unnecessary polarization.

When we fix racism our international policies will have more meaning because other peoples would not see America as a hypocritical nation critical of others but unwilling to repair its own deep flaws.

When we fix racism law enforcement will not need or use "I feared for my life" as justification for killing unarmed Black people.

When we fix racism my biracial children will no longer be asked "what are you" and asked to choose between parents with whom they'll identify.

When we fix racism those countless lives lost to racist terror will not have been in vain.

When we fix racism we will finally, at last, pay true homage to our heroes like Martin King, JFK, John Lewis... instead of merely holding them in rhetorical high regard with performative virtue signaling.

When we fix racism Black Americans can finally live in peace and White Americans can begin to heal from guilt and both will have reduced health risks and stress of cognitive dissonance and the health impacts of mutual fear.

When we fix racism, discussions about reparations will have true and lasting meaning and have more relevance.

When we fix racism we will cease to mobilize billions of dollars to support Euro-derived countries disproportionate to darker global neighbors.

When we fix racism we can begin to address other health inequities based on gender, language, ability, age, origin, religion and other false barriers.

Because until we fix racism, all Americans will have an unrecognized traumatic debt owed not only to our forebears, but also to our progeny.

Until we fix racism only some lives matter.

Leslie Gregory is a PA-C focusing on Preventive Cardiology and is Executive Director, Right to Health.



One Nation, Indivisible

By Ben Jealous

Sierra Club

It strikes me that the days we're living through represent a metaphor for our national dilemma. January 6th and the weight of history that date carries are in the rearview mirror, at least on the calendar.

Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream still is on the horizon.

America's existential challenge is to put the former behind us permanently so we can finally achieve the latter and be what we pledge allegiance to—one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. After the attack on the Capitol, I sat down to figure out how we might finally do that, and my answers have filled a book.

As my mother's family has for four centuries, I live south of the Mason-Dixon Line close to the Chesapeake Bay, which was a literal superhighway for slavery. Casual conversations about the likelihood of another Civil War are frequent at my favorite waterside bar. Combine that with the political fault lines running through many families and friendships (including my own) and we feel more divided than indivisible. It's clear why so many fear for our republic's survival.

I have always been an optimist about America. Even for me, witnessing a failed coup shook my usually hopeful outlook.

Like many whose Southern roots run deep, I often turn to the past for answers. What I discovered in questioning our current differences revived my faith that the United States always will overcome our troubles and emerge even stronger on the other side.

In the 1880s, formerly enslaved men and former Confederate soldiers in Virginia—home to the Confederacy's capital—banded together to fight for the future of their children. They built a political party called the Readjusters. Their demand was simple: readjust the terms of Civil War debt so that we can maintain free public schools for all.

Not only did they win that victory, they also won control of the state's government and achieved several more: they abolished the poll tax, they abolished the public whipping post, they created the first public Black college in the South, and they expanded Virginia Tech to make it the working person's rival to the University of Virginia.

The Readjusters' short-lived multiracial populist movement eventually was attacked violently by White supremacists and defeated politically by wealthy special interests spreading vile disinformation; their party is all but erased from history books.

Still, they defined the future of Virginia and our nation by planting early seeds for FDR's New Deal coalition and by creating a bold legacy in public education that endures to this day. Moreover their example reminds us that the spirit that moved Dr. King to dream hopefully about Black and White children has always run deep in our nation, and always will. When we lose faith in our neighbors, that hope reminds us that the path to a stronger nation is to remember we still have more in common than we don't, and to act on the beliefs we share.

If men who had been enslaved could find common cause with men who fought to keep them enslaved to build a better future for all their children, we should never lose faith that we can unite for the sake of ours.

Ben Jealous is incoming executive director of the Sierra Club, America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization; former national president of the NAACP; and professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania. His new book Never Forget Our People Were Always Free was just published.



End Title 42—And Closed Borders

By Peter Orvetti

One World Digest

The crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border continues, with no policy solution in sight. During the 2022 fiscal year, nearly 2.4 million migrants were apprehended at the border, up 44 percent from the previous year and a nearly eightfold increase from five years earlier. Nearly 500,000 migrants successfully entered the U.S. across the southern border without authorization, four times the estimated total for 2017.

Lawmakers came close to a comprehensive reform package in the final days of the last Congress, but the clock ran out in December and the deal fell through. With several key Senate negotiators now retired, it is unlikely to be revived.

Also in late December, the Supreme Court extended the use of Title 42 at the border. Title 42 was created as part of the Public Health Service Act of 1944 to block entry "from designated places to prevent spread of communicable diseases." It was put into use in March 2020 at the start of the COVID pandemic, and controversially extended by the Biden administration in 2021.

The Supreme Court ruling was an unexpected 5-4, with Justice Neil Gorsuch joining the court's three liberals in dissenting. Gorsuch argued that COVID was no longer a factor in the influx of migrants, and that Congress and the Executive Branch should no longer be allowed to use an emergency public health provision to avoid enacting permanent policy.

As Diana Kearney of Oxfam America said, the ongoing use of Title 42 "is not based on our laws but rather on our country's worst xenophobic impulses." But what can be done instead?

The border "crisis" is less rooted in the U.S. border being too porous than in the border not being open enough. For the nation's first 148 years, U.S. borders were essentially open (with the racist Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 the lamentable exception). Politicians who speak of their ancestors "coming here legally" do not state, and perhaps do not know, that those bold new Americans faced no legal barrier. It was not until the 1920s that the discriminatory and highly controversial national origins quota was adopted.

George Mason University economist Bryan Caplan has called immigration restrictions "government-required discrimination against people who have done nothing more than be born in another country." His George Mason colleague Alex Tabarok is blunter: "Closed borders are one of the world's greatest moral failings."

Allowing free entry for migrants is a very American thing to do. It would also be a very logical one from a fiscal perspective.

Free movement spurs innovation, which creates jobs. Four out of 10 U.S. Nobel laureates in physics, chemistry, medicine, and physiology since 2000 were immigrants. Immigrants or their children founded a similar proportion of Fortune 500 companies. In fact, Michael Clemens of the Center for Global Development has calculated that if free movement was permitted between all of the world's nations, the economic benefit would make the planet \$95 trillion richer in today's dollars.

The political will may not exist to loosen, rather than tighten, restrictions on free movement between the U.S. and Mexico. But when the debate over real immigration policy reform does resume in earnest, it should be given a fair hearing.

Peter Orvetti is a news analyst and the editor of One World Digest.