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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 challengers," Roberts and



Cruz

personal loans will sometimes be the only way for an unknown challenger with limited connections to front-

wrote. "As a

practical matter,

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 Ele-na 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."

ben.wermund@chron.com

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 Mc-Allen and set a timer for the longest three minutes of her life.

She watched the timer tick mentally down, 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



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

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

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community and there's research that shows, for example, among Black Americans ... there are similar experiences according to skin color," Lopez said.

Immigration status is also a leading target for discrimination, with 32 percent of Latinos born in other countries and in Puerto Rico reporting such incidences coming from Hispanics.

Discrimination between Hispanics born in the continental U.S. and those born abroad or on unincorporated U.S. territory is not a new phenomenon, said Jeronimo Cortina, a political science professor at the University of Houston who studies immigration.

He said since the 1930s and 1940s, "There's always existed this ambivalent relationship between foreign-born Latinos and native-born Latinos" prompted by influxes of immigrants, Cortina said.

Cortina said the mainland U.S. Latinos perceive Puerto Ricans and foreign-born Latinos as potential competition.

Latinos had mixed reactions to the federal Bracero program in the 1940s and 1960s that brought in manual workers from Mexico to alleviate severe shortages of farm laborers and workers in other low-paid industries .

Ambivalent intergroup relationships also occur in Black communities where there is "tension between the African American community and migrants coming directly from Africa," Cortina said.

'Don't be so brown'

Educational levels and English fluency and pronunciation are other factors that incite discrimination among Latinos, which, together with skin color, can be perceived as markers of class, Cortina said.

This type of derision was familiar to Lupe Mendez, a Mexican American born in Galveston to low-income Spanish speaking parents who nation, looking down at you because of your background or for having a brown skin or your language or accent didn't stop there," Mendez said.

With English as his first language and Spanish as the family tongue, he still faced mistreatment from two Hispanic professors when he moved to Houston for college at a private institution, he said.

"Don't you even know how to spell your last name!" he recalled his Spanish professor, a light-skinned Latino, saying, scolding him and taking points off his test score.

"I was trying very hard to learn proper Spanish," Mendez said. "But these two professors bit me at every corner."

Now an educator him-

Racial discrimination targeting Latinos

Percentage of Latinos who say they have personally experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly by someone who is ...

	Latino	Non-Latino
All	27 📜 31	
U.S. born	23 💭 27	
Foreign born*	32 🤇) 34





* Foreign born in this analysis includes Hispanics born in the unincorporated territory of Puerto Rico, even though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens at birth. Source: Pew Research Center Staff graphic

self with more than 20

years of experience. who

was honored as the 2022

Texas Poet Laureate, he

said he's seen that dis-

crimination by Latinos

against Latinos still hap-

pens at schools.

And it happens out in the open.

Mercedes Herrera, a janitor who cleans corporate offices in Houston's Galleria area, was verbally attacked recently by another Latina and it left her "stunned, as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown on me," she said.

She had been at a rally supporting colleagues who were laid off by another company. She said the janitors were chanting in Spanish when, a Hispanic woman "came right up to me and screamed in my face, 'pinches Latinos, pinches mugrosos,' " which translates roughly to "damn Latinos, dam scum."

Herrera said she didn't just feel angry, she felt sad. The Latina was the only person who opted to berate the janitors among a group of several company officials facing opposite them who were white and Black, she said.

"It was sad to see one of us treating us as if we were dirty people," Herrera said. "They seem to forget that we are the essential workers who came to clean the mess after the (2021 winter storm), after Harvey, during the pandemic."

Herrera said the woman who called her names also tried to intimidate her by holding up her phone close to her face and saying she was going to record her.

"I have children and grandchildren. I have always worked hard to support my family and am very proud of the work I do," Herrera said.

"I have taught my children not to discriminate against anyone," she said. "We are all equal and we are all brothers and sisters."

olivia.tallet@chron.com Twitter: @oliviaptallet



METRO BRIEFS

SAN ANTONIO Weather service expects record heat this week

It's only May, but it already feels like summer in San Antonio. And you better get used to it because experts say the warm temperatures are here to stay.

In fact, the Alamo City has a chance to experience record heat for most of the week, with temps expected to reach the high 90s and possibly hit 100 degrees, said Andrew Quigley, meteorologist at the National Weather Service.

Monday's high was expected to reach 98, which would break the previous record of 97 that was set in 2013. The high for today is predicted to reach 99. That would also break a record of 97 degrees set in 2013.

Thursday's high is expected to reach 98, but should fall short of the record of 101 degrees.

SAN ANTONIO Shooting at UTSA-area bar sends 1 to hospital

A person was hospitalized after being shot during a fight early Monday at Hills and Dales Ice House in the University of Texas at San Antonio area. Police responded to the popular bar at 15400 White Fawn Drive about 12:45 a.m. for an unrelated call. While police were there, a fight broke out, and someone pulled out a gun and shot another person in the chest, according to authorities. Police detained several customers but did not say whether they had a suspect in custody.

didn't go far in school.

"Don't be so brown!" "Go to your rancho," "I am Ms. Rodriguez, not Rrrodrrriguez," teachers would tell Mendez and other Latino students, mocking their accents when they used a drawn out pronunciation of the letter "R."

Mendez said the curious thing is that those types of discriminatory comments came from school teachers who were also Latinos.

"This kind of discrimi-

REFUGE

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Daw, who is in charge of husbandry at the center, oversees conservation and care of the species. When he's in the field, he uses a cluster of pistachios to draw the blind salamanders into a fine mesh net.

The team puts the net over different underwater spring pockets that connect to the Edwards Aquifer and tosses in a few pistachios. The nuts attract little bugs and fish that the blind salamanders eat, luring the salamanders to the spot.

Quarantine goals

Once collected, the species are quarantined at the center for at least 30 days to prevent them from spreading fungi or diseases to the others.

"We'll just observe the animals generally, and then after the 30 days, we'll move on to actually swabbing some species," Daw said. "We need to check if they're positive for anything first, make sure they're healthy, and then move them in with the whole group."

The team must keep track of genetic diversity as well.

Without such diversity, species could have issues down the genetic line, which could harm the population. It's something the people at the refugia have been doing research on recently, he said.

Also, Daw said, the team must be able to keep the population reproducing and thriving for years in the event that some condition prevents reintroduction for an extended period, such as a contaminant being spilled into the Edwards Aquifer.

After completing quarantine, the creatures are put in research tanks or tiny tank habitats to survive.

One thing that researchers watch for is cannibalism, which salamanders are known to engage in when placed with others, especially if those others are smaller. In one case, a blind salamander ate another that was only a couple millimeters smaller than itself. The researchers caught it just as half the attacked salamander's body was sticking out of the aggressor's mouth. They saved the head and ended up doing a 3D printout of it.

"These guys will eat anything they get their mouth on," Moore said. "They are the apex predator in their habitat, which means they just do what they want."

The species is also known to eat its young, so the team will separate the eggs from the others in a different tank. They then hatch the baby salamanders in a refrigerator.

Everyone at the center is hypercautious. Shoes must be cleaned, and gloves must be worn. They keep empty tanks at the ready in case there's a fungal breakout, disease or other issue at another tank.

The team even has a backup refugia for the backup refugia, in Uvalde.

"We are doing everything we can to keep these species safe," Bockrath

said.

'Generations to come'

Within the Edwards Aquifer's ecosystem, many animals are good indicator species. Dwindling populations and sickly blind salamanders or riffle beetles are a first sign that something may be wrong with the aquifer.

This is just one reason that keeping these species alive matters, said Kristy Kollaus, an environmental scientist with the Edwards Aquifer Authority.

"You want to keep that balance," she said. "If you lose the keystone species, like the blind salamander, then how does it affect the rest of the aquifer? And then, in turn, how does it impact the people who depend on it? These species are under protection, which maintains the levels of the aquifer, so we don't over pump and have the resource for the future."

Typically, it takes twice as much energy for a system, such as an aquifer, to recover something than it does to maintain it. Likewise, restoring an impaired aquifer to its prior condition can take a lot of money and work, Kollaus said. So it's much cheaper in the long run to conserve it and keep the species that help maintain it alive and thriving as well.

Also, scientists can study the species up close and understand life below the surface even further.

And while the researchers are doing their part to protect the species, the team said San Antonio residents can help protect the habitat by being conscious of how much water they use, obeying watering restrictions and being mindful of fertilizers or contaminants that could drain into the aquifer.

"We're using their habitat," Bockrath said. "It's not just ours. We all depend on it."

Elena Bruess writes for the Express-News through Report for America, a national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms. ReportforAmerica.org. elena.bruess@expressnews.net

SAN ANTONIO Police: Man says he was 'training' girl, 13, for sex

A San Antonio man justified sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl by telling her that he was "training" her for sex when she was older, court documents said.

David Anthony Thomas, 42, was charged with aggravated sexual assault of a child on Saturday. Thomas' bail was set at \$100,000, records show.

SAN ANTONIO Woman solicited teen co-worker, court records say

A San Antonio woman is accused of sending inappropriate photos to her 16-year-old co-worker, court records show.

Stephanie Nicole Hernandez, 26, was arrested Friday and charged with online solicitation of a minor. She is being held on \$15,000 bail.

At the time, Hernandez and the girl worked together at a San Antonio Peter Piper's Pizza.