

NEWS IN BRIEF 6

November 29th – December 6th 2024

CNN

President Joe Biden announced Sunday that he has pardoned his son Hunter Biden, who faced sentencing this month for federal tax and gun convictions, marking a reversal as he prepares to leave office.

This official grant of clemency cannot be rescinded by President-elect Donald Trump.

By pardoning his son, Joe Biden has reneged on a public promise that he made repeatedly before and after dropping out of the 2024 presidential race. The president and his top White House spokesperson said unequivocally, including after Trump won the 2024 election, that he would not pardon Hunter Biden or commute his sentence.

THE ECONOMIST

Kim Yong-hyun, South Korea's defence minister, resigned over his role in the short-lived declaration of martial law by Yoon Suk Yeol, the president. The opposition is seeking to impeach Mr Yoon. The police opened an investigation into the role of the president and three other officials (including Mr Kim) in the alleged coup.

ABC

Australia's parliament has passed a world-first law banning social media for children under 16, putting tech companies on notice to tighten security before a cut-off date that's yet to be set.

Under the new law, tech companies must take "reasonable steps" to prevent under-age users from accessing social media services or face fines of nearly 50 million Australian dollars (\$32 million).

Tech companies Meta – the owner of Facebook and Instagram – and TikTok said in statements Friday that they shared the government's goal of making social media safer for young users but the law had been "rushed."

BBC NEWS

Brands that make unhealthy foods will be able to get round the government's junk food advertising ban if their adverts do not show products that break the rules.

From October 2025, foods that are high in fat or sugar will not be able to be advertised on television before 9pm, or in paid online advertising. But restrictions in the new regulations, which aim to tackle childhood obesity, will only apply to the identifiable products in an advert. It means that adverts from fast food chains, for example, will not face restrictions as long as they do not feature products such as burgers or fries.

FRANCE 24

For almost 6 months every year, residents of New Delhi suffocate under a blanket of pollution. The Indian capital is among the most polluted cities in the world, and new records were set each November. The fine particles in New Delhi's air are 60 times that of levels recommended by the WHO, which can cost an average of 12 years in life expectancy for a lifetime spent in the city.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEffyKgIcfM>



BBC NEWS

The price of Bitcoin has for the first time broken past the \$100,000 mark, hitting a new record high. The value of the world's biggest cryptocurrency has been boosted by hopes US President-elect Donald Trump will adopt crypto-friendly policies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQhBnnLVoo>



Supreme Court decision could affect other trans rights cases

Dec. 4, 2024 | By [Amy Harmon](#) | The New York Times

The Tennessee law at issue in the case argued before the Supreme Court on Wednesday is known as United States v. Skrmetti, and governs gender transition treatments for minors. Legal scholars and advocates on both sides of the case say it could more broadly shape what it means to be transgender in the United States, setting a precedent for several state law challenges already underway regarding sports participation, bathroom use and health care for adults.

A decision in the case, experts say, also could affect any national legislation that may emerge from the new Republican-controlled Congress. “The Supreme Court could say, ‘This only applies to health care for minors,’ but why?” said Jessica Clarke, a law professor at the University of Southern California who co-wrote a brief in support of the Biden administration’s side of the case, challenging a Tennessee ban on transition treatments for minors.

Jim Campbell, chief counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal group that filed a brief in support of Tennessee, said he expected that the court’s opinion in Skrmetti would dictate the outcome of challenges to state policies that deny coverage for gender transition procedures for Medicaid recipients or employees on state health insurance plans. “How it affects the bathroom issues, sports issues — I don’t think it’s like a one-for-one that necessarily what the court does here, it’s going to do in those cases,” Campbell said, “but I do think it’s going to significantly influence them.”

The central dispute in the case revolves around whether a Tennessee law banning several forms of medical care for transgender youth makes distinctions on the basis of sex. If the Supreme Court finds that it does, then laws in more than a dozen states that prohibit transgender students from using bathrooms and participating on sports teams that align with their gender identity might not withstand constitutional challenges — or would at least require a higher level of justification to do so.

In its court briefings, Tennessee argues that the law does not make such distinctions because the ban on transition treatment is applied to both boys and girls. The plaintiffs say that it does because the ban is selective by sex: It allows minors to use these medical treatments, but only if they’re not using them for gender transition. For example, they said, testosterone may be prescribed for teens identified as male at birth, but not for those identified as female.

Tennessee’s response, if accepted by the justices, could have far-reaching effects, legal scholars said. The state argues that biological justifications for the bans are not the kind of sex stereotypes the court struck down in its 1996 landmark decision in the case United States v. Virginia. In that case, the Supreme Court found that Virginia’s reason for excluding women from the Virginia Military Institute, which only male students could attend at the time, was an unconstitutional sex stereotype.

[...] But according to Courtney Cahill, a constitutional law professor at the University of California, Irvine, the Supreme Court’s ruling in the Virginia Military Institute case actually supports the plaintiffs’ position in the Tennessee case, because the state’s argument for excluding women from admission was also rooted in biological differences between the sexes. “I can see it leading to a big step back for women and LGBTQ people,” Cahill said, “if biology is allowed to act as a constraint on sex discrimination.”

Still, James Blumstein, a law professor at Vanderbilt University who submitted a brief on behalf of Tennessee, said he thought a ruling for the state could be construed far more narrowly. The state, he said, has an interest in protecting the health of minors, including from their parents and doctors. But in his mind, a ruling in the case on those grounds would have no bearing on sports, bathrooms or adults. “It seems quite wide of the mark to attempt to fit these categorizations into a sex-based discrimination context,” he wrote.

to argue : plaider

underway = in progress

Medicaid is a US government program that provides health insurance for adults and children with limited income and resources.

to revolve around sth : tourner autour **to prohibit sb from doing sth** = to prevent sb from doing sth

to withstand sth = to resist sth

a plaintiff : un.e plaignant.e

a justice [ɪ] = a judge (here, of the Supreme Court)

a scholar ['skɒlə] : un.e spécialiste

to strike [aɪ] **down** = invalidate, repeal **to be rooted in sth** : être ancré dans qqc

a constraint = a limit

on behalf [br'ha:f] **of sth** = in place of sth

to be construed = to be interpreted

a ruling : a decision

grounds : base, raison