

Election

Battles over schools

Tight Virginia governor's race tests Biden strength

RICHMOND, Nov. 2. (AP): The first major test of how voters feel about Joe Biden's presidency is unfolding in Virginia, where a governor's race that was supposed to be a comfortable win for Democrats is instead ending in suspense.

Terry McAuliffe, one of the most prominent figures in Democratic politics and a former Virginia governor, is in a tight race Tuesday for his old job against

Republican rival and political newcomer Glenn Youngkin. The bruising, costly campaign has centered on issues including



Youngkin

Youngkin's ties to former President Donald Trump, the future of abortion rights and culture war battles over schools.

But the results may ultimately be interpreted as an early judgment of Biden. A year after he captured Virginia by 10 percentage points, the competitive nature of the governor's race is a sign of how his political fortunes have changed. The White House has been shaken in recent months by the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, a sometimes sluggish economic recovery amid the pandemic and a legislative agenda at risk of stalling on Capitol Hill.

Deepen

A loss in a state that has trended toward Democrats for more than a decade would deepen the sense of alarm inside the party heading into next year's midterm elections, when control of Congress is at stake.

"Tomorrow will be a statement. A statement that will be heard across this country," Youngkin told a large crowd that chanted "USA! USA!" during his final rally Monday night. "The future of this commonwealth, the future of this country is going to be decided."

McAuliffe countered that a GOP win would roll back all the progress his own party had made and would buoy Trump and his talk of 2024. "Folks, the stakes are huge," McAuliffe said, adding of Youngkin, "He doesn't know anything about governance."

At the polls on Tuesday morning, Cassandra Ogren, 29, of Norfolk, said she had voted for McAuliffe in part because of his support for abortion rights and her concern about restrictions recently enacted in Texas.

"I'm definitely a little scared of those particular rights being restricted for women like myself and those that I work with and serve in my business every day," said Ogren, an esthetician.

Motivated

Ogren said she was also motivated by Youngkin's ties to Trump.

"Anyone endorsed by President Trump is not someone I want representing me," she said.

Bennett White, 24, of Norfolk, said he'd voted for Youngkin because of his approach to education and because the Republican candidate is a "change-up from the status quo."

White said he's concerned about McAuliffe's education policies, especially after the Democratic candidate said he doesn't believe "parents should be telling schools what they should teach." He also said he doesn't want "our next generation of leaders to be looking at their peers in the lens of race."

"My mom's a teacher," White said. "I just want to make sure that my mom is safe in the classroom and that her ideals and everyone's ideals are protected, and we're not turning into brainwashing academies."

Elsewhere on Tuesday, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy was trying to win reelection against Republican former State Assembly member Jack Ciattarelli. If successful, Murphy would be the first Democrat reelected as the state's governor in 44 years, though New Jersey hasn't voted Republican for president since 1988.



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., arrives to meet with the Democratic Caucus at the Capitol in Washington, early Tuesday, Nov. 2. Even as Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., is wavering over supporting President Joe Biden's \$1.75 trillion domestic policy package, Democratic leaders are vowing to push ahead, with voting possible on the bill this week. (AP)

Democrats vow to push ahead

Manchin wavers on Biden's plan

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2. (AP): Pivotal Sen. Joe Manchin wavered on his support for President Joe Biden's sweeping \$1.75 trillion domestic policy proposal, but Democratic leaders vowed to push ahead, with initial voting possible on the bill and a related \$1 trillion infrastructure package in the House this week.

The West Virginia Democrat's announcement Monday came as Democrats wanted assurances from Manchin that he will support Biden's big package. He's one of two key holdout senators whose votes are needed to secure the deal and push it toward passage.

Instead, the conservative Manchin rebuffed progressive Democrats, urging them to quit holding "hostage" the smaller public works bill as negotiations continue on the broader package. "Enough is enough," Manchin said at a hastily called news conference at the Capitol.

Manchin said he's open to voting for a final bill reflecting Biden's big package "that moves our country forward." But he said he's "equally open to voting against" the final product as he assesses the sweeping social services and climate change bill.

Democrats have been working frantically to finish up months of negotiations, and it's unclear whether

Manchin's resistance will deliver a debilitating blow to those efforts or have the opposite effect of propelling Democrats to start taking votes on Biden's signature domestic proposal. His comments infuriated some Democrats but energized others, particularly progressives eager to force his hand.

The White House swiftly responded that it remains confident Manchin will support Biden's plan, and the congressional leaders said it all remained on track.

Respond

"Senator Manchin says he is prepared to support a Build Back Better plan that combats inflation, is fiscally responsible, and will create jobs," said press secretary Jen Psaki in a statement. "As a result, we remain confident that the plan will gain Senator Manchin's support."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer both echoed the White House. And progressives insisted it's time to vote.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the leader of the progressive caucus said, "I don't know what Sen. Manchin is thinking, but we are going to pass both bills through the House and we are going to deliver transformative change to the people."

The stakes are high with Biden overseas at a global climate change summit and his party fighting in two key governors' races this week - in Virginia and New Jersey - that are seen as bellweathers in the political mood of the electorate.

With Republicans staunchly opposed and no votes to spare, Democrats have been trying to unite progressive and centrist lawmakers around Biden's big vision.

Biden unveiled a framework for the package last week, a sizable investment in social service programs and climate change strategies, but Democrats are trying to negotiate a provision to lower prescription drug prices for seniors with Medicare, among other final changes.

At a leadership meeting late Monday, Pelosi said the House Rules Committee could meet as soon as Tuesday evening or Wednesday, which would allow for votes midweek, according to a person who requested anonymity to discuss the private talks. The Senate would still have to vote, likely later in the month.

Progressives had been refusing to vote on the smaller public works bill, using it as leverage as they try to win commitments from Manchin and Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, the other key holdout, for Biden's broader bill.

America

Rev Jackson hospitalized: The Rev. Jesse Jackson was hospitalized Monday in Washington, D.C. after falling and hitting his head while helping Howard University students who are protesting living conditions on campus, according to a spokesman.

The 80-year-old Chicago civil rights leader was entering a campus building when he fell and hit his head, according to Jackson spokesman Frank Watkins.

Jackson's staff took him to Howard University Hospital for various tests including a CT scan which came back normal. Watkins said Jackson would be kept at the hospital overnight for observation.

"Family, he's resting comfortably and doing well," Santita Jackson, one of Jackson's daughters, posted on Twitter along with a story from The Grio about his fall. (AP)

California man charged: A 20-year-old California man accused of assaulting a flight attendant on a cross-country American Airlines flight allegedly punched the woman in the face after being told he could not use the bathroom, leaving her bleeding around her nose and giving her a concussion, according to a court document.

Prosecutors announced Monday that Brian Hsu, 20, of Irvine was charged with assault and interfering with a flight crew on a flight last week from John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York to John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana, California.

He appeared in federal court in California Monday and was released on a \$10,000 bond. He was ordered to appear in federal court in Denver, where the flight was diverted after the alleged assault, on Nov. 15. (AP)

Court revives lawsuit: A federal appeals court on Monday revived a lawsuit filed by an online freelance journalist in Texas who says she was arrested for merely seeking information from the police.

Priscilla Villarreal goes by the name La Gordiloca on Facebook and Twitter. Monday's opinion from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals describes her as a non-traditional journalist who posts livestreamed video and information on crime scenes in the Laredo area, along with "often unfiltered" commentary that is sometimes critical of local authorities.

Her lawsuit, revived in a 2-1 decision by the appeals court panel, said she was arrested in 2017 and accused of violating a little-known Texas law that a judge later found unconstitutional. (AP)

And other awards on the MENA region level

stc is ranked 1st in Kuwait as the Best Leading Corporate for Investor Relations for the year 2021



Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announces winning the 1st position as "the Leading Corporate Investor Relations", in addition to its position amongst the top 5 companies in the Middle East, at the Middle East Investor Relations Association "MEIRA" Annual Conference and Awards held on the 25th October 2021. stc's CEO, Eng. Maziad Alharbi, was selected amongst the top 5 CEOs for Investor Relations in the Middle East for the year 2021 across various industries. On the other hand, stc's Investor Relations and M&A General Manager, Mr. Wassim M. El Hayek, was ranked the 1st as the Best Investor Relations Professional in Kuwait in addition to ranking stc's Digital Annual Report in the second position for mid cap companies in the MENA region for the year 2020.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, digital platforms were the major communication channel between IR professionals of leading corporates and investors around the world. However, with the start of the gradual return to normal life all around the world, this year MEIRA was able to enhance the communication

stc is ranked 1st as the Best Leading Corporate for Investor Relations in Kuwait for the year 2021

between the concerned parties by holding the annual conference in Dubai - United Arab Emirates, in the presence of the largest listed shareholding companies on the stock exchanges in the GCC and the Middle East Region from all sectors such as banking, oil, telecommunications, real estate and others. Whereby, Mr. Wassim El Hayek, Investor Relations and M&A General Manager at Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) received the Awards.

MEIRA is considered the largest event covering the Investor Relations' best practices in the MENA region in addition to demonstrating the importance of incorporating transparency and corporate governance practices in the Investor Relations functions of listed companies. The event honors and awards each of the leading companies, investor relations professionals, CEOs and CFOs who demonstrate dedication to apply the highest professional standards in investor relations.

On this occasion, stc is proud to highlight the methodology adopted by MEIRA to classify the respective companies, their IR functions, executive management and Investor Relations officers. Whereby, the

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stc is ranked amongst the top 5 Leading Corporate for Investor Relations in the Middle East for the year 2021

votes of each of the financial analysts as well as the international portfolio and fund managers were considered in the ranking process. The voting survey included a number of major attributes, which contribute in enhancing the trust between the investors and companies' executive management, in order to rank the executives of each company. Those attributes included, but are not limited to, leadership, credibility and communication, in addition to other well-known leadership traits. Meanwhile, classification of the IR functions was based on several areas, the most important of which are the quality of earnings call, knowledge, responsiveness and credibility in communication in addition to timing to market, consistent and granular financial information.

Engineer Maziad Alharbi, stc's Chief Executive Officer, stated, "Being a leader in the telecom industry and one of the pioneers in providing the digital transformation services in the Middle East, stc has been always keen on applying the best practices and professional standards across all company functions in order to support its employees in achieving the optimal level of operational activities. To achieve its 2021 corporate strategy that has been revised to reflect the latest developments in the ICT and Telecommunications market, and which focuses on building strategic partnerships in the industry, stc has not only considered incorporating the industry's best practices but it also ensured to maintain the highest level of transparency with the current and potential investors in



Maziad Al-Harbi

addition to applying the corporate governance principles across all company activities. Being ranked the 1st in Kuwait as a Leading Corporate for Investor Relations and amongst the top 5 companies in the Middle East, demonstrates the great efforts of stc's Investor Relations team in fulfilling the needs of the investment community in an efficient, transparent and timely manner. Furthermore, positioning stc as one of the leading companies in the Investor Relations' activities in the MENA region as well as amongst the top targeted companies during the COVID-19 crisis, illustrates the executive management's and Investor Relations department's leading role in stc's IR activities which meets the global best practices in this area."

Alharbi added, "It is worth mentioning that positioning stc's Digital Annual Report in the second place amongst the leading corporates of the MENA region reflects the sincerity, dedication and creativity of stc's skilled employees across all the Company's sectors, as well as their diligence and hard

The Investor Relations and M&A General Manager, Mr. Wassim M. El Hayek wins the Best Investor Relations Professional in Kuwait for the year 2021

stc wins MEIRA 2021 Awards

Advancing further into new horizons



Kuwait wins

1st Leading Corporate for Investor Relations
1st Best Investor Professional

Middle East ranks

Top 5 Leading Corporate for Investor Relations
Top 5 Best Investor Relations by CEO
2nd Best Digital Annual Report

stc

The CEO, Eng. Maziad Alharbi is ranked amongst the top 5 CEOs for Investor Relations in the Middle East for the year 2021

work in supporting the Investor Relations team to complete their operations and provide the necessary services to the investment community. Accordingly, this has helped stc to maintain transparency and adhere to the corporate governance rules and regulations imposed by local regulators."

He continued, "These achievements also translate stc's significant role in implementing the corporate governance framework within the Company and adhering to Kuwait's regulatory bodies' rules and regulations in order to ensure a smooth flow of information with stc's shareholders and investment community.

Throughout the pandemic, which had a strong impact on the communication standards between listed companies and investors around the world, stc proved its ability to overcome the economic challenges and potential risks, while serving the investment community and company shareholders virtually leveraging on the digital platforms

and communication channels. stc's digital transformation corporate strategy played a significant role in stc's success with this regard, in addition to its focus on providing the necessary ICT and technical solutions to individuals and enterprises. Throughout 2021 and during the period of uncertainty, the IR Department was able to ensure that the investment community was fully informed with the latest developments about the Company's operational and financial performance in addition to stc's plans to overcome the challenges resulting from COVID-19 crisis."

Alharbi concluded, "At stc, we are open to communicate the Company's market position, competitive advantages, corporate strategy, as well as financial and operational performance to the investment community. As a result, stc's prudent management was able to maintain effective communication and transparency with the Company's relevant stakeholders during 2021 and succeeded in earning their trust and support."

stc is ranked 2nd as the best Digital Annual Report amongst mid cap companies in the MENA