

Supreme Court backs Cruz in case on campaign finance

Ruling is victory for conservatives seeking to chip away at candidate spending limits

By Benjamin Wermund
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday sided with U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz in his bid to scrap limits on how much candidates can be reimbursed for loans they make to their campaigns, writing in a 6-3 ruling that the rule “burdens core political speech without proper justification.”

The ruling is a victory for conservatives seeking to chip away at campaign spending limits under the First Amendment. Critics of the ruling argue that the limits help prevent corruption.

A 2002 federal election law

caps the amount of campaign funds collected after an election that candidates can use to repay loans they make to their campaign at \$250,000. Cruz challenged the rule after lending his 2018 reelection campaign \$260,000 as he worked to fend off a fierce challenge from Democrat Beto O'Rourke.

The repayment “raises a barrier to entry” for new political candidates, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote on behalf of the court's six conservative justices in the majority opinion.

“The ability to lend money to a campaign is especially important for new candidates and challengers,” Roberts



Cruz

wrote. “As a practical matter, personal loans will sometimes be the only way for an unknown challenger with limited connections to front-load campaign spending. And early spending — and thus early expression — is critical to a newcomer's success.”

The liberal justices argued in a dissenting opinion that the two-decade-old rule serves as a check on “crooked exchanges” as candidates who lend their campaigns large sums have a personal reason to seek donations to make that money back, and may well push “favorable legislation,” “prized appointments” or “lucrative contracts” for those donors.

“The politician is happy; the donors are happy,” Justice Elena Kagan wrote. “The only loser is the public. It inevitably suffers from government corruption.”

A spokesperson for Cruz called the decision a “resounding victory for the First Amendment.”

“Sen. Cruz is gratified that the Supreme Court ruled that the existing law imposed an unconstitutional restriction on free speech that unfairly benefited incumbent politicians and the super wealthy,” they said. “This landmark decision will help invigorate our democratic process by making it easier for challengers to take on and defeat career politicians.”

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Some go to Mexico for abortion medication

By Eleanor Klibanoff, Mitchell Ferman and Uriel J. García

TEXAS TRIBUNE

NUEVO PROGRESO, Mexico — Maria laid the pregnancy test facedown on the counter in her boyfriend's bathroom in McAllen and set a timer for the longest three minutes of her life.

She watched the timer tick down, mentally running through her litany of reassurances: They'd used a condom; she'd taken the Plan B pill; maybe her missed period was just an anomaly.

“I was just praying, please don't let this be the case,” she said. “I had no idea how I'd navigate the situation. But what can I do but flip this test over?”

It was positive.

Maria, who was a 17-year-old high school junior at the time, spoke with the Texas Tribune on the condition of anonymity and is identified in this story with a pseudonym because she fears repercussions from her family for sharing her experience.

Maria came from generations of teenage mothers, and while her Catholic parents didn't talk with her much about sex, they were clear they had different expectations for her. They wanted her to leave the area for college to pursue her dreams of studying law.

She couldn't have the baby, she decided.

It was October 2020, a year before Texas would implement the most restrictive abortion law in the country, and 18 months before a draft opinion obtained by Politico revealed that the U.S. Supreme Court plans to overturn Roe v. Wade, the landmark case that established constitutional protections for abortion.

But even before all that, Maria

Abortion continues on A4

Latinos are facing more bias from their own

By Olivia P. Tallet

STAFF WRITER

About a quarter of Latino adults in the United States face inter-ethnic discrimination, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center.

Hate speech is likelier to be triggered among Latinos when one party has a different immigration status, a darker skin color or speaks Spanish.

Overall, the report says that 27 percent of Latinos surveyed had personally experienced discrimination or unfair treatment from other Latinos. Overall 31 percent said they had been targeted by people who are not Hispanic.

Latinos were likeliest to be discriminated against based on their race or darker skin tone — 41 percent reported incidents involving other Latinos. Roughly the same percentage of Hispanic respondents, 42 percent, had been victimized by non-Hispanics based on race.

“The main takeaway of this survey is that the discrimination that Latinos experience not only comes from people who are not Latinos, but also from Latinos themselves,” said Mark Hugo Lopez, director of race and ethnicity research at Pew Research, a nonprofit think tank.

Lopez said Latinos are a very diverse and multiracial population, and that the discrimination based on race and colorism is not exclusive to this community.

“This can happen in any

Latinos continues on A5



Photos by Josie Norris/Staff photographer

A Texas blind salamander hangs out in a tank in the refugia at the San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center.

Safety for the endangered

San Marcos facility preserves creatures in case their habitats fade away

By Elena Bruess

STAFF WRITER

At the San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center, about 45 Texas blind salamanders are floating in a freshwater tank, ready to dart away at the slightest movement. Nearly translucent and ambling along on spindly little legs, the cave dwellers mostly sit still, their flat slick heads sometimes lifted with two minuscule black dots under their skin where eyes would be.

Desiree Moore, a research biologist for the Aquatic Resources Center, removes one salamander with a net and places it on a gloved hand. The amphibian moves fast, sensing a different environment. But Moore moves faster, using her other hand to keep the creature from falling in the tank.

“They can move really fast when they want to,” she said. “Got to keep a close eye on them.”

Saving the species

This tank is among many at the Aquatic Resources Center's refugia, a space that houses and supports vulnerable populations in case something catastrophic occurs in their natural habitat. The refugia program is a part of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan, which began a decade ago, to protect federally listed endangered and threatened species that live in the Edwards Aquifer and Comal and San Marcos springs.

Besides the Texas blind salamanders, other tanks contain fountain darters, San Marcos salamanders, Comal Springs riffle beetles and others, all endangered or threatened species that depend on the Edwards Aquifer for survival.

The refugia, a smattering of buildings on



Research biologist Desiree Moore talks about the 45 Texas blind salamanders housed in the refugia. “They can move really fast when they want to,” she said.

the south side of San Marcos, started in 2017. The goal for the researchers, biologists and scientists at the site is to have a backup population — several hundred of a given species — that can be reintroduced into the aquifer and the springs if the natural population goes extinct.

Five years into the initiative, the team at the refugia has made significant progress in growing separate populations and in studying creatures that make their home underground.

“The whole point of conservation, of protecting these species, is to preserve [the

aquifer] for future generations while still being able to use the resource,” said Katie Bockrath, research biologist lead at the Aquatic Resources Center. “And that's exactly what we're doing here.”

In the tanks

When Adam Daw and his team go into the field to collect Texas blind salamanders for the refugia, they take one of every three. They want enough to meet the project's goal but not so many that they harm the natural population.

Refuge continues on A5

