

'Threads of Freedom' Quilt Exhibit Honors Black History

KPBS—Juneteenth, which commemorates June 19, 1865 — the day the last enslaved people in Texas were freed — was observed this week. But the WorldBeat Cultural Center in Balboa Park is continuing the celebration on Saturday with two special events: a Harriet Tubman bird walk and the "Threads of Freedom" quilting program.

"Threads of Freedom" Worldbeat Cultural Center founder and executive director Makeda "Dread" Cheatom launched the "Threads of Freedom" program last Juneteenth as a way to explore the art and history of quilting.

"We had tons of sewing machines and kids learning this — so much fun," Cheatom said. "And then we were so blessed with Kim coming and teaching the kids, too."

Kim Ballentine Lane, a local quilter, is now the director of "Threads of Freedom."

"Last year, 'Threads of Freedom' had a community event. I volunteered but also helped with the creation of the community quilt," Lane said. "Each person, we were asking them to create whatever was on their heart or on their mind. It was a five-and-a-half-inch square of fabric with fabric pens and permanent markers. And that was the beginning of 'Threads of Freedom.'"

That quilt will be revealed this



WorldBeat Cultural Center founder Makeda Cheatom shows a family quilt from her mother that will be displayed at "Threads of Freedom" in a photo taken June 6, 2025.

weekend as part of this year's exhibit. Lane, clearly passionate about the craft, showcased the quilts that will be on display.

"You can see the variations of colors because quilts were made from scraps. African Americans made quilts from cotton sacks, flour sacs, old clothes," she said, pointing to a

more than 50-year-old quilt Cheatom brought in. "This is also hand-stitched. That is how my maternal grandmother and those before her made the quilts."

"Threads of Freedom" aims to highlight the connections between the past and present.

"Many of us saw our grandmoth-

ers or great-grandmothers making the quilts — or making sure we were wrapped in a quilt," Lane said. "We felt so special and loved because this is something from their home."

That's why she encouraged Cheatom to share her family heirloom quilt.

She said, 'Bring that quilt out.' But

it's all tattered," Cheatom shared. "But it tells a story, and it makes me proud. They're our roads and threads of freedom. So we want everybody to come out, check this out and learn how to make quilts again."

Quilt codes and the Underground Railroad

Lane's quilts are rich with symbolism, especially one she made that features quilt block designs inspired by stories of the Underground Railroad.

"This is an Underground Railroad sampler quilt," Lane said, referencing the design. "I took these patterns from Eleanor Burns and Sue Bouchard. They have a book called the 'Underground Railroad Sampler Quilt.'"

She refers to the patterned squares as symbolic codes that some believe were used to help people escape slavery in the early to mid-1800s.

"It was taking a journey from slavery to freedom, and in taking that journey, quilt blocks were the road map," Lane explained. "The signs and symbols behind the quilt blocks were like a map. And we're really trying to highlight the Underground Railroad."

Her quilt includes:

Wagon Wheel - a sign to pack for travel by wagon

Bear's Paw - follow a mountain trail, out of view

Bowtie - dress in disguise, often as someone of higher status

"It was an educational piece. This is a history book," Lane added, "You can break it down by the color, you could break it down by the fabric, you could break it by the design."

A disputed theory

While Lane and the "Threads of Freedom" exhibit deeply embrace these ideas, not all scholars agree that quilt codes were ever used as a means of secret communication along the Underground Railroad.

The quilt code theory originated in the 1999 book called "Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad," based on a single oral account passed down through generations.

"When it was published, it created this frenzy — which, in some way, was good because it got folks looking at quilts made by Black folk," said Tracy Vaughn-Manley, an avid quilter and assistant professor in the Department of Black Studies at Northwestern University.

"On its surface, it's quite a captivating story that there were these ways in which those who were attempting to escape enslavement had these codes, this unspoken thing, that were leading them to freedom, that were leading them to safe houses," Vaughn-Manley said. "It's a real feel-good, triumphant story. I can completely understand the allure of the lore."

Thom Tillis Announces Retirement From Senate After Clash With Trump

(AP)—U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., announced Sunday afternoon he will not be seeking reelection to a third term in 2026, opening up a competitive Senate race in the battleground state.

The announcement followed his Saturday vote against President Donald Trump's so-called "big, beautiful bill." Tillis was one of two Republican senators who opposed advancing the bill in its current form largely due to its proposed cuts to Medicaid. Tillis said the bill would result in "tens of billions of dollars of lost funding in North Carolina" and would force the state to eliminate Medicaid coverage for "hundreds of thousands in the expansion population."

Tillis attributed his decision not to run for reelection to the loss of bipartisanship and independent thinking in Washington.

"In Washington over the last few years, it's become increasingly evident that leaders who are willing to embrace bipartisanship, compromise and demonstrate independent thinking are becoming an endangered species," Tillis said in a Sunday statement, adding that it was not a hard choice between spending another six years "navigating the political theatre and partisan gridlock in Washington" or spending those years with his family.

A day before Tillis' announcement, Trump had encouraged primary challengers to step forward to run against Tillis after his opposition to the bill, saying in a Saturday night Truth Social post that he intends to find a candidate who will "properly represent" N.C. and the U.S. On Sunday Trump responded to the re-



irement announcement in another Truth Social post, calling it "great news."

Tillis currently serves on the Senate Committee for Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, as well as the Finance, Judiciary and Veterans' Affairs Committee. He has served in the Senate since 2015 after narrowly defeating Democratic incumbent Sen. Kay Hagan in 2014 by a 1.7% margin. He was reelected in 2020 by a 1.8% margin. Previously, Tillis served as Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives from 2011 to 2014.

A senator's career concludes

Tillis was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 2014 and was reelected in 2020 with his term set to end in January 2027. During his two terms, the N.C. Republican was widely noted for a bipartisan streak that occasionally put him at odds with his

own party.

Tillis emphasized veterans' affairs, introducing the TEAM Act, which supported veterans exposed to toxic hazards, and co-wrote the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act — the first gun control law enacted in almost 30 years. He also championed several pieces of legislation to combat child abuse, backed former President Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and voted for the CHIPS and Science Act.

His willingness to cross party lines came at a cost. In 2023, the N.C. Republican party voted to censure Tillis over his votes in favor of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and the Respect for Marriage Act, which codified same-sex and interracial marriage.

During the 2024 election, Tillis notably distanced himself from Republican N.C. gubernatorial nominee

Mark Robinson due to allegations about the candidate's activity on a porn site. On X, Tillis wrote that if the allegations were true, Robinson needed to "take accountability for his actions and put the future of [N.C. and] our party before himself."

Tillis also had a complex relationship with Trump. During Trump's first term, Tillis voted in favor of all three of Trump's Supreme Court nominees and supported the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, Trump's signature tax cut package that the "big, beautiful bill" would extend. Trump endorsed Tillis for reelection in 2020.

But tensions emerged during Trump's second term. In January, the senator encouraged Danielle Hegseth — former sister-in-law of then-nominee for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth — to testify against the nomination, suggesting it could persuade undecided senators to block Hegseth's confirmation.

Tillis ultimately voted to confirm Hegseth amid political pressures and voted to confirm all of Trump's cabinet nominees this term. Since Trump's second term began, Tillis voted to confirm all of his cabinet nominees.

"I still look forward to continuing to serve North Carolina over the next 18 months. I look forward to solely focusing on producing meaningful results without the distraction of raising money or campaigning for another election," Tillis said in his announcement. "I look forward to having the pure freedom to call the balls and strikes as I see fit and representing the great people of North Carolina to the best of my ability."

Many Black Americans Face Unequal Burden As U.S. Inches Closer to War

By Stacy M. Brown

Black Press USA

As the United States edges closer to possible military action against Iran, history signals a familiar reality for Black Americans: disproportionate risk, unequal support, and a long legacy of being asked to sacrifice more while receiving less. From World War I through Iraq and Afghanistan, Black servicemembers have routinely been overrepresented in combat roles and underrepresented in decision-making positions. Today, although Black Americans make up just over 13% of the U.S. population, they account for nearly 19% of active-duty Army personnel. "When the U.S. goes to war, Black Americans, whether as civilians, enlisted personnel, or military families, often carry a disproportionate share of the burden," Liscach R. Isaboke, Esq., Managing Partner at Isaboke Law Firm, PLLC, told Black Press

USA.

"Historically, Black service members have been overrepresented in frontline and high-risk roles while underrepresented in officer ranks," Isaboke said. "This exposure results not only in increased physical danger, but also long-term disparities in access to VA benefits, career advancement, and mental health care upon return." That overrepresentation is linked to greater economic inequality. Recruitment data shows the military draws heavily from low-income communities, and Black Americans—more likely to face systemic barriers to college and employment—are disproportionately represented among enlistees seeking stability, education, or opportunity. Once enlisted, they are less likely to be promoted into leadership roles, often due to bias in evaluation and selection processes. According to the VA's National Health Study, 21.9% of deployed Black veterans screened

positive for PTSD, compared to 14.1% of white veterans. Studies have shown that Black veterans are less likely to receive long-term, culturally competent mental health care and face more barriers to follow-up treatment. Military justice records also reveal that Black service members are more likely to face court-martial than their white counterparts.

"Black Americans have historically been overrepresented in the U.S. military while being under-protected both at home and abroad," Cazoshay Marie, a disability advocate, artist, and writer, wrote in an email to Black Press USA. "From the disproportionate impact of PTSD and other invisible war wounds among Black veterans to the lack of adequate support upon returning home, the psychological and socioeconomic costs of war weigh heavily." "Increased military spending often coincides with the defunding of essential programs—education, healthcare, and

community infrastructure—which are lifelines in our communities," Marie said. Those federal divestments have long-term consequences. During the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it's estimated that the U.S. spent over \$6 trillion on military operations, interest payments, and veteran care. As those expenses ballooned, domestic programs—including housing subsidies, public education investment, and job training—faced cutbacks. Black Americans, already on the receiving end of wealth gaps and institutional neglect, felt those losses acutely.

In their February 2024 essay "The Race Gap That Shapes American Views of War," published in Foreign Affairs, Naima Green-Riley of Princeton University and Andrew Leber of Tulane University wrote that Black Americans have consistently been less likely than white Americans to

(See *UNEQUAL* P. 2)



DUKE ENERGY RELENTS, PROVIDES POWER TO NEW CHAPEL HILL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

NC Newslne—Last week, Duke Energy provided power to P.E.A.C.H. Apartments in Chapel Hill to allow the developer to run air conditioning units to prevent mold and mildew from taking hold. Triple-digit temperatures and high humidity are forecast for next week, which would create ideal conditions for mold and mildew growth.

The energy company had previously refused to run power to the apartments for low-income residents, citing the developer's decision to use a single meter for billing purposes, according to a consumer complaint the developer, EMPOWERment Inc., filed with the North Carolina Utilities Commission.

EMPOWERment Inc. Executive Director Delores Bailey had expressed concern about the potential damage mold and mildew could cause to the 10-unit affordable housing complex while Duke Energy and the nonprofit work out differences about the meter.

On Friday, Bailey was hopeful that Duke and her organization will soon reach a permanent settlement about the single meter so that tenants can begin moving in August or September at the latest. EMPOWERment Inc., decided to use one meter for the entire apartment complex to accommodate rooftop solar panels and to reduce energy costs for low-income residents who would rent the apartments.

"Duke has set up the power on a single meter, which is what we asked in the complaint," Bailey said.

Now that the power has been turned on, Bailey said EMPOWERment Inc.'s contractor, Focus Design Builders, can put the finishing touches on the project, which is more than 85% complete.

The remaining work consists mostly of "punch list" items such as making sure appliances are working and water is running properly, Bailey said. Outside, there is some landscaping and grading left to do, she added.

"They've (contractors) have got to come back and do a cleanup of the units and make them livable construction-wise," Bailey said.

The disagreement between Duke and EMPOWERment Inc., stemmed from differing interpretations of a state law prohibiting master meters for electric and natural gas service in new residential buildings. One section of the law outlines an exception to the prohibition if the tenant and landlord agree in the lease that the cost of the electric service or natural gas service, or both, will be included in rental payments. North Carolina has generally required individual meters and service in tenants' names for each unit in new residential building constructed on or after Sept. 1, 1977.

Bailey previously told NC Newslne that electric bills would be paid by tenants in monthly rent payments under lease agreements between the nonprofit and tenants. The amount charged would depend on the number of bedrooms in the apartment, she said.

Duke Energy told NC Newslne last week that it cannot comment on specific customers' accounts. But did provide a statement in an email from spokesman Jeff Brooks:

"Duke Energy service regulations, in compliance with North Carolina law, require residential units to have individual meters, no one master meter covering the entire building. These guidelines are in place to promote consistency in the quality and reliability of service to all customers."

Rewiring the units so that each has a meter would have cost the nonprofit about \$86,000, Bailey said. "We don't have that," she said last week. It would take three-to-six months to receive the parts needed to rewire the apartments if the nonprofit decided to go that route, she said. The Southern Environmental Law Center filed the complaint on behalf of the nonprofit.

EMPOWERment Inc., asked the state Utilities Commission for the following relief:

- Require Duke connect electric service to EMPOWERment's P.E.A.C.H. Apartments immediately, while the Commission considers this Emergency Complaint and Request for Declaratory Ruling, to prevent the risk of irreparable harm and health risks from the lack of essential electric service.

- Order that Duke permit the use of "master" meters when the lease between landlord and tenant states that the cost of electric and/or gas utilities is included in rental payments, as set forth in G.S. § 143-151.42(b)(2).

- In the alternative, declare that a multifamily residential building is eligible to use a single "master" meter, with the Commission's approval, when served by a solar array.

- Require Duke to provide permanent electric service to the P.E.A.C.H. Apartments under the current single-meter configuration.

North Carolina House, Senate Vote To Freeze Use Of Legal Fund That Goes To Aid Low-Income Residents

NC Newline—The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill that would impose a freeze on the use of a major legal aid fund for anything other than administrative fees Thursday. The measure would place a hold on millions of dollars used for public assistance until 2026.

The provision, included in three bills that passed the House Wednesday, was approved by the Senate on Thursday as part of Senate Bill 429, the “2025 Public Safety Act.” It stipulates that no money from the North Carolina Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) fund, established in 1983 to fund legal aid throughout the state, may be used to issue grants or other public assistance programs.

IOLTA operates by pooling funds that lawyers are required to hold in trust so that they may collectively generate interest, which is used to fund aid programs for individuals

als who cannot otherwise afford legal assistance. Since its inception, IOLTA has awarded \$134 million in grants supporting these efforts, helping in areas such as education, healthcare access, and housing.

Rep. Marcia Morey (D-Durham) moved to remove the IOLTA restrictions from all three bills Wednesday, noting a lack of relevance to the subject matter of the bills. The IOLTA provision was added to all three bills the day prior to their vote on the House floor.

“This is private money that accrues interest on lawyers’ trust accounts, and what this amendment will do, it will freeze it,” Morey said. “All the grants that could be started in 2026 will be frozen. All of you in your districts benefit from many of the grants that the State Bar puts out.”

She cited the importance of grants for victims’ compensation, elder law,



and foreclosure prevention, as well as numerous other civil matters. “On January 1, there will be no money coming into these organizations that have been helping people in civil matters.”

Though the Senate rejected two other bills containing the provision Thursday, it ultimately passed the Public Safety Act, which includes the IOLTA freeze alongside dozens of noncontroversial changes to criminal procedure, such as increased penalties for soliciting minors, greater access to protective orders for victims of domestic violence, and creating new criminal offenses for habitual domestic violence and exposing children to controlled substances.

The bill heads to Governor Josh Stein’s desk for his decision on whether to approve or veto it. Should it become law, IOLTA funds will be frozen from July 1, 2025 until June 30, 2026. Grants issued in 2025 would still be paid out, but none could be issued in 2026.

In a January press release, IOLTA announced it would disburse roughly \$12 million in grants in 2025, including \$5,325,000 to Legal Aid of North Carolina, \$1,160,000 to Pisgah Legal Services, \$1,070,000 to the North Carolina Justice Center. Smaller grants were allocated to groups like the Home Defense Project, Disability Rights North Carolina, and the Council for Children’s Rights.

The funds have also proved invaluable in the past in funding legal aid services to people impacted by natural disasters, with \$970,000 being issued in 2024 for legal aid to victims of Hurricane Helene, that went toward helping indigent North Carolinians navigate insurance claims and evade consumer fraud attempts.

Gunman Started Idaho Blaze, Then Ambushed Firefighters

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A man armed with a rifle started a wildfire Sunday and then began shooting at first responders in a northern Idaho mountain community, killing two firefighters and wounding a third during a barrage of gunfire over several hours, authorities said.

A shelter-in-place order was lifted Sunday night after a tactical response team used cell phone data to “hone in” on a wooded area where they found the suspect’s body with a firearm nearby as flames rapidly approached, Kootenai County Sheriff

Investigators said the gunman acted alone.

“We believe that was the only shooter that was on that mountain at that time,” Norris said.

Three victims were brought to Kootenai Health, said hospital spokesperson Kim Anderson. Two were dead on arrival and the third was being treated for injuries, Anderson said. The wounded firefighter was “fighting for his life” after surgery and was in stable condition, Norris said.

The scene was sheer pandemonium as the brush fire burned and firefighters rushed to the scene only to come under heavy fire.

First responders made urgent calls for help on their radios: “Everybody’s shot up here ... send law enforcement now,” according to one dispatch.

Gov. Brad Little said “multiple” firefighting personnel were attacked.

“This is a heinous direct assault on our brave firefighters,” Little said on X. “I ask all Idahoans to pray for them and their families as we wait to learn more.”

Norris said it appeared the sniper was hiding in the rugged terrain and using a high-powered rifle. He said he instructed deputies to fire back.

Just as the evening press conference was expected to begin, the bodies of the slain firefighters arrived in the nearby city of Spokane, Washington, escorted by a procession of



fire and law enforcement vehicles. Firefighters and others saluted as the vehicles passed by.

An alert by the Kootenai County Emergency Management Office asked people to avoid the area around Canfield Mountain Trailhead and Nettleton Gulch Road, about 4 miles (6.5 km) north of downtown Coeur d’Alene.

Though the shelter-in-place order was lifted, the sheriff’s office cautioned residents to be prepared because the fire was still burning.

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support U.S. wars abroad. The authors cited not only political and moral skepticism but also a deeply rooted sense that these wars are carried out in the name of democracy while offering little tangible benefit to Black communities. “Black Americans are more inclined to ask: Is this war just? Will our people gain anything from it? And what are we sacrificing for a country that so often withholds justice at home?” Green-Riley and Leber wrote.

The article pointed to cultural responses, including KRS-One’s 2008 track “Our Soldiers,” which critiques the Iraq War and opens with a siren that initially evokes U.S. policing. The song’s hook, “Frontline of the political war,” highlights a dual consciousness: the experience of fighting abroad while being targeted and marginalized at home. “As a historian of public health and policy, I can say that when the U.S. goes to war, Black Americans often shoulder a disproportionate share of both the burden and the consequences—on the battlefield and at home,” Dr. Zachary W. Schulz, of the Department of History at Auburn University, told Black Press USA. “Historically, military service has been a double-edged sword for Black Americans,” Schulz said. “From the Civil War through Iraq and Afghanistan, Black soldiers have fought for freedoms abroad they were denied at home. Military service offered mobility, education, and sometimes even a pathway to civil rights advocacy—as in the case of the Double V campaign during WWII—but it also exposed Black personnel to racism within the ranks, limited advancement opportunities, and post-service disparities in veteran care.”

“Civilians are also deeply affected,” Schulz said. “Wars often fuel economic shifts and labor demands that open up jobs for Black workers—only to see those gains reversed when the war ends. Wartime policing and surveillance disproportionately target Black communities, and anti-war protest movements led by Black activists—think Muhammad Ali or Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Beyond Vietnam’ speech—have historically met with state suppression and public backlash.” “The impact is layered,” Schulz added. “Black Americans are overrepresented among the fighters, under-resourced in the aftermath, and frequently erased from the national narrative of sacrifice.” “We must tell the full truth,” Isaboke concluded. “Black Americans have always shown up for this country, even when this country has not always shown up for them, especially in times of war.”

Sweeping Private School Voucher Program Tucked Inside U.S. House GOP Tax Bill

WASHINGTON — A national school voucher program got a step closer to becoming law Wednesday, as school choice continues to take heat across the United States.

The proposal in the U.S. House would allocate \$5 billion a year in tax credits for people donating to organizations that provide private and religious school scholarships and is baked into the Ways and Means Committee’s piece of a massive reconciliation package to fund President Donald Trump’s priorities.

The tax credit provision largely reflects the Educational Choice for Children Act — a sweeping bill that GOP Reps. Adrian Smith of Nebraska, Burgess Owens of Utah and Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana reintroduced in their respective chambers earlier this year.

The tax-writing committee advanced its measure Wednesday in a party-line vote. Republicans are using the complex reconciliation process to move the package through Congress with simple majority votes in each chamber, avoiding the Senate’s 60-vote legislative filibuster, which would otherwise require bipartisanship.

“School choice” is an umbrella term centering on alternative programs to one’s assigned public school. While proponents have argued that school choice programs are necessary for parents dissatisfied with their local public schools, opponents say these efforts drain critical funds and resources from school districts.

At a press conference, Rep. Elise Stefanik praised the Educational Choice for Children Act, which she cosponsored in the House.

The New York Republican said the bill is “a transformative piece of legislation that will expand educational opportunities for children across our nation.”

“For too long, students, especially those from underserved communities, have been trapped in failing school systems,” she said, adding that “school choice gives students the opportunity to succeed” and “is the great equalizer.”

The tax panel’s proposal includes

a \$20 billion total tax credit, which would be made up of a \$5 billion tax credit annually between 2026 and 2029.

The scholarships would be available to students whose household incomes do not exceed 300 percent of the median gross income of their area.

“This is opening the door to the federal government subsidizing a secondary private system of education that gets to pick and choose who it educates and how it educates kids,” Sasha Pudelski, director of advocacy at AASA, The School Superintendents Association, told States Newsroom.

The association helps to ensure every child has access to a high quality public education.

“??I think it’s really important for folks to understand that we are opening this door for the first time to this kind of subsidy,” Pudelski said.

The provision also comes as Trump has made school choice a major part of his education agenda.

He signed an executive order in January that gave the U.S. secretary of Education two months to offer guidance on how states can use “federal formula funds to support K-12 educational choice initiatives.”

Organizations that advocate for students with disabilities, including the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the Council for Exceptional Children, the Center for Learner Equity, and The Arc of the United States, fiercely opposed the bill, highlighting concerns that it is not sufficient in providing enforceable protections for students with disabilities and their families.

In a statement, Jacqueline Rodriguez, CEO of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, said “the guarantee of rights and protections for students with disabilities using these vouchers is disingenuous at best and crooked at worst, without the other critical provisions of IDEA,” or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

“It is quite possible that families with disabilities will use a voucher under the pretense that their child will have the same rights when in fact they do not,” Rodriguez said.

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Trump Wins As Supreme Court Curbs Judges, But May Yet Lose On Birthright Citizenship

WASHINGTON, (Reuters) - The U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling blunting a potent weapon that federal judges have used to block government policies nationwide during legal challenges was in many ways a victory for President Donald Trump, except perhaps on the very policy he is seeking to enforce.

An executive order that the Republican president signed on his first day back in office in January would restrict birthright citizenship - a far-reaching plan that three federal judges, questioning its constitutionality, quickly halted nationwide through so-called “universal” injunctions.

But the Supreme Court’s ruling on Friday, while announcing a dramatic shift in how judges have operated for years deploying such relief, left enough room for the challengers to Trump’s directive to try to prevent it from taking effect while litigation over its legality plays out.

“I do not expect the president’s executive order on birthright citizenship will ever go into effect,” said Samuel Bray, a Notre Dame Law School professor and a prominent critic of universal injunctions whose work the court’s majority cited extensively in Friday’s ruling.

Trump’s executive order directs federal agencies to refuse to recognize the citizenship of children born in the United States who do not have at least one parent who is an American citizen or lawful permanent resident, also called a “green card” holder.

The three judges found that the order likely violates citizenship language in the U.S. Constitution’s 14th Amendment.

The directive remains blocked while lower courts reconsider the

scope of their injunctions, and the Supreme Court said it cannot take effect for 30 days, a window that gives the challengers time to seek further protection from those courts.

The court’s six conservative justices delivered the majority ruling, granting Trump’s request to narrow the injunctions issued by the judges in Maryland, Washington and Massachusetts. Its three liberal members dissented.

The ruling by Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who Trump appointed to the court in 2020, emphasized the need to hem in the power of judges, warning against an “imperial” judiciary. Judges can provide “complete relief” only to the plaintiffs before them, Barrett wrote.

That outcome was a major victory for Trump and his allies, who have repeatedly denounced judges who have impeded his agenda. It could make it easier for the administration to implement his policies, including to accelerate deportations of migrants, restrict transgender rights,

curtail diversity and inclusion efforts, and downsize the federal government - many of which have tested the limits of executive power.

In the birthright citizenship dispute, the ruling left open the potential for individual plaintiffs to seek relief beyond themselves through class action lawsuits targeting a policy that would upend the long-held understanding that the Constitution confers citizenship on virtually anyone born on U.S. soil.

Bray said he expects a surge of new class action cases, resulting in “class-protective” injunctions.

“Given that the birthright-citizenship executive order is unconstitutional, I expect courts will grant those preliminary injunctions, and they will be affirmed on appeal,” Bray said.

Some of the challengers have already taken that path. Plaintiffs in the Maryland case, including expectant mothers and immigrant advocacy groups, asked the presiding judge who had issued a universal injunction

to treat the case as a class action to protect all children who would be ineligible for birthright citizenship if the executive order takes effect.

“I think in terms of the scope of the relief that we’ll ultimately get, there is no difference,” said William Powell, one of the lawyers for the Maryland plaintiffs. “We’re going to be able to get protection through the class action for everyone in the country whose baby could potentially be covered by the executive order, assuming we succeed.”

The ruling also sidestepped a key question over whether states that bring lawsuits might need an injunction that applies beyond their borders to address their alleged harms, directing lower courts to answer it first.

The challenge to Trump’s directive also included 22 states, most of them Democratic-governed, who argued that the financial and administrative burdens they would face required a nationwide block on Trump’s order.

George Mason University constitutional law expert Ilya Somin said the practical consequences of the ruling will depend on various issues not decided so far by the Supreme Court.

“As the majority recognizes, states may be entitled to much broader relief than individuals or private groups,” Somin said.

New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin, a Democrat who helped lead the case brought in Massachusetts, disagreed with the ruling but sketched out a path forward on Friday. The ruling, Platkin said in a statement, “recognized that nationwide orders can be appropriate to protect the plaintiffs themselves from harm - which is true, and has always been true, in our case.”

Americans Cut Back On Spending As Inflation Ticks Higher

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key inflation gauge moved higher in May in April, the Commerce Department said Friday. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 2.7% from a year earlier, an increase from 2.6% the previous month. Both figures are modestly above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. The Fed tracks core inflation because it typically provides a better guide to where inflation is headed.

At the same time, Americans cut back on spending for the first time since January, as overall spending fell 0.1%. Incomes dropped a sharp 0.4%. Both figures were distorted by one-time changes: Spending on cars plunged, pulling down overall spending, because Americans had moved more quickly to buy vehicles in the spring to get ahead of tariffs. And incomes dropped after a one-time adjustment to Social Security

benefits had boosted payments in March and April. Social Security payments were raised for some retirees who had worked for state and local governments.

Still, the data suggests that growth is cooling as Americans become more cautious, in part because President Donald Trump's tariffs have raised the cost of some goods, such as appliances, tools, and audio equipment. Consumer sentiment has also fallen sharply this year in the wake of the sometimes-chaotic roll-out of the duties. And while the unemployment rate remains low, hiring has been weak, leaving those without jobs struggling to find new work.

Consumer spending rose just 0.5% in the first three months of this year and has been sluggish in the first two months of the second quarter.

And spending on services ticked up just 0.1% in May, the smallest monthly increase in four and a half years.

"Because consumers are not in a strong enough shape to handle those (higher prices), they are spending less on recreation, travel, hotels, that



type of thing," said Luke Tilley, chief economist at Wilmington Trust.

Spending on airfares, restaurant meals, and hotels all fell last month, Friday's report showed.

At the same time, the figures suggest that President Donald Trump's broad-based tariffs are still having only a modest effect on overall prices. The increasing costs of some goods have been partly offset by fall-

ing prices for new cars, airline fares, and apartment rentals, among other items.

On a monthly basis, in fact, inflation was mostly tame. Prices rose just 0.1% in May from April, according to the Commerce Department, the same as the previous month. Core prices climbed 0.2% in May, more than economists expected and above last month's 0.1%. Gas prices

fell 2.6% just from April to May.

Economists point to several reasons for why Trump's tariffs have yet to accelerate inflation, as many analysts expected. Like American consumers, companies imported billions of dollars of goods in the spring before the duties took full affect, and many items currently on store shelves were imported without paying higher levies.

There are early indications that that is beginning to change.

Nike announced this week that it expects U.S. tariffs will cost the company \$1 billion this year. It will institute "surgical" price increases in the fall. It's not the first retailer to warn of price hikes when students are heading back to school.

Walmart said last month that that its customers will start to see higher prices this month and next as back-to-school shopping goes into high gear.

Also, much of what the U.S. imports is made up of raw materials and parts that are used to make goods in the U.S. It can take time for those higher input costs to show up

in consumer prices. Economists at JPMorgan have argued that many companies are absorbing the cost of the tariffs, for now. Doing so can reduce their profit margins, which could weigh on hiring.

Cooling inflation has put more of a spotlight on the Federal Reserve and its chair, Jerome Powell. The Fed ramped up its short-term interest rate in 2022 and 2023 to slow the economy and combat inflation, which jumped to a four-decade high nearly three years ago. With price increases now nearly back to the Fed's target, some economists — and some Fed officials — say that the central bank could reduce its rate back to a level that doesn't slow or stimulate growth.

Trump has also repeatedly attacked the Fed for not cutting rates, calling Powell a "numskull" and a "fool."

But Powell said in congressional testimony earlier this week that the Fed wants to see how inflation and the economy evolve before it cuts rates. Most other Fed policymakers have expressed a similar view.

Big Banks All Pass The Lesser Federal Reserve's Stress Tests

NEW YORK (AP) — All the major banks passed the Federal Reserve's annual "stress tests" of the financial system, the central bank said Friday, but the test conducted by the central bank was notably less vigorous than it had been in previous years.

All 22 banks tested this year would have remained solvent and above the minimum thresholds to continue to operate, the Fed said, despite absorbing roughly \$550 billion in theoretical losses. In the Fed's scenario, there would be less of a rise in unemployment, less of a severe economic contraction, less of a drop in commercial real estate prices, less of a drop in housing prices, among other met-

rics compared to what they tested in 2024.

All of these less harmful, but simulated, drops mean there would be less damage to these banks' balance sheets and less risk of these banks of potentially failing. Since the banks passed the 2024 tests, it was expected that the banks would pass the 2025 tests.

"Large banks remain well capitalized and resilient to a range of severe outcomes," said Michelle Bowman, the bank's vice chair for supervision, in a statement. An appointee of President Trump, Bowman became the Fed's vice chair of supervision earlier this month.

The Fed said it went with a less

vigorous test because the global economy has weakened since last year, and therefore the test tends to weaken. Further, the bank said previous tests had shown "unintended volatility" in the results and it plans to seek public and industry comment to adjust stress tests in future years. The Fed also chose to not test the banks as heavily on their exposure to private equity assets, arguing that private equity assets are typically held for the long term and are not typically sold at times of distress.

The Fed also didn't test for any bank exposure to private credit, a \$2 trillion asset class that even Fed researchers themselves have observed to be growing alarmingly

quickly. The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston recently pointed out that private credit could be a systemic risk to the financial system under a severe adverse scenario, which is exactly what the stress tests are supposed to test for.

There was no wording or phrasing in the Fed's press release, reports or methodology about testing or measuring private credit or private debt in this year's test. The Fed did do what it calls an "exploratory analysis" of the private credit market, which concluded the major banks were "generally well-positioned" to withstand losses in the private credit market. That analysis was entirely separate and not part of this year's test.

The Fed's "stress tests" were created after the 2008 financial crisis as a way to gauge whether the nation's "too big to fail" banks could withstand another financial crisis like the one that happened nearly 20 years ago. The tests are effectively an academic exercise, where the Fed simulates a scenario in the global economy and measures what that scenario would do to bank balance sheets.

The 22 banks that are tested are the biggest names in the business, such as JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, which hold hundreds of billions of dollars in assets and have wide-ranging businesses that touch every part of the U.S. and global

economy.

Under this year's hypothetical scenario, a major global recession would have caused a 30% decline in commercial real estate prices and a 33% decline in housing prices. The unemployment rate would rise to 10% and stock prices would fall 50%. In 2024, the hypothetical scenario was a 40% decline in commercial real estate prices, a 55% decline in stock prices and a 36% decline in housing prices.

With their passing grades, the major banks will be allowed to issue dividends to shareholders and buy back shares of stock to return proceeds to investors. Those dividend plans will be announced next week.

Housing Red Flag: Data Show Increase In Cancellations In Purchase Agreements

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The latest sign of trouble in the U.S. housing market: A pickup in home purchase agreements falling through before they're finalized.

Some 6% of pending contracts to buy a home were canceled in May, down from 7% in April, but up from 5% in May last year, according to data from National Association of Realtors. May is the third consecutive month with an annual increase in pending home sales cancellations.

A separate analysis of housing data by Redfin found that 14.6% of all pending sales in May fell out of contract, up from 14% in May last year, and the highest cancellation percentage for the month of May going back to at least 2017.

The trend underscores how even home shoppers who manage to ink a deal with a seller can end up having to back out because of unexpected costs, changes in their credit, employment or financial status, or a low appraisal, among other reasons.



"Stock market fluctuations, restrained consumer confidence and broader economic and geopolitical uncertainties may be leading to higher-than-normal cancellations rates in recent months," said Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist.

The U.S. housing market remains in a sales slump going back to 2022, as elevated mortgage rates and rising home prices nationally keep push-

ing the cost of homeownership well beyond what many would-be homebuyers can afford.

While sales of previously occupied U.S. homes in May remained at the slowest pace since 2009, pending U.S. home sales rose 1.8% from the previous month and increased 1.1% from May last year, NAR said Thursday.

A home sale is listed as pending

when the purchase contract has been signed but the transaction has not closed. There's usually a month or two lag between a contract signing and when the sale is finalized, which makes pending home sales a bellwether for future completed home sales.

A snapshot by Redfin of pending U.S. home sales for the four weeks that ended June 22, shows they fell 2.3% from a year earlier, the biggest drop in three months.

Economists at mortgage buyer Fannie Mae revised their outlook for existing U.S. home sales this week, citing expectations that the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will end this year at 6.5%.

Fannie Mae now expects existing U.S. home sales will rise 2% this year to 4.14 million. The economists' previously forecast the sale of 4.24 million homes. Still, they project home sales will jump 9.5% in 2026 on the back of mortgage rates easing to 6.1%.



NCDIT TO LAUNCH REVISED \$1.5B BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS, AND DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM TO EXPAND HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS IN NC

RALEIGH—The N.C. Division of Information Technology's (NCDIT) Division of Broadband and Digital Opportunity announced its plans to launch a revised Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program this summer in compliance with the restructuring notice released by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) on June 6. The BEAD program provides \$1.5 billion for high-speed internet expansion projects across North Carolina.

The new federal guidance allows additional competition from fixed wireless and satellite providers, revises scoring criteria, and requires states to complete their subgrantee selection and submit tentative BEAD awards to the NTIA by Sept. 4. As such, the division will launch and complete the subgrantee selection process for North Carolina in adherence to this new timeline.

"We are quickly working with state and federal leadership to align North Carolina's BEAD program with the new federal requirements," said Annette Taylor, NCDIT Deputy Secretary for Broadband and Digital Opportunity. "We encourage all interested providers to prequalify now so they can participate in the state's BEAD program."

To fulfill the new BEAD policy requirements, the division is extending its current and final prequalification window to 11:59 p.m. on July 7 for any remaining internet service providers who wish to participate in the BEAD subgrantee selection process. The new prequalification guidance, response form and FAQs are available at ncbroadband.gov/BEAD-prequalification.

Prequalification is intended to streamline the application process and ensure applicants meet the program's minimum and mandatory requirements. Providers that have not started the prequalification process should use these new prequalification documents. The division has removed no longer applicable requirements from the new prequalification guidance and response form and is coordinating with providers that have already submitted prequalification materials to provide guidance on items that are no longer required.

Today, the division also published the BEAD Planning Map, which contains preliminary eligible locations for the BEAD program. In the coming weeks, the subgrantee selection window will be opened and final eligible locations will be updated in the map after the division fulfills the remaining new policy guidance requirements.

Due to the new required timeline, the division will complete the application window for the BEAD program prior to launching application windows for any other infrastructure programs. NCDIT has already awarded nearly \$675 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to connect more than 250,000 homes and businesses across the state to high-speed internet.

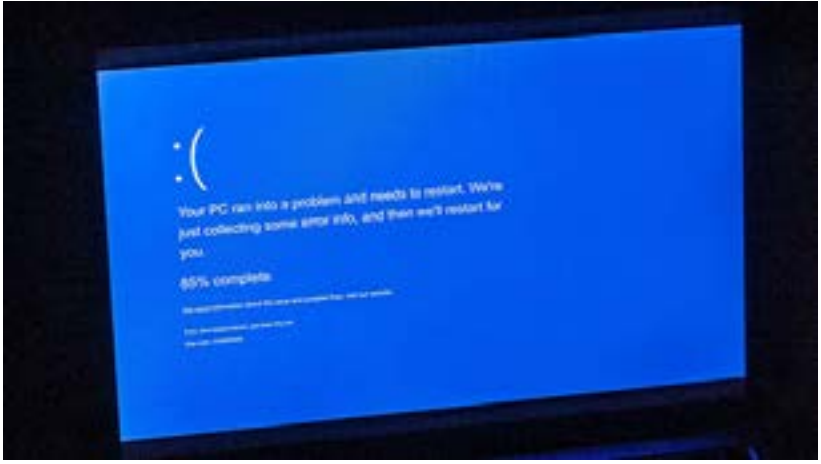
Windows' Infamous 'Blue Screen of Death'

Nearly every Windows user has had a run-in with the infamous "Blue Screen of Death" at some point in their computing life. Now, after more than 40 years of being set against a very recognizable blue, the updated error message will soon be displayed across a black background.

The changes to the notorious error screen come as part of broader efforts by Microsoft to improve the resiliency of the Windows operating system in the wake of last year's CrowdStrike incident, which crashed millions of Windows machines worldwide.

"Now it's easier than ever to navigate unexpected restarts and recover faster," Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft wrote in a Wednesday announcement.

As part of that effort, Microsoft



says it's "streamlining" what users experience when encountering "unexpected restarts" that cause disruptions. And that means a makeover to the infamous error screen.

Beyond the now-black background, Windows' new "screen of death" has a slightly shorter message. It's also no longer accompanied by a frowning face — and instead

shows a percentage completed for the restart process.

Microsoft says this "simplified" user interface for unexpected restarts will be available later this summer on all of its Windows 11 (version 24H2) devices.

And for PCs that may not restart successfully, Microsoft on Wednesday also said it's adding a "quick machine recovery" mechanism. The will be particularly useful for during a widespread outage, the tech giant noted, as Microsoft "can broadly deploy targeted remediations" and automate fixes with this new mechanism "without requiring complex manual intervention from IT."

Microsoft said this quick machine recovery will also be "generally available" later this summer on Windows 11 — with additional capabilities set to launch later in the year.



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