

ALLIES OF TRUMP REGRET DECISION TO SPURN PANEL

CAN'T REBUT EVIDENCE

McCarthy Chose Not to Include Defenders in Jan. 6 Hearings

By LUKE BROADWATER
WASHINGTON — The four hearings held in the past few weeks by the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack, with their clear, uninterrupted narratives about President Donald J. Trump's effort to undercut the peaceful transfer of power, have left some pro-Trump Republicans wringing their hands with regret about a decision made nearly a year ago.

Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, the minority leader, chose last summer to withdraw all of his nominees to the committee — amid a dispute with Speaker Nancy Pelosi over her rejection of his first two choices — a turning point that left the nine-member investigative committee without a single ally of Mr. Trump.

Mostly in private, Republicans loyal to Mr. Trump have complained for months that they have no insight into the inner workings of the committee as it has issued dozens of subpoenas and conducted interviews behind closed doors with hundreds of witnesses.

But the public display this month of what the panel has learned — including damning evidence against Mr. Trump and his allies — left some Republicans wishing more vocally that Mr. Trump had strong defenders on the panel to try to counter the evidence its investigators dig up.

"Would it have made for a totally different debate? Absolutely," said Representative Brian Mast, Republican of Florida. "I would have defended the hell out of him."

Among those second-guessing Mr. McCarthy's choice has been Mr. Trump.

"Unfortunately, a bad decision was made," Mr. Trump told the conservative radio host Wayne Allyn Root this week.

He added: "It was a bad decision not to have representation on that committee. That was a very, very bad decision."

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14 Republicans Act to Advance Gun Safety Bill

McConnell Is in Group; Few Are on '22 Ballot

By EMILY COCHRANE
WASHINGTON — As Senator Joni Ernst, Republican of Iowa, weighed whether she should vote to take up a bipartisan gun reform measure, the phone lines in her offices were being flooded by constituents hoping to sway her.

The calls were coming in roughly six to one, she estimated, with an urgent message: "Please do something."

On Tuesday, Ms. Ernst became one of 14 Republicans to break with her party to support moving ahead with the legislation, propelling it past a Republican blockade that has thwarted years of efforts to overhaul the nation's gun laws. The vote was an indication of how lawmakers in both political parties have been galvanized to action by the horror of back-to-back mass shootings, including a racist massacre that killed 10 Black people in Buffalo and a rampage at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, that killed 19 children and two teachers.

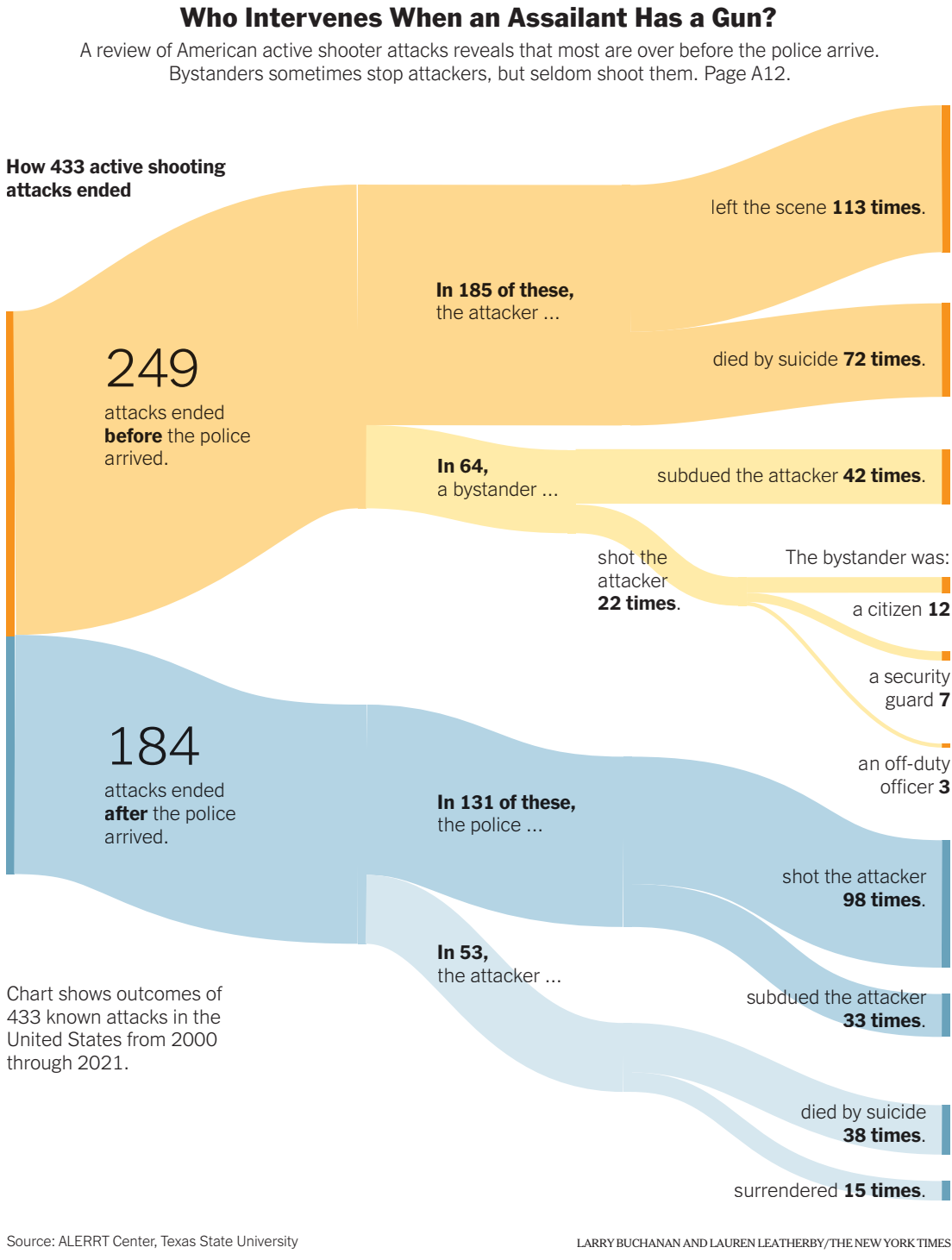
"I've talked to even Republican lawmakers in the state of Iowa, and they're like, 'We're hearing from our constituents too, about this issue,'" Ms. Ernst, the No. 5 Republican, said, adding, "So I think people recognize something needs to be done."

But the list of defectors also illustrated the fragility of the coalition that is willing to move forward with even a modest compromise on guns and the political peril a majority of Republicans still see in backing any new laws on the issue. It suggests that, far from a sweeping shift that could usher in a new era of consensus on addressing gun violence in America, the bill represents a high-water mark for a Congress that could soon be in the hands of a Republican Party that is still staunchly opposed to doing so.

Only two of the 14 Senate Republicans who broke ranks to support it are facing re-election this year, and, for different reasons, neither is particularly worried about losing support from their party's conservative base.

Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who voted to convict President Donald J. Trump at his 2021 trial, said she was not voting.

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BIDEN PRESSURES CONGRESS TO PUT GAS TAX ON HOLD

SEEKS 3-MONTH PAUSE

Move to Give 'Breathing Room' to Consumers Faces Skepticism

By ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS and LYDIA DePILLIS

WASHINGTON — With fuel prices near record highs, President Biden on Wednesday urged Congress to temporarily suspend the federal gas tax and give Americans "just a little bit of breathing room," even as the proposal faced dim prospects on Capitol Hill.

In a speech from the White House, Mr. Biden asked Congress to lift the federal taxes — about 18 cents per gallon of gasoline and 24 cents per gallon of diesel — through the end of September, shortly before the fall midterm elections. The president also asked states to suspend their own gas taxes, hoping to alleviate the economic pain that has contributed to his diminishing popularity.

"I fully understand that the gas tax holiday alone is not going to fix the problem," Mr. Biden said. "But it will provide families some immediate relief. Just a little bit of breathing room as we continue working to bring down prices for the long haul."

Critics have questioned the effectiveness of gas tax holidays, dismissing the idea as little more than an attempt by the White House and vulnerable Democrats to show that the party is attentive to Americans' financial pain.

White House officials, acknowledging the opposition from leading Democrats as well as Republicans in Congress, said Mr. Biden planned to reach out to both parties to build support — marking another test of the president's clout at a time when his approval ratings are low and his party faces losses in the midterm elections.

Mr. Biden's decision to go ahead with his appeal to Congress, despite the lack of consensus even among Democrats, was the latest sign of the desperation in the White House to find even modest steps to address an issue that is eating away at the president's support.

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An Anchor of Resistance Holding On in Ukraine

BY ROGER COHEN

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine — There is no door on Anna Svetlaya's fridge. A Russian missile blew it off the other day. The detached door saved her, protecting her chest from shrapnel as she passed out in a pool of blood.

It was just before 7 a.m. in a residential district here in the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv when Ms. Svetlaya, 67, felt her world explode in a hail of metal shards, glass and debris as she prepared breakfast.

Resolve Only Hardens in Southern Port City Vital to Both Sides

Her face a mosaic of cuts and bruises, her gaze dignified, Ms. Svetlaya said: "The Russians just don't like us. We wish we knew why!" A retired nurse, she surveyed her small apartment, where her two sisters labored to restore order.

"It's our 'brother Russians' who do this," said one, Larisa Kryzhanovska. "I don't even hate them, I just pity them."

Since the war began, Russian forces have pummeled Mykolaiv, frustrated by their failure to capture it and advance west toward Odesa. But the city's resistance has hardened.

Almost encircled in the first weeks of fighting, it has pushed back, becoming a linchpin of Ukrainian defiance on the southern front. But at regular intervals, the city's resistance has hardened.

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Deadly Quake Strikes Afghanistan, Where Sorrows Never Cease

This article is by Safiullah Padshah, Alissa J. Rubin and Mike Ives.

KABUL, Afghanistan — For much of the past two decades, the southeastern part of Afghanistan near the Pakistani border was plagued by insurgent activity, as police and military posts were frequently overwhelmed by Taliban fighters, and received few benefits from the American military presence.

The Taliban takeover in August finally brought relative peace to the far-flung population, despite the hardships they continued to face as the country suffered a drought and economic collapse.

Then early Wednesday, a 5.9-magnitude earthquake hit the region, shattering what little peace and stability the people there had been able to hold on to after years of hardship and violence.

More than 1,000 people were killed and 1,600 others injured in the quake, officials said, striking another blow to a country that has grappled with a dire humanitarian and economic crisis since the Taliban takeover in August.

The quake — the deadliest in the country in two decades — hit about 28 miles southwest of the city of Khost, a provincial capital in the country's southeast, the United States Geological Survey



A 5.9-magnitude temblor in southeast Afghanistan on Wednesday killed more than 1,000 people.

said, and had a depth of about six miles. But the worst damage was in the neighboring Paktika Province, which lies along the border with Pakistan.

"Nearly all government and private hospitals are full of victims," said Awal Khan Zadran, a doctor in the Urgan district of Paktika. Some of the injured were taken to Kabul, the Afghan capital, by helicopters and others were transported to nearby provinces, he

said. It was the latest in a series of tragedies to strike the country since the Taliban seized power from the Western-backed government last summer. In the months since, Afghanistan has struggled with widespread hunger, a severe drought, terrorist attacks by the Islamic State and an economic crisis that has devastated every facet of Afghan society.

At the same time, the Taliban

have struggled to attract foreign aid from Western donors since announcing edicts barring girls from attending secondary schools and restricting women's rights. Under the previous Western-backed government, foreign aid funded 75 percent of the government's budget, including health and education services — aid that was abruptly cut off after the Taliban seized power.

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Jewish Political Clout at Risk In a Changing New York City

By NICHOLAS FANDOS

The clock was nearing midnight on Shavuot, the Jewish Feast of Weeks, when Ruth W. Messinger offered a prophetic political warning to a crowd munching on holiday cheesecake at the Jewish community center on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

For a century, New York has been the center of Jewish political power in the United States. So much so that as recently as the 1990s, Jewish lawmakers made up roughly about half of New York City's delegation to the House of Representatives.

Now, Ms. Messinger said at the event earlier this month, gesturing to the frumpily dressed older man sitting beside her, there is only one left — Representative Jerrold Nadler — and he could soon be ousted in this summer's primary.

"For those of you who are old and don't believe this because you remember the glorious past, it would mean that New York City would no longer have a single Jewish representative in Congress," said Ms. Messinger, an elder stateswoman in Manhattan's liberal Jewish circles, who is back-



Representative Jerrold Nadler has a tough primary in August.

ing Mr. Nadler.

"This is, as far as I know, the largest concentration of Jews anywhere in the world," she added, "so that's pretty dramatic."

Mr. Nadler, an Upper West Side Democrat who is the longest-serving Jewish member of the House, finds himself fighting for political survival this summer after a

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Penélope Cruz and Antonio Banderas discuss their roles in a new film that pokes fun at the film industry. PAGE C2

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In "Corsicana," a new play by Will Arbery, finding happiness involves falling upward, Jesse Green writes. PAGE C1

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Patience has worn thin after two prescribed burns became New Mexico's largest recorded blaze. PAGE A10

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Elevators and ramps will be added to 95 percent of New York City's stations, but they won't be done until 2055. PAGE A18

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In a time of rapid inflation and rising interest rates, a recession is "certainly a possibility," Jerome H. Powell, the chair of the Federal Reserve, told the Senate banking committee. PAGE B1

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The routine summer practice of filling Europe's natural gas tanks has taken on fresh urgency after Russia cut deliveries from the Nord Stream 1 pipeline by more than half. PAGE B1

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A new book explores the stories of an older generation of drag performers. Above, Dana St. James. PAGE D6

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Andreas Anastasio, the man behind Anna Wintour's trademark hairstyle, is a talented artist as well. PAGE D1

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There could be only one Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on Wednesday, but our photographers found that all the competitors were capable of being a best friend. PAGE B10

N.F.L. Team Owner Faulted
Daniel Snyder, the owner of the Washington Commanders, was found to have undercut an inquiry into sexual harassment in the organization. PAGE B12

