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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Pandemic toll leaves vast hole for kids

About 140,000 have lost a primary caregiver, putting them at risk

BY ARIANA EUNJUNG CHA

Ten months after James Vance, a former Marine and retired policeman in Princeton, W.Va., died of covid-19, his two young children are still reeling from his death.

Julia, 12, a middle-schooler who used to do everything with her father, is withdrawn. Her sister, Jamie, 7, still talks about him in the present tense. As for Mom, Jerri, a third-grade teacher, she is struggling to keep up with bills and maintain a sense of normalcy for her daughters while still processing the devastation of losing the love of her life.

"All three of us are in therapy," Jerri Vance said. "Every time we go out, everything is about covid. We have to see that daily and deal with people who say it isn't real when it's beyond real to us."

Throughout the pandemic, public health experts and other observers have often noted that children have been largely spared the worst because they are less likely to develop severe illness from the virus. The fact that many of the dead are parents or caregivers has been largely left out of the conversation.

A new study published Thursday in the journal *Pediatrics* attempts to quantify the vast hole left by these deaths, estimating that roughly 140,000 children under 18 may have lost parents or caregivers from March 2020 to June 2021 due to covid or other causes classified as pandemic-related. Those numbers take into account both official covid deaths and deaths from other causes, such as homicides and drug overdoses, beyond those expected in a typical year before the pandemic.

The consequences are life-changing: Losing a parent or other primary caregiver is one of the most stressful things that can happen in a child's life — putting them at risk of a trajectory of depression and post-traumatic stress, as well as physical manifestations of grief, such as heart problems.

The data also reveal vast disparities by race and ethnicity — even more skewed toward an overrepresentation of minority

SEE VIRUS ON A18

Emotions flare over Trump, covid and race

BY MARC FISHER

Bruce Carlson considers himself mainly a Democrat. He voted for Bill Clinton and Barack Obama for president and for Terry McAuliffe for governor back in 2013. But he won't be voting to make McAuliffe Virginia's governor for a second time.

Carlson, a retired hospital administrator, is switching over to the Republican, Glenn Youngkin, because he believes public schools are pushing a radical agenda in

In a scramble for votes, McAuliffe and Youngkin press the hottest of buttons

which American history is portrayed as racist, and transgender kids are encouraged to use the bathroom of their choice. In the country's biggest electoral show-

down of the year, Virginians are deciding whether to return McAuliffe to office, making him only the second governor in state history to serve a second term, or turn to Youngkin, a wealthy political neophyte. The outcome, strategists from both parties agree, will hinge on which candidate best generates enthusiasm from his base, overcoming the traditionally sharp falloff in voting in the year following a presidential election.

SEE VOTERS ON A12



Former Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat.

McAuliffe tests whether state's blue streak can last

BY GREGORY S. SCHNEIDER

NORFOLK — Music and beer are stoking up the tailgaters outside Old Dominion University's football stadium. Terry McAuliffe, candidate for governor, plunges into the crowd like the king of the biggest fraternity on campus. There's no hand he won't shake, photo he won't snap, jig he won't dance — until suddenly, head looking left and arm flailing right, he smacks into a foam dinner plate.

The plate falls from the hand of a very large man, staining his white shirt. McAuliffe apologizes, cracks a joke, but the man just glares. For an uncomfortable few seconds, it seems like he might take a swing at the 64-year-old former governor.

Then, his face flushed and angry-looking, the man says, "I'm gonna vote for you anyway," and disappears into the crowd.

SEE MCAULIFFE ON A10



Virginia GOP nominee for governor Glenn Youngkin.

Man of mystery: The many faces of Youngkin

BY LAURA VOZZELLA

RICHMOND — As a candidate for Virginia's highest office, Republican Glenn Youngkin has sidestepped or straddled many thorny issues — from the perennial flash points of abortion and guns to matters as fundamental as whether President Biden legitimately won the White House or the state's elections system can be trusted.

For all his shape-shifting, Youngkin has managed to run a tight race against the best-known gubernatorial candidate that Virginia has seen in nearly a half-century: Democrat Terry McAuliffe, a former governor seeking a rare comeback in the lone state that bars its chief executives from serving consecutive terms.

If the polls are right, Virginians are narrowly split between the governor they know and this 6-foot-5 Mystery Date.

SEE YOUNGKIN ON A8

Biden is under a deadline crunch

DEBT-LIMIT FIGHT, KEY VOTES LOOM

President takes soft approach on crucial bills

BY JEFF STEIN AND SEUNG MIN KIM

At one point during a private 90-minute Zoom call with liberal lawmakers on Monday, Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) asked President Biden why he had not simply locked Sens. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in a room and forced them to cut a deal on the Democrats' economic package.

Smiling back at Khanna, Biden said, "Ro, that would be like asking for a homicide," according to two people on the call who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private exchange.

Biden's joking response underlined a serious fact: He faces daunting difficulties now that the recent dramas over his economic plans have left him just a few weeks to salvage his agenda, right his presidency and tackle problems that in some cases were years in the making.

Democrats are pushing to pass his infrastructure bill by month's end, following recent setbacks on Capitol Hill, along with a broad safety net package. The two bills include major climate provisions that Biden wants to tout at a global climate summit next month, and Democrats also want something to show Virginia's voters before their Nov. 2 vote for governor.

"If we don't pass one of those before the gubernatorial election, it's a huge, huge mistake," said Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-Va.), referring to the infrastructure bill and a separate measure, to boost U.S. science and research, both of which have passed the Senate but not the House. "We've got two major wins — two major bipartisan wins. ... Let's get at least one if not both of those wins for the president on the board."

A recent deal with Senate Republicans, meanwhile, staved off a disastrous government default until December, but at the cost of ensuring that a politically explosive debt-limit fight will unfold as the White House is struggling to

SEE BIDEN ON A4

Haiti faces a crisis as kidnappings skyrocket

Growing desperation and political instability fuel rise in gang activity

BY WIDLORE MÉRANCOURT AND ANTHONY FAIOLA

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — Four days after the August earthquake that devastated the south of Haiti, Walkens Alexandre, a physician, was traveling to treat victims at a hospital when a motorcycle blocked his white Ford Ranger. Two men hopped off, pulled guns, commandeered his truck and hauled him to the outskirts of the capital.

He was held for three days while the kidnappers negotiated

by phone with his family. He'd be set free for 30 times his monthly salary. Loved ones pleaded with relatives and friends to contribute to the ransom.

"Now I'm traumatized, fearful of people, and reminded of this every time someone slams a door, or I hear a motorcycle," said Alexandre, 43. "We don't feel safe in Haiti. There is always panic, always fear."

The most troubled nation in the hemisphere is now being held hostage by a surge in kidnappings. With victims spanning all social classes and ransoms ranging from as little as \$100 to six figures, Haiti now holds the tragic title of highest per capita kidnapping rate on Earth. Recorded kidnappings so far this year have spiked sixfold over the

SEE KIDNAPPING ON A24



SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Bitter sugar

Francisco Jose, 77, has worked in the Dominican Republic for the sugar company Central Romana for more than 20 years. Inside, The Post explores how money has flowed from Dominican sugar fields to the burgeoning tax haven of South Dakota as part of its reporting from a vast trove of documents that expose a secretive financial universe that benefits the wealthy and powerful.

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