

It's time to get our students back in school, and we can do that now safely."

Gov. Tim Walz

To find mutations, U.S. expands DNA mapping of virus samples. **A8**

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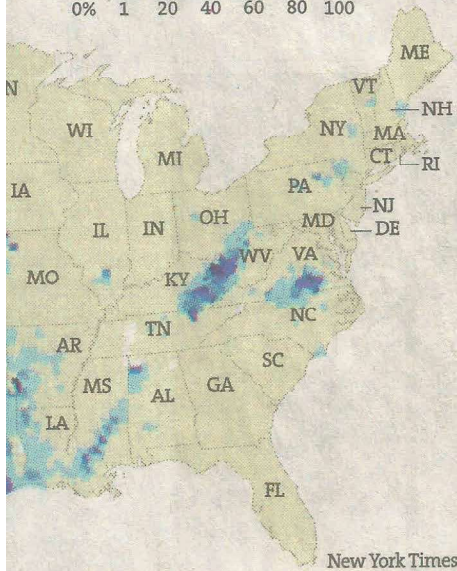
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Star Tribune  
thurs 2/18/2021

# f frigid darkness

sses remained without electricity Tuesday ne U.S. from extreme weather this week.

Percentage of customers without power



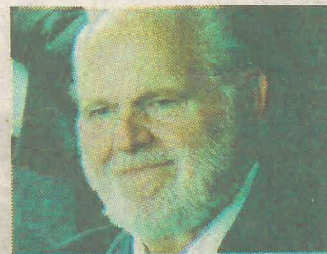
New York Times

ritical vaccine delivery system. **A9**

RUSH LIMBAUGH 1951-2021

# Provocateur made vitriol, grievances staples of right

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN and MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM  
New York Times



Rush Limbaugh, the right-wing radio megastar whose slashing, divisive style of mockery and grievance reshaped American conservatism, denigrating Democrats, environmentalists, "femina-zis" (his term) and other liberals while presaging the rise of Donald Trump, died Wednesday at his home in Palm Beach, Fla. He was 70.

His wife, Kathryn, announced the death at the start of Limbaugh's radio show, a decadeslong destination for his flock of more than 15 million listeners. "I know that I am most certainly not the Limbaugh that you tuned

in to listen to today," she said, before adding that he had died that morning from complications of lung cancer.

Limbaugh had revealed a diagnosis of advanced lung cancer last February. A day later, Trump awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, during the State of the Union address.

Since his emergence in See LIMBAUGH on A6 ▶



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**Female generals held back:** Leaders afraid Trump would reject promotions. **A2**

**Biden plan stirs debate:** Higher minimum wage would have trade-offs. **A4**

### BUSINESS

**U.S. Bank addresses wealth gap:** Effort starts with Black clients, staff. **D1**

**Nestlé drops trademark fight:** Mpls. shop can use term "vegan butcher." **D1**

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**Strength behind plate:** Jeffers; Garver, "La Tortuga" offer Twins a solution. **C1**

**U women fall:** Rutgers turned 22 Gophers turn-overs into 35 points. **C4**

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# Provocateur made vitriol, conspiracies staples of right

◀ **LIMBAUGH** from A1

the 1980s as one of the first broadcasters to take charge of a national political call-in show, Limbaugh transformed the once-sleepy sphere of talk radio into a relentless right-wing attack machine, his voice a regular feature of daily life — from homes to workplaces and the commute in between — for millions of devoted listeners.

He became a singular figure in the American media, fomenting mistrust, grievances and even hatred on the right for Americans who did not share his and his followers' views, and he pushed baseless claims and toxic rumors long before Twitter and Reddit became havens for such disinformation. In politics, he was not only an ally of Trump but also a precursor, combining media fame, right-wing scare tactics and over-the-top showmanship to build an enormous fan base and mount attacks on truth and facts.

His conspiracy theories ranged from baldfaced lies about President Barack Obama's birthplace — the president "has yet to have to prove that he's a citizen," he said falsely in 2009 — to claims that Obama's 2009 health care bill would empower "death panels" and "euthanize" elderly Americans. In the wake of last year's election, he amplified Trump's groundless claims of voter fraud.

Limbaugh's immense popularity had a profound effect on the country's media landscape. Dozens of right-wing hosts cropped up on local radio stations emulating his divisive commentary. "There is no talk radio as we know it without Rush Limbaugh; it just doesn't exist," Sean Hannity, the conservative Fox News and talk-radio star, said in a tribute to Limbaugh on Wednesday. "I'd even make the argument, in many ways there's no Fox News or even some of these other



DOUG MILLS • New York Times

Rush Limbaugh joined President Donald Trump onstage during a re-election campaign rally in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

opinionated cable networks."

In the Limbaugh lexicon, advocates for the homeless were "compassion fascists," women who defended abortion rights were "feminazis," environmentalists were "tree-hugging wackos." He called global warming a hoax and cruelly ridiculed Michael J. Fox, imitating the tremors that were a symptom of the actor's Parkinson's disease.

Last month, Limbaugh tried to minimize Trump's influence on his supporters who had attacked the U.S. Capitol, saying that Democrats "are lying about his role in the Jan. 6 uprising, or whatever you want to call it." Before the siege, Limbaugh toyed with the idea that the nation was "trending toward secession."

Married four times and divorced three times with no children, he lived in a Palm Beach estate surrounded by Oriental carpets, chandeliers and a two-story mahogany-paneled library with leather-bound collections. He had a half-dozen cars, one costing \$450,000, and a \$54 million Gulfstream G550 jet. He was known to drop \$5,000 tips in restaurants.

Limbaugh's air war, with his own rules of engagement,

began with a talk show in Sacramento, Calif., in 1984 and became nationally syndicated in 1988. For more than 20 years it was the most popular show of its kind on radio.

But as the millennium turned, Limbaugh faced problems that threatened his empire. In 2001 he acknowledged that he had become almost deaf — the result, he said, of an autoimmune disease. He continued his show, using powerful hearing aids, but they were not enough. He eventually resolved his problem with cochlear implants, which provided an electronic sense of sound, and he learned to read lips.

After years of addiction to painkillers, he was charged in Florida in 2006 with "doctor shopping" for prescriptions. He pleaded not guilty but paid the costs of a state investigation and entered rehabilitative therapy. He checked into an Arizona rehab center catering to celebrities and returned to the air after six weeks, telling listeners candidly of his addiction, treatment and legal status.

In addition to his wife, Limbaugh is survived by his younger brother, David, a lawyer and writer.