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Supreme Court Preview

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

On Wednesday morning, December 4, the U.S. Supreme Court will take up an important legal question concerning whether states can ban medical treatment for gender dysphoria in youth. The case comes from Tennessee, one of several states that have enacted such laws.

Certainly, there will be widespread media coverage. The "transgender issue" has being blamed in large part for Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' loss to Republican nominee Donald Trump. Trump wielded the subject matter in many of his campaign speeches, claiming Harris was in favor of free sex change operations for prisoners, migrants, and children.

The targeted messages, including heavy use of anti-transgender ads during nationally televised football games, was effective in winning votes for Trump and in devastating the sense of safety for transgender people of all ages.

Now, a heavily pro-Trump Supreme Court will decide whether states can ban legitimate medical treatments for people under 18 who suffer from a recognized medical condition.

Readers can listen to the one-hour oral argument live, listen to the recording, or read the transcript afterwards. Here are important details to help understand what is being discussed:

Case name: *U.S. v. Skrmetti*. This appeal originated with *LW v. Skrmetti*, a case in which the parents of three transgender teenagers in Tennessee sued to stop the ban on treatment. The Supreme Court did not act on the

see **SCOTUS,** *page 2*

Speaker Johnson declares support for banning Sarah McBride's access to women's restrooms

By Farnoush Amiri
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson declared Wednesday that lawmakers and staff will have to use the restroom corresponding with their biological sex, a statement directed at Sarah McBride, the first transgender person to be elected to Congress, months before she is set to arrive on Capitol Hill.

"All single-sex facilities in the Capitol and House Office Buildings — such as restrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms — are reserved for individuals of that biological sex," the Louisiana Republican

see **MCBRIDE,** *page 4*

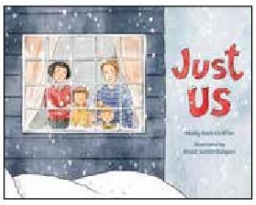
Rep.-elect Sarah McBride, D-Del., center, leaves a meeting of House Democrats on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2024, in Washington. AP Photo by Mark Schiefelbein.

A Holiday Gift Guide to 2024's LGBTQ Picture Books

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

The LGBTQ-inclusive picture books published in 2024 have been exuberant, affirming, and informative. Here are some that stand out.

(Author, illustrator, and publisher are listed after each title.) In several warm and fun tales, the queerness is incidental. Ones with two-mom families include "Just Us" (Molly Beth Griffin, Anait Semirdzhyan, Charlesbridge), a comforting winter holiday story about embracing change; "Leo and the Pink Marker" (Mariyka Foster, Peachtree), inspired by (but diverging from) the classic "Harold and the Purple Crayon"; and "The Girl Who Loves Bugs" (Lily Murray, Jenny Løvlie, Peachtree), about the titular girl and a mishap at a family reunion. For two-dad families,



try "Saturday Is Pancake Day" (Bernadette Green, Daniel Gray-Barnett, Scribble), a hilarious story of luring a parent out of bed; "Princess Pru and the Switcheroo" (Maureen Fergus, Danesh Mohiuddin, Owlkids), in which Princess Pru and her best friend Oggy the Ogre switch places, thinking

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

What to know about Scott Bessent

Would be the first openly gay treasury secretary

By Fatima Hussein
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump has chosen money manager Scott Bessent, an advocate for deficit reduction and deregulation, to serve as his next treasury secretary.

Bessent is a past supporter of Democrats who has become an enthusiastic supporter of Trump. He's an advocate of cutting spending while extending the tax cuts approved by Congress in Trump's first term.

Here are four things to know about the South Carolina billionaire who, if confirmed by the Senate, will manage the nation's finances:

Investor Scott Bessent speaks on the economy in Asheville, N.C., Aug. 14, 2024. (AP Photo/Matt Kelley, File)

He worked for George Soros and donated to Democratic causes

Before becoming a Trump donor and adviser, Bessent donated to various Democratic causes in the early 2000s, notably Al Gore's presidential run. He also worked for George Soros, a major supporter of Democrats.

Bessent had an influential role in Soros' London investment operations, including his famous 1992 bet against the pound, which generated

see **BESSENT,** *page 7*

"Jimmy, I'm a black woman and a lesbian. How the hell do you think I'm doing?"

- Wanda Sykes to Jimmy Kimmel when he asked her mood since the election.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo via www.wandasykes.com.

SCOTUS

Continued from page 1

original appeal from the three teenagers. Instead, it agreed to hear the U.S. government's position that argues the Tennessee law is unconstitutional.

Date/time of argument: Tuesday, December 4, at 10 a.m. EDT.

Link for live audio stream: https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/live.aspx

Link for recording and/or transcript: https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_audio/2024

Attorneys: Attorney Chase Strangio, 42, came out as a transgender man while in law school at Northeastern University in Boston. He has been involved in some of the LGBTQ movement's most high-profile cases in recent years, including *Obergefell v. Hodges* (same-sex marriage), *Gloucester v. Grimm* (trans use of public school bathrooms), *Aimee Stephens v. Harris Funeral Homes* (trans employee firing), and others. He is now Co-Director of the ACLU's LGBTQ & HIV Project and will help represent the transgender plaintiffs. There will also be an attorney from the U.S. Solicitor General's office, representing the U.S.'s opposition to the state bans, and an attorney from Tennessee attorney general's office to defend the ban.

Chief argument for the U.S.: The Tennessee law violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantee to equal protection under the law. In doing so, it discriminates based on sex and should be examined with a heightened level scrutiny. Under the Tennessee law, a male teenager could use testosterone to enhance his stereotypical male attributes, but a transgender male could not.

Tennessee's argument: States should be allowed to ban potentially irreversible sex-transition interventions for minors who may not be able to fully grasp the lifelong consequences and risks. Tennessee law prohibits puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and sex-transition surgeries. The state also argues that the Supreme Court should use its easiest form of review (rational basis) in deciding whether the law can stand.

In other courts: This type of case has emerged in several other U.S. federal circuit courts. This one comes from the Sixth Circuit (which covers Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan). A three-judge panel of the Sixth ruled 2 to 1 that the state could legitimately ban such treatments for youth. It rendered the decision after first applying the lowest (easiest) level of review: rational basis. Attorneys for the plaintiffs argued that a more rigorous review was warranted (heightened) because the ban discriminated on the basis of sex and transgender status.

The legal question: Whether a new Tennessee law (known as SB 1) violates a citizen's right to equal protection under the law by prohibiting all medical treatments intended to allow "a minor to identify with, or live as, a purported identity inconsistent with the minor's sex" or to treat "purported discomfort or distress from a discordance between the minor's sex and asserted identity."

The political question: President-elect Donald Trump made frequent statements on the campaign trail indicating he was opposed to gender care for people suffering from gender dysphoria. The current Supreme Court includes three of his appointees —all of whom helped deliver to Trump *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. In the past three years, Tennessee and 21 other states have banned gender-affirming care. The laws do not attempt to protect the rights and health of children; they simply ban any treatment of gender dysphoria.

The decision being appealed: Comes from the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, covering Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan. A three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit ruled against the transgender teenagers. The teenagers have made this appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, hoping to reverse the Sixth Circuit decision.

The basic medical science: The American Psychiatric Association a transgender person is one whose *self-perception is as* one gender but whose birth certificate (and often physical/sexual attributes) causes him or her to be *perceived by others* as the opposite gender. Some transgender people function and live happy lives without any medical intervention. Some suffer a dysphoria —anxiety, stress, withdrawal, and self-destructive behaviors —because of the constant, jarring discordancy between who they *are* and who others *assume* they are. Professional medical organizations say children can experience this discordancy as early as three, but many experience around age seven.

About one percent of the U.S. population is transgender. Of those, only about two percent take hormone blockers and 11 percent take gender-affirming hormones.

What do doctors say? The American Medical Association says state bans on gender-affirming care are "a dangerous intrusion into the practice of medicine." The American Psychiatric Association says that suppression of puberty hormones and administration of gender-affirming hormones may be warranted for some adolescents but "Medical affirmation is not recommended for prepubertal children." The Department of Justice brief notes that intervention for pre-puberty children includes "allowing a transgender child to live in accordance with their gender identity, including their clothing, hairstyle, name, and pronouns."

The irony: Opponents of equal rights for transgender youth are arguing in this case that transgender youth should not be allowed to receive counseling, hormone blockers, or any form of surgery. These same opponents do not want transgender females to participate in girls/women's sports because they say the transgender females have an unfair physical advantage (such as muscle mass) over females identified as females at birth. The sports issue might be less of a problem if transgender females were able to receive hormone blockers *before* they develop the stronger physical characteristics that appear in adolescence.

Decision expected: With most LGBTQ-related cases, the Supreme Court has released its decisions in June, the last month of the session.

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McBride

Continued from page 1

said. "Women deserve women's only spaces."

The statement comes a day after Johnson was questioned on the issue and emphasized the need to "treat all persons with dignity and respect." He also acknowledged that "this is an issue that Congress has never had to address before, and we're going to do that in deliberate fashion with member consensus on it."

A resolution to restrict McBride's access to women's restrooms was introduced Monday by GOP Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina, who pledged to fight to "keep men out of women's spaces." Mace said the bill was aimed specifically at McBride, who was elected to the House this month from Delaware.

In response, McBride called the effort a way to "distract from the real issues facing this country."

"I'm not here to fight about bathrooms. I'm here to fight for Delawareans and to bring down costs facing families," the incoming member said.

She added, "Like all members, I will follow the rules outlined by Speaker Johnson, even if I disagree with them."

Referring to transgender people by the sex they were assigned at birth rather than by the gender they identify as is a tactic often used by opponents of transgender rights. The larger debate over whether transgender people should be allowed to use the bathrooms that align with their gender identity has been prevalent across the U.S. and became a focal point of President-elect Donald Trump's campaign.

At least 11 states have adopted laws barring transgender girls and women from girls and women's bathrooms at public schools, and in some cases other government facilities.

Democrats have called the GOP campaign against McBride as bullying. Rep. Eric Sorensen, D-Ill., said Tuesday that Mace's comments are "absolutely ignorant."

"There's no statistic anywhere that any trans person commits any crimes at any higher rates that anyone else, so I don't know where her worry is from," Sorenson, who is gay, said.

McBride is coming to Congress next year after spending years building a national profile as an LGBTQ+ activist and raising more than $3 million in campaign contributions from around the country. She became the first openly transgender person to address a major party convention in the United States in 2016, when she spoke at the Democratic National Convention.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Mombian

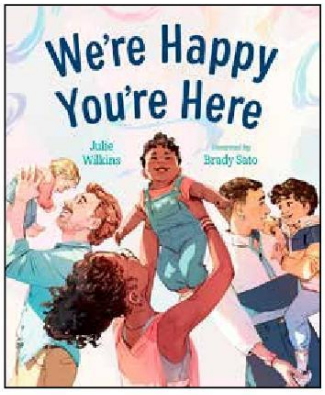
Continued from page 1

life is better for the other.

For growing queer families, one title with particularly broad appeal is "We're Happy You're Here" (Julie Wilkins, Brady Sato, Orca), a celebration of the many special people who helped bring a child into a family, including queer and non-queer couples, solo parents, siblings, grandparents, gamete donors, surrogates, and a variety of professionals. Additionally, "All Our Love" (Kari-Lynn Winters, Scot Ritchie, North Winds), stars a girl with two dads writing a letter to her new baby brother; and "Joyful Song: A Naming Story" (Lesléa Newman, Susan Gal, Levine Querido), is the gorgeously illustrated story of a Jewish boy with two moms excited about the naming ceremony for his baby sister.

Two books affirm babies' gender identity and expression: "It's a They" (Lindsay Herriot, Orca), a board book in which siblings welcome a new baby without applying gender labels; and "Who You Will Be" (Taylor Rouanzion, Stacey Chomiak, Philomel), where two parents (who can be read as two women or a woman and a nonbinary person) show their newborn the many non-gendered possibilities of colors, toys, and clothes, modeling unconditional love.

Several titles focus on two-dad adoptive families: "Harper Becomes a Big Sister" (Seamus Kirst, Karen Bunting, Magination) and "Real Siblings," which continues Harper's story as she affirms her sibling relationship in the face of questioning; "Miles Comes Home" (Sarah Brannen, Forrest Burdett, Little Bee), about a boy going to live with his new dads after being in a foster home; "Chloe and the Fireflies" (Chris Clarkson, Julie Jarema, Abrams), about a child being fostered by two dads and hoping this will be her permanent home.



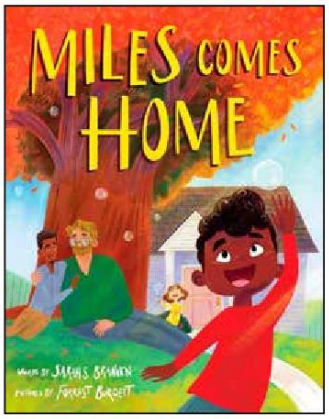
Other family situations are covered in "Goodbye, Hello: A Going Home Travel Adventure" (Angela H. Dale, Daniel Wiseman, Holiday House), which follows two siblings and one mom as they travel across the world to be with the children's other mom, who is in the Navy; "Circle of Love" (Monique Gray Smith, Nicole Neidhardt, Heartdrum), an exploration of LGBTQ identities and families within indigenous (Cree) culture; "My Guncle and Me" (Jonathan Merritt, Joanna Carillo, Running Press), in which a boy who feels like an outsider gets wise advice from his gay uncle; and "The Broken Heart" (Aaron Chan, Josiane Vlitos, Rocky Pond Books), about a girl who wants to help her brother heal after he breaks up with his boyfriend.

Same-sex romance is celebrated in "Bobby and the Big Valentine" (Timmy Woitas, Addy Rivera Sonda, Penguin Workshop), about a boy wanting to make a Valentine's card for his crush; and "Nen and the Lonely Fisherman" Ian Eagleton, James Mayhew, Little Bee), a queer fairy tale evoking the classic "Little Mermaid."

Biographies include "What I Must Tell the World: How Lorraine Hansberry Found Her Voice" (Jay Leslie, Loveis Wise, Zando); "Jimmy's Rhythm & Blues: The Extraordinary Life of James Baldwin" (Michelle Meadows, Jamiel Law, HarperCollins); "Glenn Burke, Game Changer" (Phil Bildner, Daniel J. O'Brien, Farrar, Straus and Giroux); "Queer and Fearless: Poems Celebrating the Lives of LGBTQ+ Heroes" (Rob Sanders, Harry Woodgate, Penguin Workshop); and the board book "Who Is Billie Jean King?" (Lisbeth Kaiser and Who HQ, Risa Rodil, Penguin Workshop).

Several books relate LGBTQ history and myth: "The ABCs of Queer History" (Seema Yasmin, Lucy Kirk, Workman), a simple introduction; "Rainbow Allies" (Nancy Churnin, Izzy Evans, Beaming Books), the true story of three kids who took action when their neighbors' Pride flag was stolen; "Love of the Half-Eaten Peach" (Lee Wind, Jieting Chen, Reycraft), the retelling of an ancient Chinese legend celebrating love between two men.

Gender identity takes center stage in the celebratory "Hooray for He, She, Ze, and They" (Lindz Amer, Kate Alizadeh, Simon & Schuster);



"Marley's Pride" (Joëlle Retener, DeAnne Wiley, Barefoot), about a nonbinary, transgender child attending Pride with their nonbinary, transgender grandparent; "Still My Tessa" (Sylv Chiang, Mathias Ball, Scholastic), about a girl learning to support her nonbinary sibling; and "A Song for Nolan" (Rushie Ellenwood, Sally Chen, Little Bee) where a nonbinary kid must speak up for themself in the face of gendered activities.

Numerous books star gender creative boys. Several show them overcoming (or helping others overcome) disapproval: "Nail Polish Is Too for Boys!" (Emma-Claire Sunday, Caitlin O'Dwyer, Sunbird); "Free to Be Fabulous" (David McMullin, Robbie Cathro, Clarion); and "The Rainbow Parade" (Shane Jordan, Jieting Chen, Sourcebooks); others are more purely celebratory: "The Dress in the Window" (Robert Tregoning, Pippa Curnick, Flyaway); "Getting Glam at Gram's" (Sara Weed, Erin Hawryluk, Arsenal Pulp); and "Gorgeously Me" (Jonathan Van Ness, Kamala Nair, Penguin).

Community and social issues come to the fore in "We Are a Class" (Rob Sanders, Hannah Abbo, Beaming Books), which explores what it means to be part of a diverse and inclusive school class; and "Jacob's Missing Book" (Sarah and Ian Hoffman, Chris Case, Magination), a timely story about censorship.

For full reviews and books I didn't have space for here, visit my Database of LGBTQ Family Books (mombian.com/database).

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog plus a searchable database of 1,700+ LGBTQ family books.

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Living in a Liminal Space

by Judah Leblang | www.JudahLeblang.com
contributing writer

After three years of living in a residential community in Boston with a rotating cast of 18 other individuals, most of whom were half my age or less, I'm back in my apartment in Medford Square—living alone and trying to figure out what to do next. My original plan was to live at the Beacon Hill Friends House for four years, the maximum time permitted by House policy.

But life at the House grew contentious around the Israel-Hamas War and what the community should say and do about it. So, at 67, I decided to reduce my stress and tone down the drama by moving back to my small apartment in Medford.

'Be careful what you wish for' might be my new mantra. Though I enjoy having my own bathroom back at my place, (rather than sharing one with four others!), living alone has turned out to be a major adjustment. Instead of having companionship and an instant social life just outside my 8'x14' room at the Friends House, I have to make a conscious effort to get out, to make plans in advance, to see my friends IRL—in real life—rather than over a phone line or via email.

I'm reminded of life during the first year of the pandemic, when my already limited social life dried up like a summer shower and left me isolated, in a sort of perpetual timeout. In those early days, my life consisted of teaching on screen, walking in the Middlesex Fells with a friend, and watching TV. This time around, I can have people over and see friends out in the real world, but there's the rub – it takes a lot of work, effort, and planning, and requires me, a naturally lazy man, to get up off the couch and formulate those plans in advance.

And though I'm less nervous about being among people and life has returned to some version of normal post-Covid, my memoir-writing classes are still online, and I miss the energy and connection that comes from teaching "in person," from sharing our stories in a shared, intimate space.

I moved back to my apartment as a stepping-stone, a place to hunker down through the winter. In April, I'll head back to my hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, where I haven't lived for 40 years, for a three-month trial visit, and then decide if I'll stay here in Boston, move back to Ohio where I still have several friends, or go someplace else.

I know that I don't want to live alone again long-term. Now, more than ever, going into the Trump-2 era, a thrill-ride with the guardrails removed, I need friends and a sense of community. Ideally, I would have a boyfriend, partner, husband to nest with, a supportive spouse to navigate the upcoming shitshow.

But that partner hasn't shown up, and so I'm in this liminal space, the in-between, between Boston and Cleveland, employed/retired, late-middle-aged/old, a sixty-something gay man living without a road map, piecing my life together one day at a time, and wondering what, or who, comes next.

Judah Leblang is a Boston-based writer, teacher, and storyteller, and the author of the memoir, Echoes of Jerry. Find out more at judahleblang.com.

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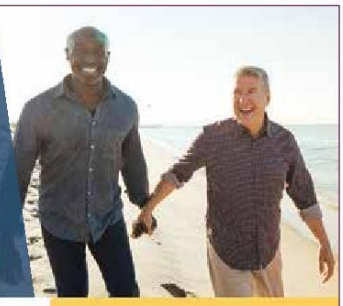

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Brookmeadow at Cobb Corner, Stoughton MA*
Cape Cod Senior Residences, Bourne MA
Compass On The Bay, South Boston MA*
Concord Park, Concord MA*
Cornerstone at Canton, Canton MA*
Cornerstone at Hampton, Hampton, NH*
Cornerstone at Milford, Milford MA*
Farmington Station, Farmington CT*
Forestdale Park, Malden MA*
Goddard House, Brookline MA*
Heights Crossing, Brockton MA*
John F. Kennedy Apartments, Cambridge MA
Standish Village, Lower Mills/Dorchester MA*
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billy masters

No sooner had **Sarah McBride** from Delaware made history as the first openly transgender member of the House of Representatives, than Speaker of the **House Mike Johnson** flexed his muscles. Since he has general control of the House facilities, he passed this rule: "All single—sex facilities in the Capitol and House Office Buildings —such as restrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms —are reserved for individuals of that biological sex." In answering accusations of being anti—McBride, he said, "We're not anti—anyone. We're pro—woman," adding, "We have single—sex facilities for a reason. Women deserve women's only spaces." How did McBride respond? She said she would comply with the rule —which then drew even more criticism from the people who wanted her to be the Rosa Parks of the Bidet. "I am not here to fight about bathrooms. I'm here to fight for Delawareans...Like all members, I will follow the rules outlined by Speaker Johnson, even if I disagree with them."

Let me interject my two cents, for whatever it's worth (perhaps only two cents). I truly understand people having some issues with trans people —particularly if they don't know any. These days, everyone seems to have an issue about something or other. So, why not just eliminate gender? Let's have All—Gender Bathrooms, one gold medal for the Best Gymnast, and one Oscar for Best Performer. It would solve a whole lotta problems —although I believe in some instances, one biological gender might have the edge over the other. But, eh, that's life.

I am sure many of you remember **Rachel Campos** —either from "The Real World" season with **Puck and Pedro Zamora** (both of whom she was quite close to), or her numerous appearances on "The View". She's been the perpetual bridesmaid for the so—called "conservative seat". She was a favorite to replace my dear **Debbie Matenopoulos**, losing in the end to **Lisa Ling**. She was well—liked enough to come back and fight to replace her, losing out to **Elisabeth Hasselbeck** (a fellow reality star). She was even in the mix when Hasselbeck was fired, only to see **Meghan McCain** nab the spot. But each time she was on, I enjoyed her immensely —even if I disagreed with most of her views (see how that works?). What possible relevance could **Rachel Campos** have today? Because she is married to **Sean Duffy** (also a "Real World" alum), who was a Representative from Wisconsin and has been tapped by the incoming El Presidente to replace **Pete Buttigieg** as Secretary of Transportation. What are his qualifications? I believe during "Real World: Boston", he took the subway a few times.

Speaking of reality stars, the original "Bachelorette" is once again the subject of gossip. Every few years, people whisper that **Trista and Ryan Sutter** will divorce. Even after 21 years of marriage and two kids, nobody believes she found happiness with a hot fireman. This latest spate of speculation started when Ryan posted something about missing her. Trista addressed the question head—on. "People were speculating that I was either having a nervous breakdown, that I was dead, or that Ryan and I were getting a divorce, because he posted something that everyone thought was cryptic? It wasn't cryptic. I was just away and I was filming 'Special Forces'." Another mystery solved. If **Shelly Miscavige** is also competing, that would solve two mysteries.

Onto Whoopi and the bakery. In case you don't know, **Whoopi Goldberg** wanted to share a special dessert when she celebrated her birthday on "The View". The dessert in question is **Charlotte Russe** —who I thought was a character on "Sex and the City". Whoopi tried to get it from a certain bakery. I say "tried" because they said they couldn't accommodate her order. "Now, I should tell you, Charlotte Russe has no political leanings, and the place that made these refused to make them for me. They said that their ovens had gone down, and all kinds of stuff. But folks went and got them anyway, which is why I'm not telling you who made them. Perhaps they did not like my politics." Or, perhaps at the time of her request, the ovens were actually down. According to the bakery, that is what happened —and the new order came in after the ovens were fixed. Is that plausible? Sure. It's also possible they don't like her politics. Or maybe they didn't like "Jumpin' Jack Flash"!

The Elton John-Jake Shears Broadway musical "Tammy Faye" will close on December 8th —less than a month after its November 14th opening. Curiously, the musical was a major hit in London's West End where it won multiple awards. On Broadway, it was universally panned by critics. What changed? We're told the creators tinkered with the show in between the runs. And let us not forget that **Andrew Rannells** created the role of **Jim Bakker** in London, but he was replaced on Broadway by Christian Borle due to a "contract disagreement".

In far happier news, the reunion of original "Hairspray" gals **Marissa Jaret Winokur, Kerry Butler and Laura Bell Bundy** at New World Stages has been extended. "Mama, I'm a Big Girl Now" was slated for a one-month off-Broadway run. It's been extended a second month and will now close on December 21st. The show got a ringing endorsement from "Hairspray" creators **Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman**. Marc was so ebullient, he posted this: "If you love musicals, friendship, motherhood and outright joy, I can't encourage you enough to go see this delightful show. I'm so glad Scott Wittman and I stopped our lawyer from sending them a cease—and—desist order!"

Speaking of shows you shouldn't miss, there are two I'm flying to see in Los Angeles. The fantastic Catalina Jazz Club in Hollywood will present the incomparable **Marilyn Maye** on Tuesday, December 3rd and Broadway's own Hugh Panaro on Thursday, December 5th. If I could, I'd see Jackie Beat on Friday, December 6th, but I'm otherwise engaged. You can get tix at CatalinaJazzClub.com. See you there!

Jussie Smollett got an early Christmas gift. His conviction for false allegations of a 2019 hate crime in the streets of Chicago has been overturned. Last week, the Illinois Supreme Court said: "We are aware that this case has generated significant public interest and that many people were dissatisfied with the resolution of the original case and believe it to be unjust. Nevertheless, what would be more unjust than the resolution of any one criminal case would be a holding from this court that the State was not bound to honor agreements upon which people have detrimentally relied." In other words, they feel that the special prosecutor's decision to retry the case violated Jussie's rights. That prosecutor had this to say: "Make no mistake —today's ruling has nothing to do with Mr. Smollett's innocence." In fact, the court did not criticize the trial itself —just the fact that it took place at all. Thus ends another chapter...hopefully!

I never mentioned that Smollett got a chance to resume his career recently with the film "The Lost Holliday" —where he was executive producer, director, composer, and star. After a gay man's husband dies, his mother (played by **Vivica A. Fox**) flies out to take care of the arrangements, only to find out they've been handled by the husband (Jussie). While I never saw it, I heard it was entertaining and perhaps worth checking out.

This week's "Ask Billy" question comes from Daniel in Chicago: *"What's the truth about this 'Gladiator II' same-sex kiss that Denzel's been talking about? Will we ever see it?"*

During an interview promoting "Gladiator II", **Denzel Washington** said, "I kissed a guy full on the lips, and I think they got chicken. I guess they weren't ready for that yet." When asked about it on the red carpet, director **Ridley Scott** contradicted him. "No, that's bullshit. They acted the moment and it never happened." At the premiere, Denzel changed his tune. "They're making more of it than it was. I kissed him on his hands and gave him a peck." By the by, Denzel's initial claim was during a video interview with Gayety. The second one was on the red carpet standing next to wife Pauletta. I think you can figure it out after watching both interviews on BillyMasters.com.

When a kiss is not always a kiss, we've come to the end of yet another column. I dunno about you, but I now have no interest in seeing either "Gladiator" flick. But I would definitely check out www.BillyMasters.com —the site that doesn't beat around the bush. In fact, we show you the bush, the whole bush, and everything around the bush! If you want to get to the bottom of anything, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before McBride tinkles in Johnson's toilet! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Photo via www.sarahmcbride.com

Sarah McBride

Photo by Library of Congress Life, CCO, via Wikimedia

Whoopi Goldberg

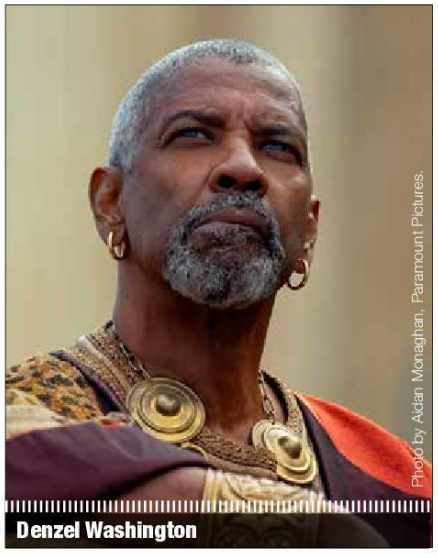
Photo by Aidan Monaghan, Paramount Pictures.

Denzel Washington

Bessent

Continued from page 1

huge profits on "Black Wednesday," when the pound was de-linked from European currencies.

He speaks regularly about deficit reduction, while supporting extending Trump's tax cuts

Bessent has backed extending provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which Trump signed into law in his first year in office, though estimates from various economic analysis of the costs of the various tax cuts range between nearly $6 trillion and $10 trillion over 10 years.

Bessent calls for spending cuts and shifts in existing taxes to offset the costs that the tax extension would add to the federal deficit.

"That's going to be a negotiation with the Republican Congress," Bessent told CNBC on Nov. 6. "I've already been in conversations with a lot of the Republicans who will chair those committees," he said. "The Republican Congress, there's a big appetite for pay-fors. It will be a negotiation."

He has in media interviews spoken about the need to tackle the nation's debt. "I do think this debt and deficit is going to be the big issue of the day. I think Americans are worried about it." He argues that consumer prices can be brought down "by starting with a deficit reduction program."

He views tariffs as a sanctions tool

Trump on the campaign trail proposed a 60% tariff on goods from China — and a tariff of up to 20% on everything else the United States imports. Mainstream economists are generally skeptical of tariffs, considering them a mostly inefficient way for governments to raise money and promote prosperity.

Bessent told Bloomberg in August that he views tariffs as a "one time price adjustment" and "not inflationary," and tariffs imposed during a second Trump administration would be directed primarily at China. "I think that tariffs in a way can be regarded as an economic sanction without a sanction. If you don't like Chinese economic policy, flooding the market with over production, you could put a sanction on them, or a tariff. Its also an answer to currency manipulation."

And he wrote in a Fox News op-ed this week that tariffs are "a useful tool for achieving the president's foreign policy objectives. Whether it is getting allies to spend more on their own defense, opening foreign markets to U.S. exports, securing cooperation on ending illegal immigration and interdicting fentanyl trafficking, or deterring military aggression, tariffs can play a central role."

He told CNBC that "I would recommend that tariffs be layered in gradually."

He would be the first openly gay treasury secretary

If confirmed to the role, he would also be the first openly LGBTQ Senate-confirmed cabinet member in a Republican administration.

In 2020, Trump named Richard Grenell, who is openly gay, acting director of national intelligence. However, the role was not subject to Senate confirmation.

In 2015, Bessent told the Yale Alumni Magazine: "If you had told me in 1984, when we graduated, and people were dying of AIDS, that 30 years later I'd be legally married and we would have two children via surrogacy, I wouldn't have believed you."

Pete Buttigieg is the first openly LGBT Senate-confirmed Cabinet member, nominated by President Joe Biden to lead the transportation department.

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JOSEPH J. BENNETT
November 29, 2009

As autumn arrives, it brings with it the scent of change and the warmth of cherished memories. Each moment serves as a reminder of the joy found in life's simple pleasures—the rustling of leaves, a cool breeze, the closeness of friends, the sight of your smile, and the energy of an unburdened heart. It is a time to reflect on what is fleeting and beautiful, and to carry that spirit of lightness and love with us always.

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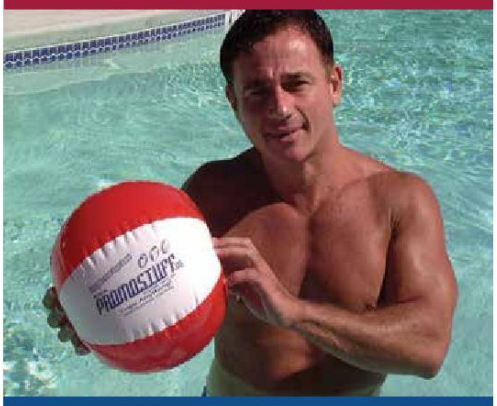

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