

DOWNTOWN MIAMI



MARCH FOR UNITY

Miami's Taylor Watkins, at center in photo above, attends a march for unity in downtown Miami on Sunday. The event was organized by the MCCJ and other community organizations. Participants marched from the Freedom Tower to the Underline to promote unity regardless of race, color, religion, origin or political affiliation. At near right, Beatriz Gonzalez, the Wolfson Campus president of Miami Dade College, speaks to the gathering. Below left, Rolaindjy Desir, a training partner for MCCJ, speaks with Brian Siegal, director of the American Jewish Committee that partnered for the march. The MCCJ was previously known as the Miami Conference of Christians and Jews.



PHOTOS BY ASKOWRONSKI@miamiherald.com

Man killed in crash of plane on bridge was a Miami airport traffic controller

BY DEVOUN CETOUTE
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Narciso Torres, a long-time airport traffic controller, was identified as the person killed in a fiery plane crash-landing on the Haulover Inlet Bridge on Saturday afternoon, his union said. The crash sent five others to the hospital, including three crossing the bridge in an SUV.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association said the 36-year-old Torres was aboard the single-engine Cessna 172 when it crashed on



Narciso Torres

the bridge. The union did not know if he was the pilot or a passenger.

"This is a terrible tragedy that has sent shock waves throughout our NATCA family," association President Rich Santa said in a statement. "Our hearts go out to Narciso's wife, Jennifer, his entire family, and the many fellow union brothers and sisters that loved him so much and are now dealing with an unspeakable loss."

Around 1 p.m. Saturday, the Cessna lost engine power and landed on the Haulover bridge, the Federal Aviation Administration said. After landing, it collided head-on with an SUV crossing the bridge — a woman and two toddlers were in the vehicle. The plane flipped and caught fire.

Three people were aboard the Cessna, two of whom were outside of the plane when Miami-Dade Fire Rescue arrived. The third person was found dead in the aircraft after the flames were extinguished.

The woman and children, in good and stable condition, were taken to

Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach as a precaution. One person was taken to Ryder Trauma Center in Miami and another person was taken to Aventura Hospital.

Doug Church, deputy director of public affairs for the union, said Torres was known as a leader.

"He was beloved," Church said. "It's a terrible loss."

According to his FAA profile, Torres lived in Weston and had many certifications, including for aircraft dispatcher, mechanic, air control tower operator and private pilot.

He began his career in 2008 at Orlando International Air Traffic Control Tower. He then transferred to New York Terminal Radar Approach Control in 2010, then came back to Orlando International in 2011 before moving to Miami International Airport in 2015.

In Orlando, he served as a local union president from 2013 to 2015, and again was elected as a union president at the Miami airport in 2019.

"Being elected twice as a president speaks to how beloved he was and looked up to," Church said.

At MIA, his local chapter included 95 union members who serve as air traffic controllers and traffic management coordinators among other roles.

"Like so many thousands of our members, Narciso had such a deep love of all things aviation, and of flying, as evidenced by this flight on a beautiful South Florida day where he was doing what he loved," Santa said. "This loss hurts so deeply. Narciso will never be forgotten."

Santa also said Torres had worked "extremely hard" to improve the working conditions of controllers and the safety of the National Airspace System.



SEAN MCKEAG AP

Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, a Democrat running for U.S. Senate, campaigns last month; he had a stroke Friday and was hospitalized all weekend.

Democrat in primary for Senate seat from Pennsylvania has stroke

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, PA.

Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, the leading Democrat in the state's high-profile Senate contest, suffered a stroke just days before the primary election but was on his way to a "full recovery," his campaign said on Sunday.

The 52-year-old Fetterman, who confirmed that he had been hospitalized all weekend, insisted the health emergency wasn't slowing his campaign. But the stunning revelation, two days before Pennsylvania's primary, created a cloud of uncertainty over the Democratic front-runner's candidacy in what may be one of the party's best Senate pickup opportunities.

In a 16-second video released by his campaign, a seated Fetterman, speaking clearly, explained that

he "just wasn't feeling very well" on Friday and decided to go to the hospital at the urging of his wife. He detailed the situation further in a written statement.

"I had a stroke that was caused by a clot from my heart being in an A-fib rhythm for too long," Fetterman said. He said the doctors were able to remove the clot, "reversing the stroke," and got his heart under control.

"The good news is I'm feeling much better, and the doctors tell me I didn't suffer any cognitive damage," he said in the statement.

Questions about Fetterman's health swirled throughout the weekend after he canceled scheduled public appearances Friday, Saturday and Sunday. His campaign cited a health issue but was not specific until Sunday.

National trend of voting by mail declining sharply so far in 2022

BY CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY
Associated Press

ATLANTA

The great vote-by-mail wave appears to be receding just as quickly as it arrived.

After tens of millions of people in the United States opted for mail ballots during the pandemic election of 2020, voters in early primary states are returning in droves to in-person voting this year.

In Georgia, one of the mostly hotly contested states, about 85,000 voters had requested mail ballots for the May 24 primary, as of Thursday. That is a dramatic decrease from the nearly 1 million who cast mail ballots in the state's 2020 primary at the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

The trend was similar in Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia, which held primaries this month; comparisons were not available for Nebraska, another early primary state.

A step back in mail balloting was expected given easing concerns about COVID-19, but some election officials and voting experts had predicted that far more voters would seek out the convenience of mail voting once they experienced it.

Helping drive the reversal is the rollback of

temporary rules expanding mail ballots in 2020, combined with distrust of the process among Republicans and concerns about new voting restrictions among Democrats. And a year and a half of former President Donald Trump and his allies pushing false claims about mail voting to explain his loss to Democrat Joe Biden has also taken a toll on voter confidence.

"It's unfortunate because our election system has been mischaracterized and the integrity of our elections questioned," said Ben Hovland, a Democrat appointed by Trump to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. "Mail ballots are a safe and secure method of voting used by millions of Americans, including myself."

A record 43% of voters in the U.S. cast mail ballots in 2020, compared with 24.5% in 2016, according to the commission's survey of local election officials. The number of voters who used in-person early voting also increased, although the jump was not quite as large as in mail ballots, the survey found.

Before the November 2020 election, 12 states expanded access to mail ballots by loosening certain requirements. Five more either mailed ballots to all eligible voters or allowed local officials to do so, according to the

National Conference of State Legislatures. This year, eight states will mail ballots to every eligible voter.

In Georgia, state officials had adopted no-excuse mail ballots and three weeks of early, in-person voting before the pandemic. Laws surrounding mail voting changed after the 2020 election, amid Trump's effort to discredit the outcome after his narrow loss in the state.

There is no evidence to support Trump's claims of widespread fraud or a conspiracy to steal the election. Judges, including some appointed by Trump, dismissed numerous lawsuits challenging the results. An exhaustive review by The Associated Press of every potential 2020 voter fraud case in the six states disputed by Trump found nowhere near enough instances to affect the result.

That has not stopped Republican state lawmakers from citing election security concerns as justification for new restrictions to voting, and mail voting in particular. The changes have confused some voters. In Texas, voters were tripped up by new identification requirements in the state's March primary, resulting in an abnormally high rate of mail ballot rejections.

Requesting a mail ballot

is significantly harder now in Georgia than in 2020, when voters could go online to request a ballot be sent to them without a printed request. Part of the 2021 voting law pushed by Republicans required voters to print or obtain a paper form, then sign it in ink before sending it in by mail, email or fax.

Voters also must include their driver's license number or some other form of identification after Republicans decided that the process of matching voter signatures was no longer enough security for an absentee ballot application.

"I couldn't even figure it out," said Ursula Gruenewald, who lives in Cobb County, north of Atlanta. "Before, I used to just click a button on a website, and they'd send me my ballot. I don't know what they want now."

Gruenewald said she usually votes by mail but decided last week to seek out a nearby early voting center, recalling she had waited in line for two hours to vote in person in 2016.

Experts said it is too early to say whether voting patterns have shifted permanently. How people vote in primaries does not necessarily reflect how they will vote in a general election, when turnout will be heavier and voters might be more worried about crowded polling places and long lines.