

## Voters in Ohio Can Tilt Fight Over Abortion

### G.O.P. Seeks a Higher Bar for Amendments

By MICHAEL WINES

For more than a century, Ohio voters have been able to amend the State Constitution with a simple majority vote.

That could end on Tuesday, because the state's Republican-controlled Legislature has called for a special election that would raise the bar for amendments from a simple majority to 60 percent of the vote.

The reason is no secret. Since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last year, voters across the country, in multiple elections, have approved ballot measures protecting the right to abortion. A similar election has been scheduled for November in Ohio, and legislators are hoping the higher bar for passing amendments will lead to its defeat.

The blowback has been withering. Beyond denunciations from the Legislature's usual liberal critics, there have been bipartisan statements from former governors and other former officeholders.

Former Gov. John Kasich of Ohio, a Republican, wrote on Twitter in April that he had watched voters reject policies that he and his legislative majority had backed. "It never occurred to me to try to limit Ohioans' right to do that," he wrote. "It wouldn't have been right then, and it isn't right now."

Once, Ohio was the quintessential swing state. Now, on issues such as education, voting and abortion, it is an exemplar of a nationwide phenomenon: one-party-controlled legislatures, almost invariably Republican ones, changing the rules of the democratic process to extend their control even further.

The 2022 election brought single-party control of the governor's office and legislature to 39 states, the most in at least three decades. And 29 states, 20 of them Republican, have veto-proof supermajorities that control both houses of the state legislatures. That has given legislatures, many of them heavily gerrymandered, extraordinary power to exert influence and to stay in power.

Continued on Page A13



Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

Ukrainian marines on the front lines said that Western armored vehicles were superior to the Soviet-era ones they had been using.

## UKRAINE'S TROOPS VIEW OFFENSIVE AS A 'MARATHON'

### SCENES ON THE FRONT

#### Newly Formed Brigades Have Better Training, but Toll Is High

By CARLOTTA GALL  
and OLEKSANDR CHUBKO

ON THE FRONT LINES, southern Ukraine — They have NATO equipment and Western training. Some have English-speaking commanders, unusual in the Ukrainian military, and even an American-accented, evangelical chaplain.

"I am never tired, I'm in the Ukrainian marines," joked Oleksandr, 28, a battalion commander of the 37th Marine Brigade. Sitting down in the shade outside a cottage near the front line, he was determinedly positive. "I think it's going well."

Over the past several months, nine Ukrainian brigades, 36,000 troops in all, have received four to six weeks of training in combined arms combat, a synchronized way of fighting that some thought would enable them to spearhead another rout of the Russian military, as in Kharkiv last year.

But some brigades suffered heavy losses in the initial stages of this summer's counteroffensive, struggling to advance against the formidable Russian defenses. At least one new brigade was so badly debilitated from casualties that it was withdrawn from the battlefield to rebuild.

Most of the fighting has been hidden from the view of the news media since the start of operations in early June. But reporters from The New York Times were permitted to visit several marine brigades — two of them newly formed brigades — that are operating on one part of the southern front to hear from the troops themselves about their role in the counteroffensive.

Ukraine's new brigades, trained and equipped according to NATO standards, have a different look and feel from many other Ukrainian units. These marines now carry American M4 assault rifles and drive Humvees, which they repainted, changing the desert brown of the vehicles so often seen in Afghanistan and Iraq to a deep green for better cover in Ukraine's lush countryside.

"I did not expect we would switch to NATO weapons so soon," said Ukrop, 23, a company commander in the 38th Marine Brigade who, like all the marines interviewed for this article, gave only first names or call signs, in keeping with military protocol. He watched as men from his unit loaded two laser-guided rockets into a launcher on the back of a

Continued on Page A5

## Why Some Women Continued to Defend Cuomo

By NICHOLAS FANDOS

The menacing posts began cropping up on Twitter last September just hours after a former aide to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York sued him over sexual harassment claims.

The tweets attacked the aide, Charlotte Bennett, in starkly personal terms. "Your life will be dissected like a frog in a HS science class," read one of the most threatening, which also featured a photo of Ms. Bennett dancing at a bar in lingerie.

The post was part of a thread from Anna Vavare, a leader of a small but devoted group of mostly older women who banded together to defend Mr. Cuomo from a cascade of sexual misconduct claims that led to his resignation in August 2021. But it turns out, her tweets had secretly been ordered up by someone even closer to the former governor's cause: Madeline Cuomo, his sister.

### Sister Quietly Directed a Group to Discredit His Accusers

In the hours before the posts went live that morning, Ms. Cuomo exchanged dozens of text messages with Ms. Vavare and another leader of the pro-Cuomo group We Decide New York Inc., pushing the activists to target Ms. Bennett, one of the first women to accuse Mr. Cuomo of sexual harassment. She appeared to invoke her brother's wishes.

"Good Morning Just spoke and he thinks a distraction could be helpful today," Ms. Cuomo wrote in the private texts reviewed by The New York Times. She suggested posting "photos of Charlotte in her sex kitten straddle" taken from Ms. Bennett's Instagram account, potentially alongside more "austere, professional"

ones of loyal Cuomo aides. "No respectable woman would EVER pose like that," Ms. Cuomo added.

She went on: "Bimbo photos." "Really despicable." "Unsophisticated girls."

Far from an isolated episode, the unvarnished exchange is part of a trove of more than 4,000 text messages, emails and voice memos between leaders of the group and Ms. Cuomo shared with The Times this summer. Together, they provide unusual insight into how far members of one of America's most storied political families were willing to go to rehabilitate a fallen Democratic scion and humiliate those they believed had wronged him.

Made up almost entirely of women inspired by Mr. Cuomo's handling of the Covid pandemic, We Decide New York rapidly joined forces in spring 2021 to defend an increasingly isolated governor as traditional allies abandoned more "austere, professional"

Continued on Page A14

## Xi's Shake-Up Imperils Image Of the Military

By CHRIS BUCKLEY

As Xi Jinping has entrenched his hold on power in China, he has likened himself to a physician, eradicating the toxins of corruption and disloyalty that threaten the rule of the Communist Party. And his signature project for over a decade has been bringing to heel the once extravagantly corrupt military leadership.

But recent upheavals at high levels of the People's Liberation Army forces suggest that Mr. Xi's cure has not endured. Last week, he abruptly replaced two top generals in the Rocket Force, an unexplained shake-up that suggests suspicions of graft or other misconduct in the sensitive arm of the military that manages conventional and nuclear missiles.

"Obviously, something has gone wrong in the system, which is probably related to discipline and corruption," said Andrew N.D. Yang, an expert on the Chinese military who was formerly a senior Taiwanese defense official. "It's like a virus in the system that has come back. It's a deep-rooted problem."

A scandal involving the top brass of the armed forces would be a setback for Mr. Xi, who has taken pride in turning the 98 million-strong Communist Party and

Continued on Page A6

## Like Trump, G.O.P. Rivals Feed Distrust in Vital U.S. Institutions

By JENNIFER MEDINA

Ron DeSantis says the military is more interested in global warming and "gender ideology" initiatives than in national security.

Tim Scott says the Justice Department "continues to hunt Republicans."

Vivek Ramaswamy has vowed to "shut down the deep state," borrowing former President Donald J. Trump's conspiratorial shorthand for a federal bureaucracy he views as hostile.

As Mr. Trump escalates his attacks on American institutions, focusing his fire on the Justice Department as he faces new criminal charges, his competitors for the Republican nomination have followed his lead.

Several have adopted much of Mr. Trump's rhetoric sowing broad suspicion about the courts, the F.B.I., the military and schools. As they vie for support in a primary dominated by Mr. Trump, they routinely blast these targets in ways that might have been considered extraordinary, not to mention unthinkable bad politics, just a few years ago.

Yet, there is little doubt about the political incentives behind the statements. Polls show that Americans' trust in their institu-

### Rhetoric Raises Alarms About Lasting Harm

tions has fallen to historical lows, with Republicans exhibiting more doubt across a broad swath of public life.

The proliferation of attacks has alarmed both Republicans and Democrats who worry about the long-term impact on American democracy. Public confidence in core institutions — from the justice system to voting systems — is fundamental to a durable democracy, particularly at a time of sharp political division.

"We've had these times of division before in our history, but we've always had leaders to bridge the gaps who have said we need to build respect, we need to restore confidence in our institutions — today we have just the opposite," said Asa Hutchinson, the former governor of Arkansas and a moderate whose campaign for the Republican presidential nomination has so far gained little traction.

"That defines the course of 2024," he added. "We're going to have a leader that brings out the

Continued on Page A12



Emil Lippe for The New York Times

### Hanging Tight

How do you teach 300 chimpanzees to seek safety in a storm? With cowbells, sound machines and an orange Frisbee. Page D1.

## New Frontier in Travel Scams: Guidebooks Generated by A.I.

By SETH KUGEL and STEPHEN HILTNER

In March, as she planned for an upcoming trip to France, Amy Kolsky, an experienced international traveler who lives in Bucks County, Pa., visited Amazon.com and typed in a few search terms: travel, guidebook, France. Titles from a handful of trusted brands appeared near the top of the page: Rick Steves, Fodor's, Lonely Planet. Also among the top search results was the highly rated "France Travel Guide," by Mike Steves, who, according to an Amazon author page, is a renowned travel writer.

"I was immediately drawn by all the amazing reviews," said Ms. Kolsky, 53, referring to what she

saw at that time: universal raves and more than 100 five-star ratings. The guide promised itineraries and recommendations from locals. Its price tag — \$16.99, compared with \$25.49 for Rick Steves's book on France — also caught Ms. Kolsky's attention. She quickly ordered a paperback copy, printed by Amazon's on-demand service.

When it arrived, Ms. Kolsky was disappointed by its vague descriptions, repetitive text and lack of itineraries. "It seemed like the guy just went on the internet, copied a whole bunch of information from Wikipedia and just pasted it

Continued on Page A10



NATIONAL A8-16

### Rescued Beagles Find Homes

Nearly 4,000 dogs were held in cages at a breeding and research facility. Now, many thrive with families. PAGE A8

### Forceful New Role for Harris

As an active presence in the 2024 campaign, the vice president is trying to reclaim her 2020 momentum. PAGE A9

INTERNATIONAL A4-7

### South Korea's Matchmakers

Singles are signing up in droves for city-hosted blind-dating events, but some point to their inability to address real family planning issues. PAGE A4

### U.K. Moves Migrants to Barge

Some asylum seekers have been sent to the Bibby Stockholm, a divisive symbol of the state's migration stance. PAGE A7

SPORTS B6-8

### A Millimeter, and a Mile

The U.S.'s close loss in the Women's World Cup doesn't accurately reflect the challenges ahead. On Soccer. PAGE B6



BUSINESS B1-5

### Scanning 8 Billion Eyeballs

The goal is part of a digital ID and cryptocurrency project co-created by Sam Altman, OpenAI's chief. PAGE B1

### Simon & Schuster Is Sold

Paramount's deal will put control of a major publishing house in the hands of KKR, a private equity firm. PAGE B1

ARTS C1-6

### Exploring Her Own Sounds

The historically minded, socially conscious musician Rhiannon Giddens offers a selection of bluesy, racy, playful tracks on "You're the One," her first full album of her own songs. PAGE C1

### Resisting to the End

The killing of the dancer O'Shae Sibley at a Brooklyn gas station last month serves as a stark reminder that some forms of expression are still seen as threatening, Gia Kourlas writes. PAGE C1

OPINION A20-21

### Rich Lowry

PAGE A21



OBITUARIES A18-19

### Director of 'The Exorcist'

William Friedkin, who also led "The French Connection" to five Oscars in the early 1970s, was known for a gritty, visceral style. He was 87. PAGE A18

