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### The Parthenon, December 1, 2021

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# THE PARTHENON

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SBC



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### Inside the Misinformation Campaigns targetting the Latino Community (AP) - P10

Before last year's presidential election, Facebook ads targeting Latino voters described Joe Biden as a communist. During his inauguration, another conspiracy theory spread online and on Spanish-language radio warning that a brooch worn by Lady Gaga signaled Biden was working with shadowy, leftist figures abroad.

PAGE EDITED AND DESIGNED BY XENA BUNTON | BUNTON2@MARSHALL.EDU

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# SGA Passes Resolution Regarding Pedestrian Safety

By CONNER WOODRUFF  
REPORTER

The Student Government Association unanimously passed a resolution on Nov. 16 to support making the roads around Marshall University's campus safer for pedestrians.

The resolution "Pedestrian Safety on Marshall University's Main Campus," was generated from concerns regarding the safety of Marshall's pedestrians crossing the streets after two traffic incidents occurred this semester.

The resolution addresses both incidents: a professor who was struck by a vehicle crossing the intersection of 3rd Avenue and Hal Greer Boulevard and a student who was struck and killed by a vehicle while crossing 3rd Avenue.

Sydni Pierce, the SGA Senator who

sponsored the resolution, said the resolution has been in development and has gone through significant changes in response to the recent accidents.

"We had received it as a concern from the student body," Pierce said. "Since that tragedy, we've had to move forward and completely change our approach."

Members of the SGA said this resolution serves only as a call to action that will endorse any changes to the traffic situations around campus made on behalf of the University's faculty and other experts.

"As student government, we have the power to facilitate change on campus; however, this issue transcends into a Huntington city issue," Pierce said.

Prior to the SGA decision, a similar bill passed through Marshall's faculty senate, supporting the idea to collaborate with the engineering department and other road safety experts in finding the best way to combat these issues.

*Conner Woodruff, woodruff9@marshall.edu*

## Marshall Prom Postponed

By ALAINA LASTER  
REPORTER

The Marshall University Prom that was scheduled for Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. has been postponed until the spring semester.

According to Sara-Frances Lyon of Housing and Residence Life, the event was postponed because of health and safety regulations. She said the event should wait until after the cold and flu season passes and the weather is warmer, rather than having students at an event and causing an outbreak before sending students home for winter break.

"We didn't sell tickets or anything, we just had people RSVP," said Lyon.

"As the event was scheduled for December originally, the maximum number of people could come were

around 200 including their guests.

For example, 100 Marshall students and them bringing their guest", said Lyon.

The event is sponsored by Housing and Residence Life.

Its location is not yet decided, as Housing and Residence Life awaits approval for the event.

"We want to try and have it outside with weather permitting, but until then we await on the approval from health and safety to reset a date and location for the Marshall prom in the spring," Lyon said

*Conner Woodruff, woodruff9@marshall.edu*



This semester both a student and professor were struck on roads surrounding the university, with the student being killed. There has been a renewed effort to ensure pedestrian safety among students and administration.



# Fire destroys garage, apartment



By CARTER WOODRUFF  
REPORTER

An auto repair shop and other structures near Marshall's Campus were destroyed in an accidental fire.

The fire started in the inside of 3rd Avenue's Wooten's Garage; the blaze was caused by the ignition of gas vapors during a vehicle's fuel system repair. The fire spread from Wooten's Garage to another business and the neighboring apartment building, destroying the apartment and 6 cars on the block of 14th Street and 3rd Avenue.

The Huntington Fire Department was sent to the structure around 3:39 p.m. and extinguished the fire with the help of additional units sent to combat the fire's large size.

The mechanics inside the garage and residents within the apartment building at the time of the fire escaped unharmed.

Future plans for the destroyed property have

been directed to the owner of Wooten's Garage.

Due to the accidental nature of the fire, there shall be no city involvement or charges pressed. "Because this fire was ruled an accident by the Fire Marshal's Office, there are no criminal charges that will be filed against anyone," Bryan Chambers, city of Huntington Communications Director, said. "The City of Huntington would have no involvement in any civil matters that would arise from the incident."

The apartment residents escaped unharmed thanks to the actions of retired Huntington firefighter, Dickie Anderson. The Fire Marshal's Office revealed that Anderson had warned the people inside the apartment building about the fire after seeing the blaze from a nearby restaurant.

Conner Woodruff, [woodruff9@marshall.edu](mailto:woodruff9@marshall.edu).

# MU to offer free hot cocoa for exam week

By ALAINA LASTER  
REPORTER

Exam week is almost here, and students are facing a stressful week of studying and preparation.

The Marshall University Counseling center is hosting an event called "Cocoa Vibes" in Prichard Hall at 5 p.m. on Wednesday Dec 1. The event will feature free cocoa and chatting for any students trying to combat the stresses of the approaching exams.

Students will hear about techniques and ways to combat their stress in a healthy way.

"I'm really excited about it, it's mainly like a stress relief event, something to kind of gear up for finals this week," said Tiffany Bowes, a mental health specialist with the MU Counseling center.

The event will have three stages, starting with a visit from MU Paws, when students can play with and pet a therapy dog.

"When you first walk in the door of the counseling center, we are going to have MU Paws there. We are

going to be able to have at least one little puppy to be able to get some snuggles and pets with," said Bowes.

After time spent with a member of the MU Paws family, students can visit the cocoa station, where they will be giving away free cocoa and mugs. Bowes said students will also be given chocolate to help with focus and these benefits will be discussed at the event.

"We have got finals coming up and part of the stress is preparing for those, and the idea in theory is to be able to relieve some of that stress for the students before they go in to take some of those exams," said Bowes.

The third station will feature another counselor from the center discussing the benefits of essential oils, especially in how they combat stress.

"We will have another counselor in that room, so that students can talk back and forth with her about the advantages of using essential oils, and what scents are

helpful for what," said Bowes. Certain scents are going to be a little bit better to provide relaxation or calming feelings, or focus.... And they will have a little essential oils packet and roller ball to take with them too."

Bowes said the counseling center hosts events like these to reach out to more students. Bowes said the staff understands the struggles many students face as they approach exams.

"Making that contact with students, that is a big thing for our events," Bowes said. "Just being able to have students walk through the center, know what it's like, and what it looks like so that they are comfortable to be able to come in if they needed to."

Bowes said the counseling center is available to all Marshall students seeking help with their mental health and they offer many programs to help students.

Alaina Laster, [laster3@marshall.edu](mailto:laster3@marshall.edu)

## A YEAR

## January

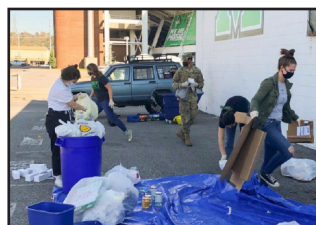


Marshall opens state's first commercial compost facility. The new facility is located on Norway Avenue in Huntington and will start with recycling from Marshall's campus.



Marshall announces Alabama Running Back Coach Charles Huff will be the new Herd Football Head Coach.

## February

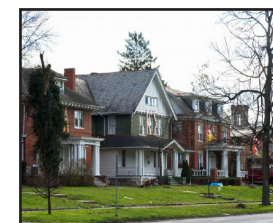
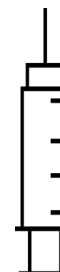


President Gilbert signs pledge for Marshall to be plastic free.



Ice storm leaves tens of thousands without power and disrupts remote learning.

## March



Marshall begins to offer COVID-19 vaccine to students and suspends Greek life over evidence of large parties without masks or social distancing.

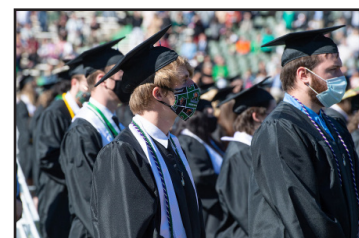
## April

Alyssa Parks and Isabella Griffiths are named SGA President and Vice President, becoming the second all-female ticket to win.



Taevion Kinsey returns for his senior season as likely NBA Draft prospect.

## May



First in-person graduation ceremony held since start of pandemic.



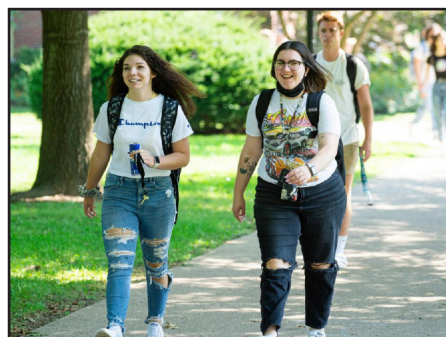
Marshall Men's Soccer wins NCAA National Championship, the first in school history.

## June &amp; July

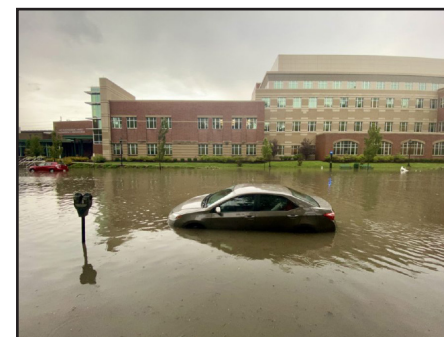
Marshall and West Virginia based Filmanatix create new student centered advertisement.



## August



Students return to campus for in-person instruction since start of pandemic.



Flash flooding damages Smith Hall, leaves major roads flooded with water.



# IN REVIEW

## September



Marshall thrift store opens in an effort to reduce waste.

## November



A Marshall student, Maribeth Cox, was struck by a car on 3rd Avenue, the incident prompted Marshall to lower flags to halfmast, and students asking for better protection for pedestrians.

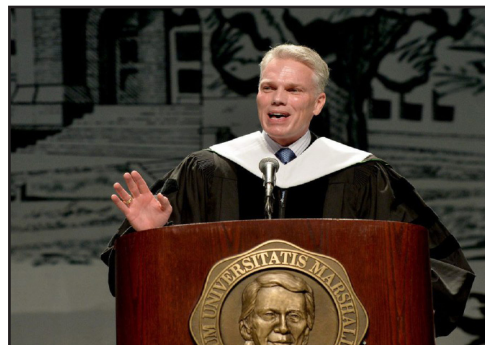


Marshall breaks ground on new business and innovation center on 4th Avenue.

## October



Marshall unveils Hal Greer statue next to Cam Henderson Center.



Brad Smith, former CEO of Intuit and Marshall alum, is named as the new President to follow Dr. Jerome Gilbert in January.

During a home game against FIU, a squirrel goes the distance with the crowd erupting into cheers that would have the student section be featured on SportsCenter.



Zach Inhat and Caroline Kinder win Mr. and Miss Marsall.



Marshall announces it will leave Conference USA to join the Sun Belt.





# WKU Runs Away From Herd, Wins in Second Half

By **ANDREW ROGERS**  
REPORTER

Western Kentucky outscored Marshall 47-7 in the second half en route to a 53-21 victory Saturday evening at Joan C. Edwards Stadium to secure the Hilltoppers a spot in the 2021 Conference USA Football Championship.

The Herd was the team to get out to the better start. MU quarterback Grant Wells completed his first 10 pass attempts and guided the Herd on a pair of touchdown drives to give Marshall the 14-0 lead with 14:22 left in the second quarter. Wells scored the first of those two touchdowns on the ground, from 1-yard out. Then, on 4th and goal, Wells lobbed a pass three yards to tight end Devin Miller.

Wells would be forced out of the game midway through the second quarter due to an undisclosed injury. The Hilltoppers pounced on the opportunity. WKU kicked a pair of field goals before halftime to make it 14-6 at intermission.

The 3rd quarter is when the nation's leading passer in yards and touchdowns, Bailey Zappe, would start rolling. The Hilltoppers' first touchdown drive lasted 23 seconds. Zappe found wide receiver Daewood Davis for a 47-yard touchdown. That shrunk the Herd's lead to 1 point, 14-13.

Next, Zappe connected with Malachi Corley from 14 yards out and that put WKU ahead for the first time at 20-14, with 9:10 left in the 3rd quarter.

Zappe and Davis connected again later in the quarter on a 50-yard touchdown. Overall, the Hilltoppers outscored the Herd 23-0 in the 3rd quarter.

"I think they (WKU) were able to come out and run their plays more efficiently in the second half," Marshall linebacker Eli Neal said. "Great system, they had great tempo and it took over."

WKU scored 36 unanswered points before the Herd finally found the end zone again.

"Hit adversity tonight and was not pleased with how we responded," Marshall head coach Charles Huff said. "A learning lesson we have to take from this is that when adversity hits, we have to bond together and not pull apart."

Backup quarterback Luke Zban found Shadeed Ahmed for a 41-yard touchdown to get Marshall within 15 points, but WKU scored 7 seconds later, on the onside kick, to make it a 22-point game. The Hilltoppers would go on to win 53-21.

Herd running back Rasheen Ali rushed 24 times for 99 yards to set the school record for rushing yards by a freshman. Sophomore receiver Corey Gammage led the team in receiving yards with 44 on seven receptions.

WKU's Zappe finished with 328 passing yards and 4 touchdowns. Davis caught three passes for 105 yards and two touchdowns. Mitchell Tinsley grabbed 9 passes for 84 yards.

Marshall finishes the regular season 7-5 and awaits its bowl fate. Western Kentucky is 8-4 and will face UTSA this Friday in the Conference USA Championship game.

*Andrew Rogers,*  
[rogers217@marshall.edu](mailto:rogers217@marshall.edu)



Quarterback Grant Wells vs ODU

*Courtesy of Zachary Hiser*

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Western Ky.	0	6	23	24	53
Marshall	7	7	0	7	21

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# Marshall Basketball Comes Up Short Against Hoosiers

By CHRISTIAN PALMER  
REPORTER

The Marshall men's basketball team traveled to Indiana on Saturday to face off against the 5-0 Indiana Hoosiers. Indiana, a perennial powerhouse team, posed a good early season test for the Thundering Herd squad.

It was a close game between these two teams, with Marshall ahead at half-time with a narrow 42-41-point lead. In the first half of action, Marshall went on a 17-0 run against Indiana. At the end of that run, Marshall led 34-22.

Indiana controlled play to start the second half, pushing its lead to 13 points with a score of 61-48. However, Marshall brought the game back within one score as a run from the Herd brought the score to 70-67. Marshall's efforts for a comeback fell short, with the team dropping a 90-79-point loss against the Hoosiers.

Head coach Dan D'Antoni said that this loss will serve as a learning experience.

"We'll learn a lot from this. They're a good ball club," D'Antoni said. "They are really good on defense. I believe they are rated one of the best in the country. We can score against it. Now it's just a matter of us owning up and not making big mistakes."

Senior guard Taevion Kinsey led the way in scoring for Marshall on Saturday, totaling 21 points in 37 minutes of action. Redshirt sophomore guard Andrew Taylor fell just short of that total with 20 points against Indiana, knocking down three triples. Sophomore forward Obinna Anochilli-Killen also had a quality performance for the Marshall. Anochilli-Killen entered the game as the nation's leader in blocks per game, averaging five blocks a game in Marshall's first five games of the season. Anochilli-Killen scored 16 points while grabbing eight rebounds and rejecting three shots.

Anochilli-Killen said the team has a shared optimism on where the program stands.

"Just like Coach Dan said, we can play with these guys, we belong here. It was not the result that we wanted, it left a bad taste in our mouth, but at the same time we came in, we fought, and we had some heart," Taevion Kinsey said. "We just have to bounce back from this."

After the win, Indiana moved to 6-0 on the season and stays undefeated. With the loss, Marshall is now 4-2 on the season. Next up for the Herd, will be a matchup against the Akron Zips. Akron is currently 3-3 on the season but has a record of 2-0 at home. Marshall will travel to Ohio for this matchup with hopes to give Akron its first home loss of the season.

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# THE PARTHENON

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*"Factual errors appearing in The Parthenon should be reported to the editor immediately following publication. Corrections the editor deems necessary will be printed as soon as possible following the error."*

## OPINION - FAREWELL LETTER

# Goodbye for now, a thank you to my friends at Marshall

By MADISON PERDUE  
COPY EDITOR

My college career has been a very transformative time in my life. I entered my first semester as an English major with no specific goal in mind for the future.

These four years have not only challenged me academically, but personally. At the end of the spring semester of my freshman year, I lost my father, who was always a great inspiration to me and encouraged me to do well in school. I felt alone and lost without his encouragement and guidance, but learned quickly that I was not alone. Thanks to the support of my amazing family, friends, and mentors at Marshall, I was able to succeed academically.

The following semester, I added a multimedia journalism major, almost on a whim, and stuck with it. The JMC department has pushed me to grow and given me opportunities I never thought I would take. At the end of 2019, Dr. Goodman encouraged me to apply for an internship position at the West Virginia Legislature, working for the Public Information Office. I almost didn't apply, anxious about moving to Charleston and worried that I might not have enough classes to graduate on time, but I am so glad I did. The internship was one of the most enriching experiences of my college career. I worked with amazing people, made a wonderful friend with my roommate, and broke from my comfort zone, growing in my skills as a writer and in my confidence. Thank you so much to Dr. Goodman for pushing me to apply, and a huge thank you to Drew Ross's team in Charleston for making me feel welcome and being there for me when I struggled. This position inspired me for the rest of my college career, and I am hoping to attend West Virginia University's College of Law

to pursue similar work.

When I first started working with the Parthenon last semester, after a stressful and confusing online semester due to the pandemic, my confidence in my ability to create two stories a week with interviews was low. In Charleston, I would interview senators about specific bills and their plans for the legislative session. This was difficult because I am a naturally shy person, but I was given specific instructions for each interview. At the Parthenon, I needed to find stories on my own and hope people would accept an interview. School attendance and activities were low, and it was especially challenging to find interviews during the pandemic and the dreaded Ice-pocalypse in February. Every time I struggled, however, Professor York was there with advice and help when I needed it most. Last semester, I also took on both of my capstone classes as well as Reporting and Public Affairs, which was one of my most challenging classes at Marshall. There were times I felt very discouraged, sometimes wondering if I would pass my classes, but when I left the semester, having met my goals and succeeded in my classes, I was more self-assured than ever before. Thank you so much to Professor York for working with me and encouraging me to apply for an editing position at The Parthenon.

This semester, I worked as a copy editor for the Parthenon, and, to fit the theme of my college career, I was panicked at first. Through the help of the Parthenon's staff, however, I learned quickly and was able to adjust. I am so fortunate to have gotten to work with these kind, inspiring people. Thank you to everyone on the staff for being so helpful, patient, and friendly to me this semester.

*The Parthenon is committed to publishing a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. If you wish to send a letter to the editor for publication, email [parthenon@marshall.edu](mailto:parthenon@marshall.edu).*

# My Time is Up - A Farewell

## OPINION - FAREWELL LETTER

By XENA BUNTON  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

When I began my career at Marshall two years ago, I had only one goal: finding my thing. Although I have the feminine urge to accomplish everything in life by my mid-20s, I was also excited to just enjoy college life.

"I've got to get involved as soon as possible," I explained to my mother. "I really don't have much time."

She turned left onto fifth avenue in my grandma's car—that we picked up last minute because freshman overpacking is very real—and she nodded.

"You will, Xena. I know it."

And I definitely did, I just did not know how my journey would look like. I didn't know it meant a major change, experimenting with video production, illustrations, marketing, and writing to find my journalistic interests—oh, and a global pandemic.

I feel as if my time at The Parthenon has been cut short, and it definitely was as I had to force four years of experiences in two years. I always had an interest in the newsroom ever since Janet Dooley gave me a tour in the spring of 2018. Yes, I bothered Sandy York about letting me in the newsroom even if it would just mean hiding in a corner and watching upperclassmen work on the paper that looked intimidating to a freshman.

I started out as a broadcast major,

emphasizing my love for video production and storytelling, but I knew it wasn't right for me a few weeks in. I then noticed that my calling was in a multimedia focus of journalism. The interest in finding stories, writing, illustrations, and using visual content led me to thrive with The Parthenon. Before becoming the Executive Editor, I was a new and eager reporter only a year prior. I knew instantly on the first day of 301 (Beat Reporting) that I had to take the class seriously and as if it was a job—even without realizing that it would eventually give me a job. I took pride in pitching interesting stories weekly, seeing my name in the newspaper and eagerly checking when my stories would be published online Tuesday nights. I felt like a creative craving was filled as a reporter. I met some great people during my time at The Parthenon that I will forever remember.

Sandy, thank you for always encouraging me every semester as I consistently improved my writing and leveled up in a higher position each semester. Even when I was nervous and surprised when you wanted me to be the Executive Editor, you allowed me to realize my worth as a storyteller and a leader. You made me feel accepted in a competitive field and gave me a home at Marshall.

Brittany, you had many roles in the

newsroom, like the mother, the wife, the mentor, and the one who writes way too much! Just kidding—maybe. As a reporter, I truly did not know who the executive editor was and you were the only I always went to. I, now, cringe at some of the basic AP-style questions I asked, but I learned so many things from you. You will forever be my editor-mom.

Charlie, I have only had the privilege of spending one semester together, but I have already learned so much from your pep talks and captivating stories. I hope to see you more after graduation and hearing more from the one and only Charlie Bowen. This just in. . .

Dr. Rabe, thank you for always checking on The Parthenon and being a genuine professor and friend. I may never be able to read as much as you, but you have inspired me to always read more.

Dan Hollis, even though you are the king of broadcast, thanks for teaching me law and ethics so I don't do anything stupid as the Executive Editor.

Josh, you may have never worked for The Parthenon but I can't ignore your work over the past year. As my boyfriend, you worked overtime to proofread all of my work. I'll allow you to put copyeditor on your resume—you deserve it.

Now, my time is up. As I reminisce,



I have to be honest that I am sad to leave The Parthenon newsroom, but I can't help to be excited for my future. My time may be up as The Parthenon editor, but my time to be a reporter who makes history is starting right now.

# Inside the ‘big wave’ of misinformation targeted at Latinos

By AMANDA SEITZ and WILL WEISSERT  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — Before last year’s presidential election, Facebook ads targeting Latino voters described Joe Biden as a communist. During his inauguration, another conspiracy theory spread online and on Spanish-language radio warning that a brooch worn by Lady Gaga signaled Biden was working with shadowy, leftist figures abroad.

And in the final stretch of Virginia’s election for governor, stories written in Spanish accused Biden of ordering the arrest of a man during a school board meeting.

None of that was true. But such misinformation represents a growing threat to Democrats, who are anxious about their standing with Latino voters after surprise losses last year in places like South Florida and the Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

Heading into a midterm election in which control of Congress is at stake, lawmakers, researchers and activists are preparing for another onslaught of falsehoods targeted at Spanish-speaking voters. And they say social media platforms that often host those mistruths aren’t prepared.

“For a lot of people, there’s a lot of concern that 2022 will be another big wave,” said Guy Mentel, executive director of Global Americans, a think tank that provides analysis of key issues throughout the Americas.

This month’s elections may be a preview of what’s to come.

After Democratic incumbent Phil Murphy won New Jersey’s close governor’s race, Spanish-language videos falsely claimed the vote was rigged, despite no evidence of widespread voter fraud — a fact the Republican candidate acknowledged, calling the results “legal and fair.”

In Virginia, where Republican Glenn Youngkin campaigned successfully on promises to defend “parental rights” in classrooms, false headlines around a controversial school board meeting emerged.

“Biden ordenó arrestar a padre de una joven violada

por un trans,” read one of several misleading articles, translating to “Biden ordered the arrest of a father whose daughter was raped by a trans.”

The mistruth was spun from an altercation during a chaotic school board meeting months earlier in Loudoun County that resulted in the arrest of a father whose daughter was sexually assaulted in a bathroom by another student. The father claimed the suspect was “gender fluid,” which sparked outcry over the school’s policy allowing transgender students to use bathrooms matching their gender identity.

In reality, the White House wasn’t involved with the meeting. The man was arrested by the local sheriff’s department. It’s also unclear how the suspect identifies.

Loudoun County was already the epicenter of a heated political debate over how the history of racism is taught in schools — another issue that became fodder for misinformation and political attacks on Spanish-language websites this summer, said Maria Teresa Kumar, president and CEO of Voto Latino, a nonprofit that mobilizes Hispanics to become politically engaged.

“It has everything to do with trust in institutions. Trust in government,” said Kumar, whose group works to combat the misinformation. “Eroding that trust will transfer not just to voting in the midterms, but just overall disengagement from your government.”

Stretched truths accusing some Democrats of being socialists or communists could also dominate the online narrative, said Diego Groisman, a research analyst at New York University’s Cybersecurity for Democracy project.

During the 2020 election, Groisman flagged Facebook ads targeting Latino voters in Texas and Florida that described Biden as a “communist.” The ads in Florida — where a majority of the country’s Venezuelan population is concentrated — compared Biden to that country’s socialist President Nicolás Maduro.



“There were clearly specific Spanish-speaking communities that were being targeted,” said Laura Edelson, the lead researcher for NYU’s program.

Evelyn Pérez-Verdía, a Florida Democratic strategist who watches Spanish misinformation patterns, says many online narratives intentionally stoke “fear in the Spanish-speaking communities.”

One conspiracy theory mentioned on talk radio grew out of Lady Gaga’s golden bird brooch at Biden’s inauguration. Some spreading the claim noted a similar brooch once worn by Claudia López Hernandez, the first openly gay mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, signaled the new president was working with foreign leftists.

“They’re not going to stop. They’re going to double down on it,” Pérez-Verdía said of the misinformation.

Critics argue that social media companies like Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, have placed outside attention on removing or fact-checking misinformation in English over other languages like Spanish.

Facebook’s own documents, leaked by ex-Facebook employee turned whistleblower Frances Haugen earlier this year, echo those concerns. Haugen said the company spends 87% of its misinformation budget on U.S. content — a figure that Meta spokesperson Kevin McAllister said is “out of context.”

An internal Facebook memo, written in March, revealed the company’s ability to detect anti-vaccine rhetoric and misinformation was “basically non-existent” in non-English comments.

Last year, for example, Instagram and Facebook banned “#plandemic,” a hashtag associated with a video full of COVID-19 conspiracy theories. Yet users were spreading misinformation on the platforms using “#plandemia,” the Spanish version of the hashtag, until just last month.

An analysis last year by Avaaz, a left-leaning advocacy



An analysis last year by Avaaz, a left-leaning advocacy group that tracks online misinformation, also found Facebook failed to flag 70% of Spanish-language misinformation surrounding COVID-19 compared to just 29% of such information in English.

McAllister said the company removes false Spanish-language claims about voter fraud, COVID-19 and vaccines. Four news outlets, including The Associated Press, also fact-check Spanish-language falsehoods circulating around U.S. content on Instagram and Facebook.

Meanwhile, researchers at the nonpartisan Global Disinformation Index estimated that Google will make \$12 million this year off ads on websites that peddled COVID-19 disinformation in Spanish. Google has “stopped serving ads on a majority of the pages shared in the report,” company spokesperson Michael Aciman said in an email.

“Spanish-language misinformation campaigns are absolutely exploding on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.,” New York Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of the party’s top progressive voices, tweeted after the Nov. 2 election.

That explosion is fueled in part by a U.S.-Latin America feedback loop that allows falsehoods to fester.

Misinformation that starts on U.S. websites is sometimes translated by social media pages in Latin American countries like Colombia and Venezuela. The inaccuracies are shared back through YouTube videos or messaging apps with Spanish speakers in

expatriate communities like those in Miami and Houston.

Those falsehoods are more likely to reach U.S. Latinos because they tend to spend more time on sites such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram, according to an October Nielsen report.

“We see YouTube accounts or radio stations churning out mis- or disinformation regarding a whole range of things that they pick up from fringe U.S. outlets,” Mentel said.

Some are working to fill the void of reliable information in those communities.

The Oakland, California, news service El Timpano delivers a text message of local news in Spanish to roughly 2,000 subscribers every week. Subscribers can text back with questions that staffers work to answer, said Madeleine Bair, who launched El Timpano.

The news service has fielded more than 1,500 questions over the past year, including ones about hoax COVID-19 cures.

“We really ramped up because it was clear that the communities we were serving were most in need of basic public health information,” Blair said, “and that information wasn’t reaching them.”

Others have urged the government to take on a watchdog role. Federal Trade Commission commissioner Rebecca Kelly Slaughter, a Democrat, said the regulator may look at disparities in how Big Tech monitors English-language disinformation compared to other languages.

“The first thing I think we need to do is investigate,” Slaughter said during a November panel with lawmakers.

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# Sackler Family Members Allegedly Abusing Bankruptcy

By GEOFF MULVIHILL  
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge should reject a sweeping settlement to thousands of lawsuits against OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma, a group of states said at a hearing Tuesday, arguing that the protections it extends to members of the Sackler family who own the firm are improper.

States have credible claims that family members took more than \$10 billion from the company, steered it toward bankruptcy, and then used a settlement crafted in bankruptcy court to gain legal protections for themselves, Washington state Solicitor General Noah Purcell told U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon.

The plan, crafted largely by those with claims against Purdue and approved in September by a federal bankruptcy judge, calls for members of the Sackler family to contribute more than \$4 billion in cash, plus the company itself, to fight the opioid epidemic, which has been linked to more than 500,000 U.S. deaths in the past two decades, including deaths linked both to prescription and illicit drugs.

In exchange, members of the family are to be protected from lawsuits accusing them of spurring the crisis. The suits accuse the company and family members of helping to spark the overdose crisis by aggressively marketing OxyContin, a powerful opioid painkiller.

They would not be protected from criminal charges. They're not facing any now, though a group of activists has been pushing federal authorities to bring charges against some members of the family, which includes some people who were executives and board members at the company and others with no involvement other than receiving money from it. Much of their fortunes are held in offshore trusts that could be hard to access in U.S. lawsuits.

Most state and local governments and thousands of individual victims of the epidemic agreed to the deal, though many did so grudgingly. Those groups are now joining with Purdue and Sackler family members to defend the plan from appeals from an office of U.S. Department of Justice, eight states, the District of Columbia, some Canadian local governments and Native American tribal groups, plus some individual victims.



In the hearing Tuesday in a New York City courtroom, McMahon focused on the \$10.4 billion in transfers from Purdue coffers to family trusts from 2008 to 2018. Nearly half of that was used to pay taxes on the earnings.

The judge said that by taking bigger distributions over the decade leading to the company's bankruptcy filings, Sackler family members "made themselves necessary" to the negotiations over how much money would be available for claimants.

Lawyers for the family said that distributions were bigger because the company was making more money and that there's no evidence any of them were trying to manipulating the bankruptcy system.

Those appealing the plan contended that the protections the Sacklers got are more generous than what they could have received had they filed for bankruptcy themselves. Bankruptcy would also protect the company from lawsuits.

They also said that allowing the deal would usurp states' ability to sue Sackler family members to hold them accountable.

"What confirmation of this plan does in this case is strip the states of police powers," Maryland Assistant Attorney General Brian Edmunds said, "to protect the public from harm."

Marshall Huebner, a lawyer for Stamford, Connecticut-based Purdue, said the states were misstating some details of the settlement plans, including how U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Drain insisted that Sackler family members would receive protections from lawsuits involving only opioids made by Purdue.

He also noted that the overwhelming majority of governments agreed to the plan, which would funnel money to individual victims of the opioid crisis and to efforts to fight the crisis.

McMahon cut him off. "My questions focus on aspects of legality of the releases," she said. "I don't want to hear about the wonderful things it's going to do. I know it was approved by a supermajority."

Still, Huebner noted, there would be far less money to work on the crisis without money from Sackler family members. He said that if they could be sued and prevailed, they might not pay the settlement. And if they lost other lawsuits — they now face about 860 of them — they might not be able to afford to.

Kenneth Eckstein, a lawyer for a group of government entities supporting the settlement, said they also wanted the releases for Sackler family members.

If some states could sue the family, he said, the others would not accept a payment plan that stretches over nine years because of a risk that the Sacklers' money would dry up before the installments could all be paid.

Mitchell Hurley, a lawyer for unsecured creditors who were seeking pieces of Purdue's assets, said that if most of those groups had not joined to agree to a settlement, "the value of Purdue was going to be wasted and go to lawyers" rather than addressing the opioid crisis.

He noted that the government and private creditors — except the individual victims — have agreed to use all the money they receive to fight opioids, which are claiming 200 lives a day in the U.S. And that money, he said, could start flowing soon if it's allowed.

The Connecticut resident on Tuesday showed McMahon a poster of photos of her son and pleaded that the settlement not be allowed.

McMahon has said she hopes to rule by next week, though a decision could take longer. Hers almost certainly won't be the last word; whatever decision she reaches is likely to be appealed to a higher court.