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Groton Community Calendar

Wednesday, June 14

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, lettuce salad with dressing, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread, ambrosia.

Olive Grove: Men's League

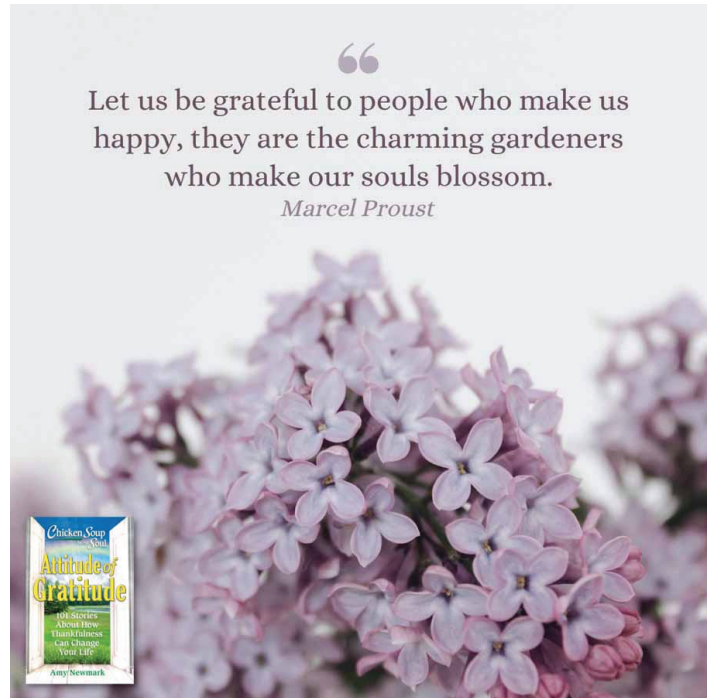
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



a.m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Legion at Sisseton, 6 p.m. (1)

Jr. Legion at Sisseton, 7:30 p.m. (1)

U12BB hosts Hannigan, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10BB B/W hosts Hannigan, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8SB at Claremont, 5:30 p.m.

U10SB at Claremont, 7 p.m. (2)

U18SB vs. Leola Merchants, 6 p.m.; and Claremont, 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 15

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, cookie, dinner roll.

Groton Transit Fundraiser, 5-7 p.m., Community Center

Emmanuel Lutheran: Movie night, 7 p.m.

U12BB at Doland, 8 p.m. (1)

U10BB at Doland, 7 p.m. (1)

U8 Blue at Doland, 6 p.m. (2)

U10SB hosts Doland, 6 p.m. (2)

T-Ball Gold at Doland, 5 p.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

JUNE 12, 2023

World in Brief

The House voted unanimously for a resolution calling for the release of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who has been held in a Russian jail on espionage charges.

More than 100 people have died, including some returning from a wedding, after an overloaded boat capsized in northern Nigeria. The boat was sailing on the Niger River in Kwara state.

Los Angeles City Councilman Curren Price Jr. has been charged with 10 counts of embezzlement, perjury, and conflict of interest, the latest in a series of scandals that have plagued the governing board over the past year.

Captain Mark Stone scored a hat trick as the Vegas Golden Knights defeated Florida Panthers 9-3 to win their first Stanley Cup.

Tens of thousands of people are being evacuated from parts of India and Pakistan as the countries brace for a powerful Cyclone Biparjoy, which is expected to make landfall this evening.

An 18-year-old cadet opened fire on members of his own unit at a military training center in Japan. Two soldiers were killed, and a third was wounded.

Author Cormac McCarthy, known for *The Road*, *Blood Meridian* and *All the Pretty Horses*, has died of natural causes at the age of 89, his publisher announced.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, at least three civilians were killed, and more than a dozen were injured in Russian missile strikes targeting Odesa.

TALKING POINTS

"ONE OF THE SADDEST DAYS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY. WE ARE A NATION IN DECLINE!!!" former President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social ahead of his court appearance in Miami. Following the hearing, he wrote, "Thank you Miami. Such a warm welcome on such a SAD DAY for our Country!"

Her [Montoya's] actions were "not reflective of the event we hosted to celebrate LGBTQI+ families or the other hundreds of guests who were in attendance" and that "individuals in the video will not be invited to future events," a White House spokesperson told Newsweek after transgender activist Rose Montoya went topless during the Pride Month event on the South Lawn. The spokesperson called her behavior "inappropriate and disrespectful for any event at the White House."

"The [Colorado] River, as a whole, is unlikely to go completely dry, but it's not unusual in the West for certain stretches of smaller rivers, including Colorado River tributaries, in certain seasons to be completely consumed," University of Colorado Law School's Western Water Policy Program director Douglas Kenney told Newsweek of the potential impacts of the ongoing drought. "An increasingly dryer Southwest is also an existential threat for the region's fish and wildlife."

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Russian President Vladimir Putin's St. Petersburg International Economic Forum begins today. His advisor said the annual event comes as Russia begins to "look to new horizons."

Donald Trump turns 77 today.

Another inflation measure, the producer price index, is due at 8:30 a.m. ET. Having peaked last summer, the PPI report on wholesale price inflation for May is expected to decline 0.1% on a month-on-month basis. The report comes the same day as the Federal Reserve concludes its monetary policy meeting.

Concession stand replacement timeline top of mind during state official visit

by Elizabeth Varin

When can construction begin on a new Groton baseball complex concession stand?

A timeline for replacing the old building was the biggest question asked during a visit from a state Game Fish and Parks Department representative Tuesday afternoon.

Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation members and city councilmen met with GFP Grants Coordinator Randy Kittle to look at the blue building in need of replacement and whether Land and Water Conservation Funds could help with the project.

"This is 25 years old," said Doug Hamilton, baseball/softball foundation treasurer.

"Actually 28," responded foundation vice president Jarod Fliehs.

"At the time it was built it was adequate, but if ADA came in here... to me it's a black eye," Hamilton said. "We have a beautiful facility and then these bathrooms..."

The foundation and city plan to move the current building to another site and build a slightly-larger facility in its place. The project includes constructing a new 28-foot by 42-foot building that would house the concession stand, public bathrooms, a relaxation room for umpires and storage space for baseball gear and field maintenance equipment.

The goal was to have a new building in place before the city hosts the state junior legion tournament in August 2024, Hamilton said.

Grants Coordinator Kittle asked how long the building would take to construct, to which vice president Fliehs said the foundation had hoped it could begin after baseball games are finished this year.

Fall or winter 2023 construction is not an option with the potential grant funding, Kittle said. The state should finalize its decision about which projects move forward in the grant process by the end of the summer. Those projects have to then be submitted by the state to the National Parks Services, as the grant is federally funded.

The earliest work can start would be next spring, he said.

Hamilton replied the foundation hoped to begin soon as concrete prices have sharply increased recently. "The good Lord only knows what those numbers are going to be next year," he said.

The estimated total cost of the project is \$222,371, according to the budget presented to the city by the foundation.



From left: Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation vice president Jarod Fliehs opens the door at the baseball complex concession stand for Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon, state GFP Grants Coordinator Randy Kittle, foundation president Lars Hanson, foundation secretary Adrienne Fliehs, City Councilman Jason Wambach and foundation treasurer Doug Hamilton during a tour of the building. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation President Lars Hanson and Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon walk around the concession stand building at the baseball complex on the west side of town. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

playgrounds and baseball fields, Kittle said. The total requested for all those projects is a little over \$2 million.

Kittle is visiting each application site to review what is needed for each facility. Those projects chosen for the grant will be submitted by the state to the federal government for final approval.

"It's a lot of fun seeing the cool things going on in the cities," he said. "There are a lot of interesting ideas for communities and cities."

The cost estimates for the project that was included with the grant application totaled \$187,620. That estimate had updated construction costs, no spray foam insulation and no walk-in cooler. The city requested \$65,667 in federal funding, with the remaining costs being covered by the city and fundraising by the baseball/softball foundation.

The project is one of about 20 submitted for grant funding from cities throughout the state, Kittle said. About \$1 million is available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for South Dakota city outdoor recreation facilities.

Other applications include splash pads, swimming pools, pickle ball courts,

Governor Noem and DSS Announce New Rules for Child Care Licensing

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the Rules Review Committee passed Governor Noem’s and the Department of Social Services’ (DSS) new rules for child care licensing.

“Every family should have the assurance that their children have access to safe, excellent, and affordable childcare. It isn’t the government’s job to provide this for them, but we can make life easier for our childcare providers to meet the needs of South Dakota families,” said Governor Noem. “Our kiddos deserve the very best care that we can offer. That is how we will continue to build stronger families and a stronger future.”

Governor Noem met with many child care providers in both October and February to discuss the best ways to improve child care in South Dakota. DSS also held nine listening sessions in August. While speaking with professionals, DSS received numerous suggestions focused on the burdens of paperwork, regulations in general, and ratios for infants through preschoolers.

The listening sessions and an analysis of South Dakota’s current child care rules in contrast to federal requirements. This study combined with Governor Noem’s discussions with child care providers then led to the drafting of these new rules.

The rules review package improves the rules for child care licensing in the following ways:

- Reduces barriers to licensure while still providing for necessary health and safety requirements;
- Streamlines language, providing improved clarity and readability;
- Reduces administrative burdens, such as dictating the specific subject matter of training for providers. Providers will now have the flexibility to choose staff training topics that meet their facility’s needs;
- Eliminates requirements that were antiquated or not focused on health and safety of children – for instance, sanitation requirements were removed or streamlined where stakeholder feedback confirmed they were unnecessary or inapplicable;
- Allows childcare providers to have increased flexibility in staffing, including removing the limitation on the number of hours a substitute provider could be used;
- Adjusts ratio requirements to allow for care of up to three infants under the age of one;
- Adjusts ratio requirements for school-age children to align with how providers group children;
- Aligns training hours for large child care center with school-age programs and small centers;
- Removes unnecessary paperwork requirements;
- Removes the restriction on the number of hours a child can receive night-time care; and,
- Aligns rules more closely with federal requirements, including safe sleep practices recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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June 5 - 11, 2023

(You might want to read the second paragraph before reading this first one!) Welcome back to another edition of the Weekly Round[s] Up, your go-to source for all the latest happenings from your United States Senator. It's been a busy week packed with meaningful interactions, insightful hearings, and some fascinating discussions on the ever-evolving

world of artificial intelligence. From connecting with you, the incredible constituents of South Dakota, to diving deep into the pressing issues that affect us all, I've been hard at work representing your interests in Washington, D.C. So grab a cup of coffee, sit back and let's dive into the highlights of the week together.

Confession: I didn't write the paragraph above. Since I had multiple meetings, summits and discussions about artificial intelligence (AI) this past week (and have for the past several weeks), I thought it would only be fitting to give ChatGPT the opportunity to write the usual introductory paragraph. This is just one example of how AI can be used in everyday settings to make our lives easier, but also an example of how easily it learns: it only needed two prompts to sound believable enough to be used, down to the comment about coffee, which I drink quite a bit of during these busy weeks. Anyway, I won't repeat the obvious... ChatGPT already told you what's ahead. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Justin Tupper, President of the United States Cattlemen's Association, and his wife Brooke (both fellow South Dakotans from St. Onge!); South Dakota members of Growth Energy, including representatives from POET and Lallemand; RF Buche and members of the National Grocers Association; Members of the South Dakota Home Builders Association; Drew Edleman and Kelsey Geraets with the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association; and Students from St. Thomas More High School in Rapid City who visited DC this past week.

Meetings this past week: Jessica Lewis, Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Political and Military Affairs; Gen. C.Q. Brown, current Chief of Staff of the Air Force and nominee to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google and leading expert on AI; and Lt. Gen. Tim Haugh, nominee for head of U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency (NSA).

As I mentioned in the opening, this past week was heavy on the AI front. I attended Scale AI's Government Summit this week, titled "AI in the Era of Strategic Competition," and spoke at a fireside chat with Senator Mark Warner (D-Va.), who is chair of the Select Committee on Intelligence, and Scale AI CEO Alex Wang. I also discussed AI on a panel at Amazon Web Service's Worldwide Public Sector Summit this past week. I also attended a bipartisan Senators AI roundtable, hosted by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The purpose of this series of discussions is to enhance our understanding of the growing field as we begin to discuss regulations on the industry. Additionally, I am leading a bipartisan AI working group with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Senators Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.). We will be hosting three educational sessions for members of the United States Senate on the topic of AI. Our goal is to unite the Senate in a bipartisan way to address the challenges and opportunities posed by AI.

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Brookings, Chancellor, Colton, Harrisburg, Madison, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, St. Onge, Wagner and Willow Lake.

Topics discussed: Issues facing South Dakota's ranchers, ethanol production, AI and the upcoming National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the annual defense appropriations bill that I work on as part of my work in the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC).

Votes taken: 6 – all of these were on nominees to positions in the executive and judicial branches.

Hearings: One in the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Classified briefings: We had our bi-weekly cyber education seminar.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Andover, Brookings, Fort Pierre, Fort Thompson, Huron, Milbank, Mitchell, New Underwood, Phillip and Wessington Springs.

Steps taken this week: 55,818 steps or 25.25 miles.

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Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors

4.0 GPA: Ethan Clark, Andrew Marzahn, Jacob Lewandowski, Carter Barse, Shaylee Peterson, Elliana Weismantel, Jackson Dinger, Cole Simon, Ashtyn Bahr, Cole Bisbee, Sierra Ehresmann, Nathalia Garcia, Brooke Gengerke, Caleb Hanten, Aspen Johnson, Cade Larson, Gracie Traphagen, Cadance Tullis

3.99-3.50: Porter Johnson, Kaleb Antonsen, Tate Larson, Brenna Carda, KayLynn Overacker, Shallyn Foertsch, Ethan Gengerke, Cameron Johnson, Marlee Tollifson

3.49-3.00: Kamryn Fliehs, Hollie Frost, James Brooks, Aeydon Johnson, Tyson Parrow, Tannor McGannon

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Lydia Meier, Emily Clark, Claire Heinrich, Kyleigh Englund, Hannah Monson, Ashlyn Sperry, Holden Sippel, Lexi Osterman

3.99-3.50: Cadence Feist, Anna Fjeldheim, Sydney Leicht, Sara Menzia, Abigail Jensen, Colby Dunker, Emma Schinkel, Celia Moreno Mananes, Dillon Abeln, Lane Tietz, Logan Ringgenberg, Jaycie Lier, Camryn Kurtz, Bryson Wambach, Anna Bisbee, Faith Fliehs

3.49-3.00: Bradin Althoff, Carly Guthmiller, Karsyn Jangula, Ava Wienk

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Gretchen Dinger, Elizabeth Fliehs, Payton Mitchell, Diego Eduardo Nava Remigio, Faith Traphagen, Axel Warrington

3.99-3.50: Kennedy Hansen, Kayla Lehr, Blake Pauli, Brooklyn Hansen, Laila Roberts, Turner Thompson, Logan Pearson, Nicolas Fernandez Gonzalez, Brevin Fliehs, Karrah-Jo Johnson, Emily Overacker, Korbin Kucker, Corbin Weismantel, Jeslyn Kosel

3.49-3.00: Riley Carman, Kaden Kampa, Abby Yeadon, Emma Kutter, Ashley Johnson, Kellen Antonsen, Rebecca Poor, Carter Simon, Drew Thurston, Aiden Heathcote

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Mia Crank, Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Nathan Unzen

3.99-3.50: Lucas Carda, Natalia Warrington, Talli Wright, Gage Sippel, De Eh Tha Say, Paisley Mitchell, Benjamin Hoeft, Ryder Johnson, Raelee Lilly, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Logan Warrington, Aiden Meyers, Karter Moody, London Bahr

3.49-3.00: Lincoln Krause, Cali Tollifson, Keegen Tracy, Karsten Fliehs, Hannah Sandness, Jayden Schwan, Breslyn Jeschke, Cambria Bonn, Jarrett Erdmann, Garrett Schultz, Karol Janesly Diaz Torres

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Teagan Hanten, Carlee Johnson, Ashlynn Warrington, Colt Williamson

3.99-3.50: Kira Clocksene, Liby Althoff, Brody Lord, Emerlee Jones, Halee Harder, Zander Harry, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Addison Hoffman Wipf, Aiden Strom, McKenna Tietz

3.49-3.00: Avery Crank, Leah Jones, Blake Lord, Walker Zoellner, Gavin Kroll, Claire Schuelke, Hayden Zoellner, Brenna Imrie, Hailey Pauli

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Elizabeth Cole, Makenna Krause, Thomas Schuster

3.99-3.50: Sydney Locke, Jace Johnson, Layne Johnson, Ryder Schelle, Chesney Weber, Rylen Ekern, Mya Feser, Addison Hoeft, Ethan Kroll, Taryn Thompson, Rylie Rose, Dee Eh June Say, Kyleigh Kroll, Easton Weber, Wyatt Wambach

3.49-3.00: John Bisbee, Karson Zak, Ruelle Gilbert, Kinsley Rowen, Alex Abeln, Brysen, Sandness, Kason Oswald, Gracie Pearson, Braeden Fliehs

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Novalea Warrington

3.99-3.50: Wesley Borg, Asher Johnson, Kolton Antonsen, Zachary Fliehs, Tevan Hanson, Brooklyn Spanier, Neely Althoff, Aspen Beto, Arianna Dinger, Abby Fjeldheim, Madison Herrick, Lincoln Shilhanek

3.49-3.00: Samuel Crank, Adeline Kotzer, Connor Kroll, Savannah Beauchamp, Wesley Morehouse, Logan Olson, Aurora Washenberger, Jordan Schwan, Kaedynce Bonn, Tenley Frost, Wyatt Hagen

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North Dakota State University Spring 2023 Dean's List

A student must earn a 3.50 grade point average or higher and be enrolled in at least 9 class credits to qualify.

Flihs, Megan Kathleen, Interior Design; Kettering, Pierce Gerald, Agribusiness; Kettering, Portia R, Interior Design

Northern State University Spring 2023 Dean's List

Students who have earned at least a 3.5 grade point average for the semester are eligible for the dean's list. Caitlynn Barse, Andover; Layne Voeller, Barnard; Samantha Ferguson, Bath; Bryce Peterson, Bristol; Kayla Jensen, Claremont; Alyssa Keough, Claremont; Lauren Geranen, Frederick; Miranda Lai, Frederick; Madisen Bjerke, Groton; Carrie Feser Cole, Groton; Alyssa Fordham, Groton; Braden Freeman, Groton; Alexis Hanten, Groton; Kasey Hinman, Groton; Logan Hinman, Groton; Regan Leicht, Groton; Eh Tha You Say, Groton; Hailey Buckmeier, Houghton; Emily Palmer, Langford; Christine Stoltenberg, Stratford; Katelyn Mehlhaff, Westport.

South Dakota State announces spring 2023 dean's list

BROOKINGS, S.D. (06/12/2023)-- More than 3,000 students were recognized for their outstanding academic performance over the spring 2023 semester at South Dakota State University by being named to the dean's list.

To earn dean's list distinctions in SDSU's colleges, students must have completed a minimum of 12 credits and must have earned at least a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Students with F, I, U, RI or RU grades are not eligible regardless of system term GPA attained. Note that this report includes courses that were taken at other South Dakota institutions this term. A minimum of 12 credits within the 100-699 course range must be taken. A student who passes pregeneral education courses may still qualify, if the student has 12 other credits that do fall within the 100-699 range. Those with an * have a perfect 4.0.

Tessa Erdmann, a student in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

Trista Keith *, a student in SDSU's College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions

Allyssa Locke *, a student in SDSU's College of Education and Human Sciences

Nicole Marzahn, a student in SDSU's College of Nursing

Hailey Monson, a student in SDSU's College of Nursing

Sage Mortenson, a student in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

AnneMarie Smith *, a student in SDSU's College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Emily Thompson *, a student in SDSU's College of Education and Human Sciences

Althoff Strong at the Plate as Groton Legion Post 39 Defeats SD Claremont Post 262 Legion

Five hits from Bradin Althoff helped lead Groton Legion Post 39 past SD Claremont Post 262 Legion 22-5 on Tuesday. Althoff singled in the first, singled in the third, singled in the third, tripled in the fifth, and doubled in the fifth.

Groton Legion Post 39 earned the victory despite allowing SD Claremont Post 262 Legion to score three runs in the first inning. Will Cutler and Colby Dauwen all contributed in the big inning with RBIs.

SD Claremont Post 262 Legion got things started in the first inning. SD Claremont Post 262 Legion scored two runs when Cutler homered.

Groton Legion Post 39 pulled away for good with ten runs in the third inning. In the third Cole Simon singled on a 3-1 count, scoring two runs, Althoff singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run, Logan Ringgingberg drew a walk, scoring one run, Colby Dunker singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, Cade Larson singled on a 1-0 count, scoring two runs, Braxton Imrie singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run, Simon singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, and Althoff singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post 39 notched ten runs in the fifth inning. Groton Legion Post 39's big bats in the inning were led by singles by Brevin Fliehs, Simon, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Ringgingberg, and Dunker, a walk by Imrie, a triple by Althoff, and a double by Althoff.

Simon pitched Groton Legion Post 39 to victory. Simon allowed six hits and five runs over five innings, striking out six.

Jesse Keough took the loss for SD Claremont Post 262 Legion. The hurler surrendered ten runs on nine hits over two and two-thirds innings, striking out two.

Groton Legion Post 39 collected 18 hits on the day. Althoff, Simon, Fliehs, Larson, and Dunker each racked up multiple hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Althoff led Groton Legion Post 39 with five hits in five at bats.

Cutler went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead SD Claremont Post 262 Legion in hits.

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Groton Legion Post 39 **22 - 5** SD Claremont Post 262 Legion

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday June 13, 2023

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | R | H | E |
|------|---|---|----|---|----|-----------|-----------|----------|
| GRTN | 0 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 10 | 22 | 18 | 1 |
| SDCL | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 |

BATTING

| Groton Legion Post | AB | R | H | RBI | BB | SO |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| B Flihs (CF) | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| C Simon (P) | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| B Althoff (1B) | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| T Larson (3B) | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| R Groeblichhoff (...) | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| K Kucker (SS) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| L Ringgingberg (R...) | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| C McInerney (RF) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C Dunker (LF) | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| T Diegel (LF) | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C Larson (C) | 3 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| B Imrie (2B) | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Totals | 36 | 22 | 18 | 20 | 7 | 4 |

2B: B Althoff, **3B:** B Althoff, **TB:** R Groeblichhoff, C Dunker 2, L Ringgingberg, C Larson 2, B Flihs 3, C Simon 3, B Imrie, B Althoff 8, **SF:** C Larson, **HBP:** C Dunker, **SB:** L Ringgingberg, T Diegel, B Althoff, **LOB:** 8

PITCHING

| Groton Legion | IP | H | R | ER | BB | SO | HR |
|---------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| C Simon | 5.0 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| Totals | 5.0 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 |

W: C Simon, **P-S:** C Simon 83-50, **WP:** C Simon, **BF:** C Simon 24

| SD Claremont Post | AB | R | H | RBI | BB | SO |
|----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| B Gustafson (SS,...) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| B Hanse (RF) | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| W Cutler (C) | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| J Keough (P, CF) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| T Leidtholt (1B, 2B) | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C Dauwen (CF, P,...) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| R Bruns (LF) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| D Feist (3B) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| G Cutler (2B) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| W Schuller (1B) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| CR: C Glines | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 21 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 6 |

2B: B Hanse, **HR:** W Cutler, **TB:** B Hanse 2, W Cutler 6, B Gustafson, T Leidtholt, **SF:** C Dauwen, **SB:** W Cutler, J Keough, **LOB:** 4

| SD Claremont | IP | H | R | ER | BB | SO | HR |
|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| J Keough | 2.2 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| C Dauwen | 2.0 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| B Gustafson | 0.1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Totals | 5.0 | 18 | 22 | 16 | 7 | 4 | 0 |

L: J Keough, **P-S:** B Gustafson 13-11, C Dauwen 65-31, J Keough 75-42, **WP:** C Dauwen, **HBP:** C Dauwen, **BF:** B Gustafson 4, C Dauwen 21, J Keough 20

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Fall Short to SD Claremont Post 262 Legion, 6-2

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion fired up the offense in the first inning. Braxton Imrie grounded out, scoring one run.

SD Claremont Post 262 Legion pulled away for good with five runs in the third inning. In the third Jesse Keough drew a walk, scoring one run, Colby Dauwen drew a walk, scoring one run, Rennan Bruns singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run, and Nate Schuller singled on a 0-2 count, scoring two runs.

Bruns was the winning pitcher for SD Claremont Post 262 Legion. The ace surrendered two runs on two hits over three innings, striking out three. Grant Cutler threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Kaleb Hoover was on the mound for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The bulldog went two innings, allowing two runs on zero hits and striking out three. Kellen Antonsen threw two innings in relief.

Taylor Diegel went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion in hits.

Groton Jr. Teeners Claims Victory Over Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners in Blow-Out Fashion, 13-1

Groton Jr. Teeners easily did away with Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners 13-1 on Tuesday

Groton Jr. Teeners got things started in the first inning when an error scored one run for Groton Jr. Teeners.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied six runs in the fourth inning. Groton Jr. Teeners's offense in the inning came from singles by Ethan Kroll, Gavin Kroll, Alex Abeln, and Lincoln Krause.

Ryder Schelle earned the victory on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. The righty allowed two hits and one run over four innings, striking out five.

Tayten Kurkowski was on the hill for Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners. Kurkowski lasted three innings, allowing five hits and seven runs while striking out two. Dylan Carlson threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied 12 hits on the day. Abeln, Krause, and Kroll each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Abeln went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits. Groton Jr. Teeners stole nine bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Krause led the way with three.

Weber Earns Victory for Groton Jr. Teeners in No-Hitter Against Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners

Easton Weber was brilliant on the hill on Wednesday, as Weber threw a no-hitter to lead Groton Jr. Teeners past Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners 15-0.

Groton Jr. Teeners opened up scoring in the first inning. Groton Jr. Teeners scored on a stolen base during Ryder Schelle's at bat. Then Schelle singled, driving in one.

Weber led the Groton Jr. Teeners to victory on the pitcher's mound. The righty surrendered zero runs on zero hits over four innings, striking out five.

Tucker Acree took the loss for Webster VFW Post 4690 Teeners. The pitcher lasted one inning, allowing seven hits and seven runs.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied 14 hits on the day. TC Schuster, Weber, and Lincoln Krause all had multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Schuster went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits.

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Groton Transit Fundraiser

Thursday, June 15, 2023

5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Groton Community Center

*** Groton Transit Fundraiser will be

held at the

Groton Community Center

109 N. 3rd St. - one block east of

Groton Transit ***

Let us do the cooking for you!
Burgers, Brats, Beans, Watermelon,
Chips and the famous Mini Donuts!!

* Food * Fund * Door Prizes *

FREE WILL OFFERING

*Please join us and help
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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Sioux Falls man loses insurance and gaming licenses after alleged \$1.5 million fraud

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 13, 2023 4:35 PM

A Sioux Falls man who lost his insurance license for an alleged \$1.5 million fraud that affected more than 600 South Dakota student athletes has also lost his gaming license.

At its Tuesday meeting in Deadwood, the South Dakota Commission on Gaming revoked Gary Aaron King's personal gaming license. King was a member of multiple businesses housed at the Midnight Star in Deadwood.

The decision came after the state Division of Insurance revoked King's insurance producer license and business entity license in March.

King owned and operated Cypress Risk Management LLC, which sold insurance to cover student-athletes at colleges and universities in South Dakota and other states. King allegedly received premiums that he failed to remit to the insurance companies he was working with, according to documents from Minnehaha County court, the state Division of Insurance, and the state Office of Hearing Examiners. About \$1.5 million of that money remained outstanding as of March, according to the Office of Hearing Examiner documents. The Division of Insurance documents say at least 625 South Dakota student athletes were affected and "may lose their coverage due to these actions."

King did not appeal the Division of Insurance's 's March 10 decision. The Gaming Commission concluded it had grounds in state law to revoke his gaming license Tuesday because he violated provisions in the insurance code and participated in "fraudulent, coercive, or dishonest practices, or demonstrated incompetence, untrustworthiness, or financial irresponsibility in the conduct of business in the state or elsewhere." King had volunteered to relinquish his gaming license, but the license has not been physically received by the commission yet, so commissioners voted to officially revoke it Tuesday.

King held his gaming license for about a year, according to prior reporting from the Black Hills Pioneer. He owned GK LLC and owned more than one-third of Elevated LLC, which owns Bet Rushmore. During the Gaming Commission's February 2022 meeting, King applied for a sports wagering services provider license with several other owners of Elevated LLC. Bet Rushmore has sports betting kiosks at Midnight Star.

The corporate entities that were involved with King in the gaming world did not appear in front of the commission because they had already cut ties with him.

King has faced several recent lawsuits, including one in Minnehaha County from Student Assurance Services Inc., of Stillwater, Minnesota. The lawsuit said King sold insurance for the company to colleges and universities in Nebraska, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota, but failed to remit the premiums he collected. After King failed to respond to the lawsuit, a judge entered a default judgment in April against him and his company, Cypress Risk Management, for about \$700,000.

— *South Dakota Searchlight's Seth Tupper contributed to this report.*

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Tribes still face uphill slog for housing infrastructure funding after passage of rules

Sen. Red Dawn Foster provides lone 'nay' vote, citing lack of easy tribal access

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 13, 2023 2:14 PM

South Dakota's tribes may lose out on a quarter of a \$200 million pool of workforce housing infrastructure money before lawmakers can pass a bill giving them access to the funds.

The Legislature's Rules Review Committee voted 5-1 Tuesday to give final approval to the rules for the program. But a wrinkle in the law that created it will force tribes that hope to use the money this year and at least part of the next to partner with non-tribal cities or counties.

Such partnerships are a workaround for tribes to the latest problem in long-stalled efforts to pass along infrastructure funding to developers. Those efforts date to 2021, when legislators first approved the funding that Tuesday's vote finally makes available to developers across the state.

Last month, South Dakota Housing Development Authority Interim Director Chas Olson said in a public hearing that any infrastructure paid for through the program must be handed off to a "political subdivision of the state" after a developer builds it.

Tribes and tribal entities are eligible for the funding under program rules, but are not political subdivisions of South Dakota.

The workaround of city-tribal partnerships won't work for everyone, according to Sen. Red Dawn Foster, D-Pine Ridge, who cast the lone "no" vote against the rules on Tuesday in Pierre.

Nearly all the land in Oglala Lakota County is tribal, she said.

"What political subdivision could they partner with in that county?" Foster asked Olson.

Olson told Foster that he doesn't have a great answer for counties in such a predicament.

"Until we have a potential fix to the law or amendment to the law to allow the tribes and tribal entities to be long-term owners and maintainers of the infrastructure, I think the workaround is kind of what we're stuck with for now," Olson said.

The burden of that workaround could be more significant for the \$50 million portion of the funding that came from the federal government.

The \$200 million on offer is split in two, with \$150 million in state money to help developers cover the cost of streets, street lights, curbs, sidewalks, wastewater and stormwater projects. The \$50 million in federal money is more restrictive. It can only be used for wastewater and stormwater, must be awarded by the end of 2024, and must be spent by the end of 2026.

Foster wanted to know if that tight timeline could put the federal money out of reach for the state's tribal citizens, since the next opportunity to amend the housing infrastructure law won't come until the beginning of the next legislative session in January.

Last fall, before the Housing Development Authority shelved its plans to award funding over legal concerns with the original program setup, former director Lorraine Polak said there were enough applications from developers to award all \$50 million in federal funds.

"Do you think any will be left once the statute has been changed to include tribes?" Foster said Tuesday.

Olson called that "a hard question to answer," but pointed to the larger pool of state funding as "low-hanging fruit" that will remain available after 2024.

Olson couldn't say for certain if the time limits and legal hurdles would put the federal dollars out of reach.

"I would hope that for the tribes' sake and other entities, that there will be some leftover, but there's really no way to determine that until we start getting the applications," Olson said.

Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, wondered about the state funding, as well. He asked Olson if tribes have a realistic shot at access to the state dollars "on day one" in 2023.

"It's really going to come down to what kind of cooperation and collaboration you can get between the tribes and the political subdivisions," Olson said.

Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, told Olson he'd like to see the authority prioritize applications from

developers who put “a lot of time and money and resources” into their applications in 2022.

“My encouragement would be to try to make the new application process as consistent with that old application process as possible, to honor those people’s investments in both time and money,” Hansen said.

Olson said that while applicants will need a few additional forms of documentation and an adjustment of their cost estimates, “there’s not going to be a big departure from our original application.”

Hansen, like each committee member except Foster, voted to support the program rules.

Foster said she supports the program as an answer to what she described as a housing crisis in South Dakota, but said the restrictions for tribes are a blow against tribal sovereignty, particularly in her home county.

“I do hope other tribes find a workaround and are able to apply for this because it is that needed,” Foster said.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

Biden administration implores states, including SD, to slow Medicaid cuts

BY: HANNAH RECHT - JUNE 13, 2023 11:05 AM

Too many Americans are losing Medicaid coverage because of red tape, and states should do more to make sure eligible people keep their health insurance, the Biden administration said Monday.

More than a million Americans have lost coverage through the program for low-income and disabled Americans in the past several weeks, following the end of pandemic protections on April 1, according to the latest Medicaid renewal data from more than 20 states.

After a three-year pause, most states have now resumed checking which Medicaid recipients remain eligible and dropping those who no longer qualify or don’t complete required paperwork. About 4 in 5 people dropped so far either never returned the paperwork or omitted required documents, federal and state data show.

Xavier Becerra, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, decried those numbers in a letter sent to state governors on June 12.

“I am deeply concerned with the number of people unnecessarily losing coverage, especially those who appear to have lost coverage for avoidable reasons that State Medicaid offices have the power to prevent or mitigate,” he wrote.

The Biden administration outlined several optional steps states can take to ensure everyone who still qualifies for the safety-net health insurance program stays covered. For instance, states can pause the cancellations to allow more time to reach people who haven’t responded. Health insurance companies that manage Medicaid plans can help their enrollees fill out the paperwork.

Some states were already choosing to take extra time. Though Wyoming began renewals in May, the state is being “deliberately cautious” and won’t drop people for incomplete paperwork until July or August, state Health Department spokesperson Kim Deti said. Oregon won’t start those cancellations until October.

Officials in other states have demonstrated no eagerness to slow the cuts.

About 10 percent of Arkansas’ Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program enrollees have already been dropped, nearly all because they didn’t complete paperwork. Arkansas is speeding through the re-determinations in just six months, while most other states are taking about a year, as HHS recommended. Despite outcry from some federal lawmakers and advocates, Medicaid officials in the state wrote on June 8 that they would continue to “swiftly disenroll” people who no longer qualify.

That could be disastrous, said Joan Alker, executive director of Georgetown University’s Center for Children and Families. “My big worry is that we could lose millions of families quickly. It’s going to be very

hard to get them back.”

Becerra also wrote that he is “particularly concerned” about children losing coverage, although the administration doesn’t know exactly how many kids have been dropped. States don’t have to report numbers by age to federal authorities, said Dan Tsai, director of the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services.

Tens of thousands of kids are losing coverage, according to data from states that shared it. In Indiana, of the 53,000 dropped in the first month, a third were kids. In South Dakota, more than half were kids. In Arkansas, nearly 55,000 kids were dropped in the first two months.

Becerra also urged governors to work more directly with families at risk of losing coverage. State agencies should team up with schools, faith-based groups, pharmacies, and other community organizations to help enrollees better understand how to stay on Medicaid, he wrote.

In most states, people who still qualify for Medicaid but lose coverage because of state errors or incomplete paperwork have 90 days to ask for their coverage back.

Some officials view the large number of paperwork-related cancellations as no big deal because people can reapply if they still qualify. But it’s not that simple, Alker said. Many people don’t know their appeal rights, and the grace period doesn’t apply to all adults in several of the hardest-hit states.

Alker said states will temporarily save money from not having to pay for enrollees’ care. But in the meantime, people won’t be able to afford their regular medications. Some will end up in the emergency room sicker than before, she said. “There’s really nothing good that comes out of these gaps in coverage.”

This story was originally published by KFF Health News, a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.

Hannah Recht, Data Reporter for KFF Health News, covers health care by assembling databases, digging through documents, analyzing data, and talking to people, too. She was a member of the KFF Health News-AP public health reporting team on the Underfunded and Under Threat project that won the Online News Association’s Award for Investigative Data Journalism and an AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award. She regularly publishes open data and code alongside her stories for other journalists to use in their own reporting. Previously a data and graphics reporter at Bloomberg News, she graduated from the University of Rochester with a bachelor’s in mathematics and statistics and a minor in epidemiology.

Trump pleads not guilty in federal documents case, heads back out on campaign trail

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 13, 2023 5:03 PM

Former President Donald Trump pleaded not guilty in federal court in Miami on Tuesday to 37 felony counts of taking highly classified national security documents from his time in office and obstructing efforts to recover the documents, according to media reports from inside the courtroom.

Trump, the first former president charged with a federal crime, remains the leading contender for the Republican nomination for president in 2024 even as he faces at least two prosecutions. No trial date has been set in the Florida case.

A crowd of supporters gathered outside of the Miami courthouse Tuesday, holding Trump campaign flags and signs of support. Trump waved from his vehicle as he left the courthouse. Secret Service agents subdued a protestor dressed as a prisoner who tried to accost the vehicle.

Trump stopped at a café to meet with supporters after the court hearing.

He was scheduled to hold a campaign event at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club Tuesday evening.

U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville, an Alabama Republican, indicated he would join the event, saying on Twitter he would be “standing right next to President Trump tonight in total support.”

Tuberville missed a 50-49 procedural vote in the Senate Tuesday to advance the nomination of Jared

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Bernstein as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Tuberville included in his tweet a request for supporters' email addresses.

Trump indictment

Trump continued his public schedule after the federal indictment was unsealed on Friday, appearing in Georgia and North Carolina over the weekend.

According to the indictment, Trump schemed with an aide to keep possession of top secret and other sensitive national security documents from his presidency and concealed those documents — even from his own lawyers — to avoid a court order to return them.

A federal grand jury did not charge Trump for his initial taking of the documents from the White House to Mar-a-Lago, his Florida estate and private club. Instead, the charges stem from Trump retaining 102 documents with classification markings, which federal authorities recovered only through an FBI raid.

After months of the National Archives and Records and Administration asking for Trump's White House records and a federal grand jury subpoena, Trump relinquished a total of 235 documents, according to the indictment.

Trump directed personal aide Waltine Nauta to move dozens of boxes of documents to avoid detection from his own lawyers, prosecutors said. He then falsely told the grand jury he'd turned in everything that had been asked of him, according to the indictment.

Later he showed at least three people classified documents, which he described as classified and said he could get in trouble for disclosing, according to the indictment.

Trump has also been charged with — and pleaded not guilty to — state charges in New York alleging that he falsified business records by using campaign funds to pay hush money to adult film actress Stormy Daniels. A state judge set a March 2024 trial date for that case.

U.S. District Judge Aileen M. Cannon is overseeing the federal case in the Southern District of Florida, though U.S. Magistrate Judge Jonathan Goodman presided over Tuesday's arraignment.

Trump appointed Cannon to the federal bench, and she has previously ruled in Trump's favor when he requested an independent special master to review the documents FBI agents took from his South Florida estate in an August 2022 search.

Cannon faced criticism for that ruling, which was later overturned by the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Congressional reaction

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, declined to comment on Trump's case when asked by reporters Tuesday, saying he was staying out of the presidential race.

"I'm just simply not going to comment on the candidates," he said. "We've got a bunch of them and I'm just simply going to stay out of it."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York also declined to address the charges directly, saying that the case should proceed without interference from politicians.

"In terms of the Trump indictment, no one's above the law, including Donald Trump," he said. "There ought to be no political or ideological interference as the case moves forward."

Other Democrats made similar remarks that Trump should be treated like a common defendant and was entitled to his day in court.

Colorado U.S. Rep. Ken Buck was among the few congressional Republicans to say a conviction should disqualify Trump for the White House.

In an appearance on CNN, Buck noted that in 2016, Trump called his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, unfit for office because of her alleged mishandling of classified information as secretary of state.

"His words have set the standard that America will look at to see if he is fit for president," Buck told CNN's Dana Bash. "He's innocent until proven guilty. After the trial, if he is convicted of these charges ... I certainly won't support a convicted felon for the White House."

GOP rallies to Trump defense

On his way to the courthouse Tuesday, Trump wrote on Truth Social, his social media platform, that the prosecution was a "WITCH HUNT," a term he has used for the several investigations into his potential

misconduct.

"ONE OF THE SADDEST DAYS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY," he wrote. "WE ARE A NATION IN DECLINE!!!"

Many congressional Republicans have rallied to Trump's defense, echoing his witch hunt claim that President Joe Biden, a Democrat who defeated Trump in the 2020 election and is running for re-election in 2024, was targeting a political opponent.

"Let's be clear about what's happening: Joe Biden is weaponizing his Department of Justice against his own political rival," House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, tweeted.

Others have said the U.S. Justice Department was holding Trump to a higher standard than Biden, who self-reported improperly storing classified documents from his time as vice president and U.S. senator from Delaware.

"We have a sitting president who possessed classified documents dating back decades to his time as vice president and as a senator. Yet he is now weaponizing the federal government to go after his leading political opponent," U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, said. "Where is the equal justice under the law?"

But Biden — and Mike Pence, the vice president under Trump — returned classified documents once they were discovered. The federal indictment, led by Special Counsel Jack Smith, alleges Trump intentionally held onto documents he knew were classified.

States Newsroom Washington senior reporter Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

U.S. House Republicans spar with HHS secretary over transgender youth, child labor

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 13, 2023 4:50 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra on Tuesday defended access to health care for transgender people, as well as his agency's actions in connection with unaccompanied migrant children.

Republicans at a U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing grilled Becerra about gender-affirming care for transgender minors, including puberty blockers. They also pressed him about an investigation from the New York Times that reported HHS lost contact with 85,000 unaccompanied migrant children and hundreds of those children were found working dangerous jobs in violation of child labor laws.

Becerra appeared before the panel to advocate for President Joe Biden's HHS budget request for fiscal 2024 proposing \$144 billion in discretionary funding and \$1.7 trillion in mandatory funding for health care, child care, mental health services, Medicare expansion and more.

"Our country faces numerous health care challenges — and HHS is at the center of addressing many of these issues," Becerra said in his opening statement.

But the chair of the panel, Rep. Virginia Foxx, said she was not pleased with the budget request.

"Each dollar matters when wallets are stretched thin, so the enormous HHS budget requires a critical eye," the North Carolina Republican said in her opening statement. "Budgets calling for more money and reckless spending are crushing everyday Americans."

Democrats raised concerns about maternal mortality, lack of access to reproductive care for pregnant patients, the rise in child labor violations for unaccompanied migrant children and health care access for transgender people.

"The nation is witnessing the harsh restrictions and criminalization of women's access to abortions, jeopardizing the health of women and families across the country," ranking member Rep. Bobby Scott, a Virginia Democrat, said in his opening statement. "We are all bearing witness to the baseless villainization of the necessary care that supports transgender individuals."

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The GOP-controlled House recently passed legislation to ban transgender girls from competing in the sports that align with their gender identity.

Gender-affirming health care

Several states with Republican-controlled state legislatures have moved to ban transgender children from accessing gender-affirming care, and Republicans at the hearing zeroed in on the topic.

Republican Rep. Mary Miller of Illinois asked Becerra if puberty blockers were dangerous and what risks come with using them.

"No drug would be on the market if it was not safe," he said.

Miller asked Becerra what "your own FDA says about the risk," referring to the Food and Drug Administration.

Puberty blockers were first approved by the FDA in 1993 to temporarily pause puberty in children who were going through it too early. Transgender adolescents can choose to start hormone therapy, in which they receive either estrogen or testosterone treatments, whichever one that aligns with their gender identity.

Republican Rep. Jim Banks of Indiana took issue with a report HHS published in March about gender-affirming care, in which the agency recommended cutting federal funding for hospitals that deny access to health care for transgender people.

"Does this mean that HHS is seriously threatening to withhold hospital grants from states like my own if they refuse to go along with surgeries ... or puberty blockers for kids?" he asked.

Becerra said that the agency is going to "protect the rights of any American to get the health care they're entitled to, and if someone tries to stop them from that, that's a violation of the law."

Democratic Rep. Mark Takano of California said Republicans on the committee were trying to cause a "moral panic."

"This line of questioning I think is meant to inflame Americans sensibilities about transgender people and stigmatize them," he said.

Takano asked Becerra how often transgender youth receive gender-affirming surgeries.

Becerra said that any surgeries that transgender minors receive are very rare and that they are performed on adolescents, not young kids. It's a decision that is made on the individual level between a patient and medical provider, he added.

"What we know at HHS is that many of the transgender youth that are having very difficult, traumatic times find that getting gender-affirming care has been helpful in stabilizing their lives," Becerra said.

Child labor

Both Democrats and Republicans asked Becerra about the New York Times investigation into child labor. Becerra pushed back on those criticisms, arguing that the agency did not "lose" contact with any children because those children were not in HHS jurisdiction.

"Once we place those children (with a sponsor), we lose jurisdiction over those kids," he said. "So we can't lose people we don't have jurisdiction over."

Becerra mostly placed the blame on companies that the Department of Labor has investigated and cited for exploiting migrant children.

"I don't believe that these children are receiving the oversight protections when an employer or company is violating their labor rights," he said.

Republican Rep. Tim Walberg of Michigan told Becerra that he found the lack of coordination between HHS, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Labor alarming.

"It appears as though many of these children were placed with human traffickers and were forced to work in dangerous jobs," Walberg said.

He asked Becerra if the Labor Department had informed his agency in 2021 and 2022 that those unaccompanied children were being exploited.

Becerra said that HHS does not have jurisdiction over the unaccompanied children that the agency releases to sponsors, but that HHS is coordinating with the Labor Department to notice any patterns that companies are violating child labor laws.

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House Democrats last week lobbied Foxx to hold a hearing on the uptick in child labor violations overall, but she argued that Tuesday's hearing would provide the committee with an opportunity to address the issue.

"We do feel like there was a betrayal of trust for our most vulnerable kids in this country," Republican Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer of Oregon said to Becerra about the reports of migrant children working in dangerous work conditions.

Reproductive health care

Following the first-year mark since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the constitutional right to abortion access, Democrats raised concerns about access to reproductive care, especially for pregnant patients who live in states that have banned abortion.

Democratic Rep. Suzanne Bonamici of Oregon told Becerra she was concerned about reports of pregnant patients who need to travel to other states to access care because of abortion bans. She also cited reports about medical staff waiting until their patients get dangerously ill before being able to provide treatment.

She asked Becerra if the agency expects to see maternal mortality rates increase or decrease in states that pass bans and restrictions on access to abortion.

"Pregnant women in states with abortion bans are nearly three times more likely to die during the process of bringing a child into their family," Becerra said.

He added that the Biden administration is aiming to reduce maternal mortality rates with a budget request of \$1.9 billion for the Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health programs. HHS is asking for \$276 million to be directed "toward reducing maternal mortality and morbidity and \$185 million to the Healthy Start program to reduce racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes."

The current maternal mortality rate in the U.S. is 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There are also racial disparities in maternal mortality rates: Black mothers are 2.5 times more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth causes than white mothers.

Democratic Rep. Jahana Hayes of Connecticut said she was concerned about the Black mortality rate, pointing to the recent death of American track and field champion Tori Bowie due to complications of childbirth. Bowie was 32.

She asked Becerra how the president's budget would address the high mortality rates of Black mothers.

He said the agency is planning to continue expanding access to the doula program "so we can make sure that women are receiving care, not just at the point of delivery, but before that, so they're preparing for that delivery and having good health outcomes." Doulas are trained professionals who provide support to new mothers before and after birth.

"So we're going to continue to work with community health centers, with those programs that reach out to do community health service work, to try to make sure we're getting to people early," Becerra said. "Someone who's an athlete at a young age of 32 should not be dying in her home alone because she's pregnant."

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Legislative committee approves changes to child care licensing rules

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 13, 2023 7:03 PM

The Legislative Rules Review Committee approved new rules Tuesday for child care licensing from the Department of Social Services meant to address a severe child care shortage in the state.

The new rules cut training hours for child care center providers in half and allow providers to care for more children at once than laid out in previous rules. Significant changes include:

- Increasing the number of children 5 or older who could be cared for by a single adult to 15, up from 10 in the previous rules.
- Allowing an in-home provider to care for up to three infants (up from two previously) and up to nine other children (keeping previous rules that up to four of those children can be younger than 2).
- Cutting the number of required training hours for child care providers from 20 a year to 10 (family day cares remain at six hours), with CPR and first aid training required in addition to the 10 hours.
- Expanding the allowed duties of a 14-year-old worker at a before or after-school program.
- Requiring providers to follow the safe sleep guidelines for infants and young children offered by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Removing the limit on a number of hours a substitute provider can be used.
- Removing restrictions on the number of hours a child can receive nighttime care.

The committee approved the rules 4-2, with the two no votes coming from Rep. Erin Healy, D-Sioux Falls, and Sen. Red Dawn Foster, D-Pine Ridge.

The effort to rewrite the rules has been in the works since 2022, with listening sessions held throughout 2022 and 2023.

Several child care organizations opposed the rule changes when the DSS held a listening session in Sioux Falls last month, while other providers lauded the changes as "actionable" steps to address child care issues.

Those opposed to the rule changes were concerned about increased ratios, with Early Learner South Dakota Executive Director Kayla Klein pointing out that South Dakota already allowed more children to be supervised by a single adult than neighboring states. The training requirement change, meanwhile, would mean fewer hours for South Dakota providers than their counterparts in all neighboring states but Iowa, which requires 10 hours a year.

However, Gov. Kristi Noem celebrated the approved rule changes in a news release Tuesday.

"Every family should have the assurance that their children have access to safe, excellent, and affordable childcare," Noem said in a statement. "It isn't the government's job to provide this for them, but we can make life easier for our childcare providers to meet the needs of South Dakota families."

Kerri Tietgen, CEO of Embe, wrote a letter to DSS earlier this month supporting the changes. Two changes that are the most significant for the nonprofit child care provider based in Sioux Falls are the ratio changes for children aged 5 and older and the reduced training requirements.

The changed training requirements allow the nonprofit to be "more agile," although Embe requires training exceeding licensing requirements in the state.

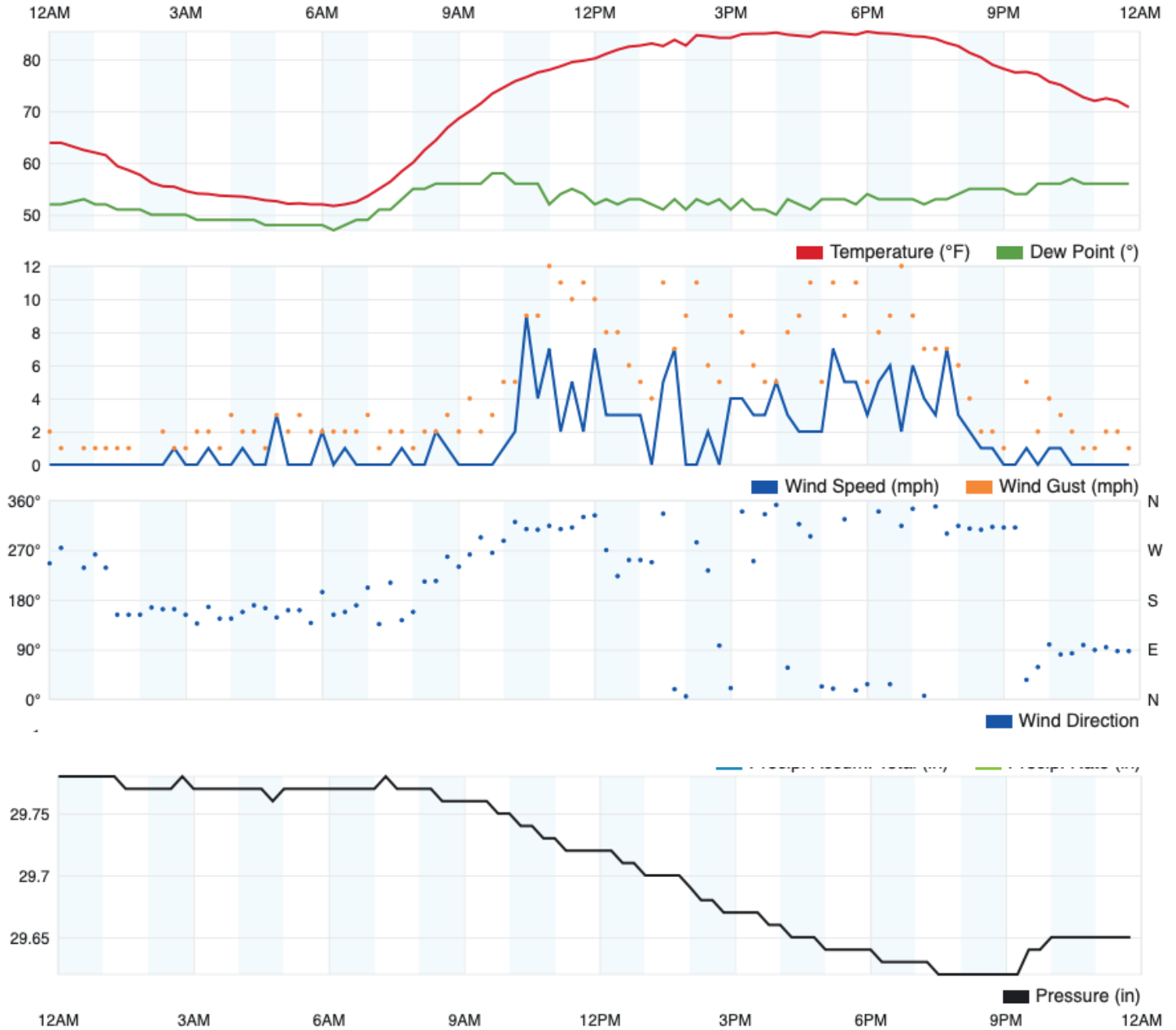
"EmBe provides a significant amount of on-the-job training via our Director of Curriculum and her team, behavior specialists and counselors from The Compass Center working in our operations daily, and leaders within our organization coaching," Tietgen wrote. "I do believe that this coaching will be more impactful than the formal training at times. So, this change allows us, as a provider, to be more adaptable and responsive with the types of training deliverables within our organization."

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

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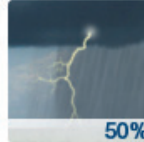


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

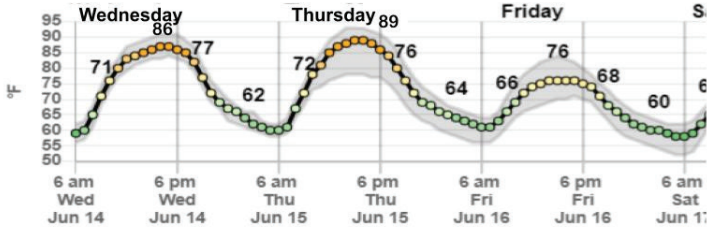
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| Today | Tonight | Thursday | Thursday Night | Friday | Friday Night | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mostly Sunny | Partly Cloudy | Haze | Chance T-storms | Chance T-storms | Chance T-storms then Chance Showers | Chance Showers |
| High: 89 °F | Low: 59 °F | High: 93 °F | Low: 62 °F | High: 80 °F | Low: 59 °F | High: 81 °F |



Above Normal Temperatures Until Friday

Regional Temperature Forecast



Maximum Temperature Forecast

| | 6/14 Wed | 6/15 Thu | 6/16 Fri |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Aberdeen | 89 | 93 | 76 |
| Britton | 86 | 90 | 78 |
| Brookings | 87 | 90 | 82 |
| Chamberlain | 89 | 93 | 76 |
| Clark | 86 | 89 | 80 |
| Eagle Butte | 86 | 82 | 73 |
| Ellendale | 87 | 90 | 78 |
| Eureka | 86 | 88 | 75 |
| Gettysburg | 86 | 87 | 75 |
| Huron | 90 | 94 | 79 |
| Kennebec | 88 | 90 | 74 |
| McIntosh | 84 | 78 | 72 |
| Milbank | 88 | 91 | 86 |
| Miller | 86 | 91 | 77 |
| Mobridge | 88 | 86 | 77 |
| Murdo | 86 | 86 | 73 |
| Pierre | 91 | 92 | 79 |
| Redfield | 88 | 92 | 79 |
| Sisseton | 88 | 91 | 83 |
| Watertown | 87 | 90 | 84 |
| Webster | 84 | 88 | 78 |
| Wheaton | 88 | 91 | 86 |

*Table values in °F

Wednesday



Dry but Smoky

Thursday



30-60% chance of showers & storms

Friday



30-60% chance of showers & storms

Wildfire smoke will be prevalent today and Thursday, and it will be rather warm. Rain chances increase, though, for Thursday and Friday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:54 PM

Low Temp: 52 °F at 6:19 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 11:01 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 41 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1969

Average High: 80

Average Low: 55

Average Precip in June.: 1.65

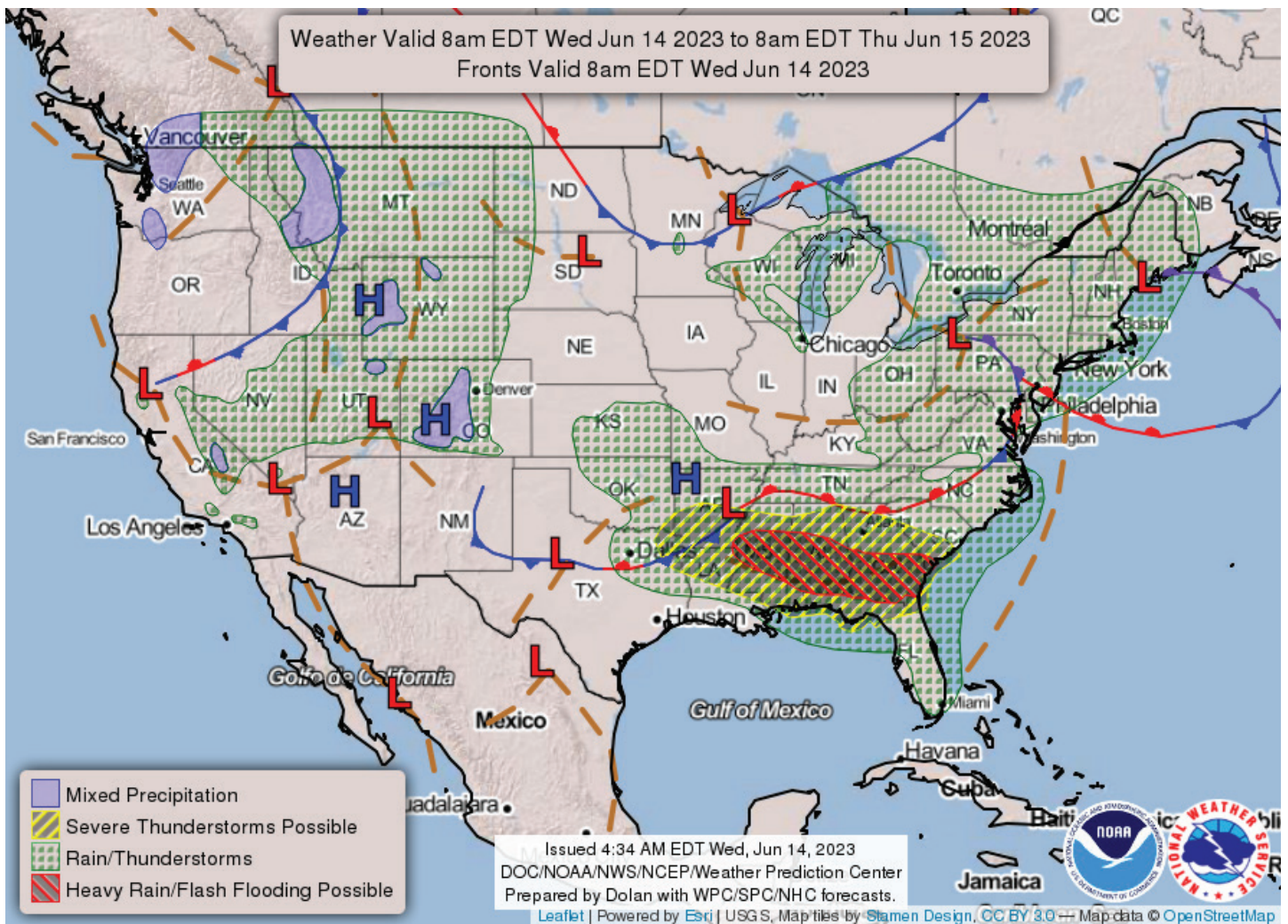
Precip to date in June.: 0.51

Average Precip to date: 8.90

Precip Year to Date: 8.42

Sunset Tonight: 9:23:57 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:25 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 14, 1970: An estimated F3 tornado moved northeast from just southeast of Mound City. Barns and sheds were said to have been blown away on three farms.

June 14, 1985: A thunderstorm produced golf ball size hail in the Castlewood area causing considerable damage to grain, corn, soybeans, and gardens. Some areas just south of Castlewood had hail piled up to six inches deep. Leaves were stripped from several trees. Wind gusts to 60 mph accompanied the hail.

Another thunderstorm produced high winds and damaging hail in Grant and Roberts Counties. North of Milbank along both sides of Highway 15, crops incurred considerable damage. An area 17 miles northeast of Sisseton into Browns Valley, to Mud Lake, saw crop damage from golf ball size hail.

June 14, 2009: An upper-level disturbance combined with a warm front and very unstable air brought severe thunderstorms to parts of central and north-central South Dakota. Hail up to the size of golf balls, flash flooding, along with several tornadoes occurred with these storms. Heavy rain caused flash flooding on the Moreau River with the bridge on Route 14 being overtopped. The bridge had to be closed west of Green Grass. A basement was also flooded three miles east of Green Grass along with several roads in the area in Dewey Country. A tornado touched down west of Hayes in Stanley County and traveled almost a mile before lifting. No damage occurred. A second tornado touched down east of Hayes with no damage occurring.

1903 - The Heppner Disaster occurred in Oregon. A cloudburst in the hills sent a flood down Willow Creek, and a twenty foot wall of water swept away a third of the town in minutes, killing 236 residents and causing 100 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1961 - The temperature in Downtown San Francisco, CA, soared to 106 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thirty-two cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, tied their record for June, and the high of 101 at Milwaukee WI marked their first 100 degree reading in 32 years. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to South Texas, drenching McAllen with 3.2 inches in one hour. A thunderstorm soaked the town of Uncertain with 2.3 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf States to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region during the day and into the night. There were 62 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorm winds caused 28 million dollars damage in Montgomery County MD. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHO'S BIGGER?

One Sunday morning after church as the family was driving home, Molly asked, "Mom, the preacher said that God was bigger than any of us. Is that really true?"

"Yes, He is!" answered her mother.

"Well, Mom," she continued, "the preacher also said that God lives in us. Is that also true?"

"Yes," admitted the mother.

"Well, then," she asked rather confused, "why doesn't He show through us?"

How much of God is seen in or through our lives each day?

We speak of Him often, turn to Him quickly, and say we rely on Him totally, but do we consult with Him continually?

When we make plans, we need to include Him. If we visit with a friend, we need to invite Him into the conversation. As we leave for a journey, we need to ask Him to travel with us. Throughout the day, every day, at work or at play, we need to ask Him for His wisdom.

Perhaps if we consulted God for His advice in everything we do and were more conscious that His Spirit is actually within us, and that He wants to work through us, we would realize that He is bigger than we are and wants to "show through" us.

Prayer: Father, we often think of Your goodness, but rarely talk about it to others. We believe that You love us but seldom share this with others. Come, live through us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.13.23

8 10 19 44 47 4

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$281,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 20
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.12.23

1 29 32 41 46 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,940,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 35 Mins 36
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.13.23

3 10 11 14 21 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 50 Mins
DRAW: 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.10.23

5 14 19 23 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$95,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 50 Mins
DRAW: 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.12.23

9 15 22 54 64 19

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 19 Mins 36
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.12.23

2 3 16 23 68 7

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$340,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 19 Mins 36
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Mark Miller becomes Gov. Noem's 5th chief of staff to depart office

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's chief of staff, Mark Miller, plans to leave the governor's office, becoming the fifth chief of staff to depart during Noem's tenure.

Miller's departure was confirmed Tuesday by Ian Fury, the governor's spokesman. Fury did not comment on Miller's last day or any possible replacements.

Miller is returning to Florida where he has accepted a position with a nonprofit, KELO-TV reported.

"Governor Noem is grateful for all of Mark's help serving the people of South Dakota over the past several years," Fury said in a statement. "His family situation made it advantageous for him to move back home, and we wish him well on that and all other endeavors."

Miller became Noem's general counsel in 2020 and was named interim chief of staff in 2021. He was promoted to chief of staff in March 2022.

Miller was Noem's advocate on abortion issues and was chairman of the Department of Education's Social Studies Standards Commission.

North America's first known case of a rabid moose confirmed in western Alaska

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A moose in western Alaska has tested positive for rabies in the first apparent case of a rabid moose in North America, state game officials said.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game officials began receiving reports of a moose acting aggressively toward people in the community of Teller, located about 70 miles (113 kilometers) northwest of Nome on the Bering Sea coast, on June 2.

"It was drooling and being very aggressive towards people and it was wobbly, unstable on its legs," Kimberlee Beckmen, a Fish and Game wildlife veterinarian told the Anchorage Daily News. "That was very unusual behavior."

After consulting with Beckmen, department staff members killed the moose because of its aggressive behavior and signs indicative of a rabies infection. The carcass was burned to prevent the virus from spreading to scavengers.

The Alaska State Virology Laboratory later detected the rabies virus in the moose's brain, the department said in a statement.

Last week, the department said other rabid moose had been diagnosed in South Dakota, Minnesota and Canada but corrected that on Monday to say the only known cases of rabies in moose were reported in Europe. Beckmen said the other cases in North America actually were places where moose were tested for rabies but the results were negative.

The western Alaska case is the first in North America, according to national database records dating from the 1950s.

The moose had a wound from a fox bite, the likely means of transmission. The moose contracted the Arctic fox rabies variant, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That variant circulated last winter among red foxes on the Seward Peninsula and Arctic foxes on the North Slope.

Rabies outbreaks happen every year among fox populations throughout a large swath of Alaska, with outbreaks every eight to 10 years, Beckmen said.

This past winter was the largest outbreak the department had detected, including a large number of red foxes in the Nome area. Beckmen said 29% of the foxes sampled had rabies. That meant higher exposure to rabies for dogs that got into fights with foxes, Beckmen said.

The virus can affect and be fatal for humans, but the CDC says only up to three human cases are reported annually in the U.S.

Because of the rabid moose, the game department plans to test all dead wild mammals from parts of the state where rabies is generally present at a certain level among foxes, Beckmen said.

Officials also encouraged hunters and those processing game meat to wear gloves while butchering moose or other animals, washing hands thoroughly after handling game, disinfecting knives and other equipment that touches the meat and cooking game to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit (74 degrees Celsius).

Long-awaited Vietnam energy plan aims to boost renewables, but fossil fuels still in the mix

By VICTORIA MILKO AP Science Writer

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Power outages are leaving Vietnamese homes and businesses without power for hours at a time, as a prolonged drought and high temperatures strain the fast-growing economy's capacity to keep up.

A long-anticipated plan meant to fix the energy crunch and help achieve ambitious climate change goals will offer some relief but may not go far enough in weaning the country off of fossil fuels, experts say.

The need for progress is evident.

Streetlights have been turned off in some major cities and businesses have been told to cut energy use. Amid severe drought, two out of the three largest hydroelectric reservoirs in Vietnam have almost completely stopped operating.

"It is a big headache for us," said Nguyen Thanh Tam, deputy director of Hoa Long printing company in Hanoi. "We need power to operate the machines."

The national energy plan, called Power Development Plan 8 or PDP8, aims to more than double the maximum power Vietnam can generate to some 150 gigawatts by 2030. That's more than the capacity of developed countries like France and Italy, though well below Japan's 290 GW.

It calls for a drastic shift away from heavily-polluting coal, expanding use of domestic gas and imported liquefied natural gas or LNG, which will account for about 25% of total generating capacity, while hydro-power, wind, solar and other renewable sources will account for nearly 50% by 2030.

"This plan showcases Vietnam's macroeconomic growth ambitions — with robust plans to expand its generation capacity and the associated power sector infrastructure required to cater to the country's growing energy demand," said Kanika Chawla chief of staff at Sustainable Energy for All, the United Nations' sustainable energy unit.

While Vietnam's new energy plan mandates that no new coal-fired power plants will be built after 2030 as the country transitions to cleaner fuels, total generation capacity from coal power will still rise by 2030, contributing some 20% of total energy production — down from the current 30.8%.

By 2050, Vietnam will stop using coal for power generation, switching all coal plants to using biomass and ammonia, according to the plan.

The continued reliance on fossil fuels and burning biomass such as rice husk and residue from sugar cane farms, as well as the switch to build new infrastructure for gas-powered plants, has experts worried.

In July 2022, Vietnam enshrined in law a pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Late last year the Group of Seven advanced economies promised to provide \$15.5 billion to help it end its reliance on coal-fired power plants as a part of a Just Energy Transition Partnership or JETP. Such projects have offered similar incentives to South Africa and Indonesia. Vietnam pledged to phase out coal power by 2040 at the United Nations climate change conference in Glasgow in 2021.

"While coal remains part of the energy mix, it is a marked shift from the coal dependence that Vietnam sees today," said Chawla. "A definite phase down in share of energy mix and future emissions, in line with the JETP, even as absolute quantities of thermal power are largely unchanged."

Vietnam has also drawn criticism for cracking down on environmental campaigns. The German government has warned that the recent detention of prominent environmental campaigner Hoang Thi Minh Hong, the fifth activist to be arrested in the past two years, could endanger a recent multi-billion-dollar deal to

help the country phase out coal use.

The gradual shift away from coal won't wean Vietnam from fossil fuels, given its goal of expanding use of LNG — cooled natural gas that is made predominantly of methane whose production and transportation leaks contribute to global warming.

Demand for LNG — itself viewed as a legacy industry to be phased out — has soared with disruptions to natural gas supplies from Russia due to the war in Ukraine. That means higher prices and less secure supplies.

"If implemented, it would make it one of the largest gas users in the region," said Aditya Lolla, Asia program lead at independent energy think tank Ember. "Any disruption to gas supply, even if they emanate due to reasons outside of Vietnam's control, may potentially push the country back to coal if alternate renewable energy capacity is not ramped up soon."

Financing is another challenge since the plan calls for spending nearly \$135 billion on new power plants and electricity grids from now until 2030.

Investors favor renewable energy sources, said Trang Nyguyen, leader of Climateworks Centre's Southeast Asia team.

"It's good that the plan gives clarity for investors. However, a big risk is that LNG assets will become stranded, as it is happening now with coal. How to mobilize enough investments in something that may not be viable in the next decade or so is a challenge that I see," she said.

Vietnam, which has rapidly industrialized and made electricity available to nearly its entire population, has made huge strides in expanding use of renewable energy. It fueled half of the country's electricity output in 2022, up from just a quarter a decade earlier. But upgrades to the power grid haven't kept up.

What's needed is a revamp of the entire power system, "with a plan to develop and integrate renewables into the power system holistically," Lolla said, noting the plan will likely result in short-term electricity rate hikes, even though it will stabilize prices and the power supply in the longer term.

"PDP8's emphasis on expansion and modernization of the grid also helps as it means fewer outages, enhanced grid stability and overall improved energy reliability for households and businesses," he said. "First and foremost, it means increased access to clean energy and reduction in emissions for the consumers."

Associated Press video journalist Hau Dinh contributed from Hanoi, Vietnam.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Greece: 59 migrants dead, dozens feared missing after fishing vessel capsizes

By DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — At least 59 people have died and dozens are feared missing off the coast of southern Greece after a fishing boat carrying migrants capsized and sank, authorities said Wednesday.

A large search and rescue operation was launched in the area. Authorities said 104 people have been rescued so far following the nighttime incident some 75 kilometers (46 miles) southwest of Greece's southern Peloponnese region.

Four of the survivors were hospitalized with symptoms of hypothermia. It was unclear how many passengers might remain missing at sea after the 59 bodies were recovered, the Greek coast guard said.

Six coast guard vessels, a navy frigate, a military transport plane, an air force helicopter, several private vessels and a drone from the European Union border protection agency, Frontex, were taking part in the ongoing search.

The Italy-bound boat is believed to have sailed from the Tobruk area in eastern Libya. The Italian coast guard first alerted Greek authorities and Frontex about the approaching vessel on Tuesday.

At the southern port of Kalamata, dozens of rescued migrants were taken to sheltered areas set up by the

ambulance services and the United Nations Refugee Agency to receive dry clothes and medical attention.

Libyan authorities have launched a major crackdown on migrants earlier this month across eastern Libya. Activists have said several thousand migrants, including Egyptians, Syrians, Sudanese and Pakistanis, have been detained. Libyan authorities deported many Egyptians to their home country through a land crossing point.

In western Libya, authorities have raided migrant hubs in the capital, Tripoli, and other towns over the past few weeks. At least 1,800 migrants were detained and taken to government-run detention centers, according to the U.N. refugee agency.

Mediterranean smugglers are increasingly taking larger boats into international waters off the Greek mainland to try to avoid local coast guard patrols.

On Sunday, 90 migrants on a U.S.-flagged yacht were rescued in the area after they made a distress call.

Separately Wednesday, a yacht with 81 migrants on board was towed to a port on the south coast of Greece's island of Crete after authorities received a distress call.

Follow AP stories on global migration at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Russia steps up aerial strikes on Ukraine, killing at least 6 amid Kyiv counteroffensive

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces fired cruise missiles at the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa and shelled the eastern Donetsk region early Wednesday, killing at least six people and damaging dozens of homes, regional Ukrainian officials said.

Russian forces have stepped up aerial strikes in their nearly 16-month war, a Ukrainian military spokesman said, while the country's armed forces have reported limited gains in the early stages of a counteroffensive to take back the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine's territory that is under Russian control.

In Odesa, three food warehouse employees were killed in a strike that also damaged homes, shops and cafes in the city's downtown, the regional administration said on Facebook. Another 13 people were injured.

Search teams were looking for possible survivors under the rubble of the warehouse, it said.

The attack on the port city, launched from the Black Sea, was the second in a week and involved four Kalibr cruise missiles, three of which were intercepted by air defenses, the administration said.

In eastern Ukraine, Donetsk province governor Pavlo Kyrylenko wrote on Telegram that at least three people died after shelling destroyed seven homes and damaged dozens more in the cities of Kramatorsk and Kostiantynivka.

Ten towns and villages along the front line in Donetsk were struck as Kyiv's troops slowly advance, according to Ukraine's presidential office.

A missile hit the Ukrainian-controlled city of Kramatorsk, where Kyiv's forces are headquartered, killing two civilians and wounding two others while damaging 29 homes, the presidential office said. Russian shelling of Kostiantynivka killed one civilian, with 57 houses damaged, it added.

Andriy Kovalov, a spokesperson for the General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces, said the Russian military increased missile and aerial strikes as Kyiv's forces intensify attacks along the war's 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line and claim some modest gains at the beginning of their counteroffensive.

In a briefing, he said strikes on the Kharkiv, Donetsk and Kirovohrad regions, in addition to the Odesa region, involved Kh-22 cruise missiles, sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles, and Iranian-made Shahed drones. Nine were intercepted.

Kovalov said Ukrainian forces had made advances in several sections and fighting was continuing in or near at least two Donetsk province communities.

Britain's Ministry of Defense, which has regularly issued updates on the conflict, wrote on Twitter that southern Ukraine "has often been more permissible for Russian air operations" compared with other parts of the front.

Separately, the mayor of the central city of Kryvyi Rih, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown, said the death toll from a Russian strike that hit an apartment building a day earlier had risen to 12.

Ukrainian authorities continued to rescue people from the flooded areas of southern Ukraine's partially Russian-occupied Kherson region following the destruction of the Kakhovka dam last week.

A total of 28 settlements on the Ukrainian-held western bank of the Dnieper River remain under water, and nearly 2,800 people have been taken to safety so far, the presidential office said, adding that the rescue effort was taking place under relentless Russian shelling.

The Ukrainian-controlled areas of the Kherson region came under artillery fire 57 times over the past 24 hours, the presidential office said.

Associated Press writer Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Democrats and Republicans share core values but still distrust each other

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans on the right and the left have a lot more in common than they might think — including their strong distrust of each other.

A survey published on Wednesday finds that when asked about core values including fairness, compassion and personal responsibility, about nine in 10 Democrats and Republicans agreed they were very or extremely important. Yet only about a third of either group said they believed the same was true for the opposing party.

The results of the survey, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago and the nonprofit group Starts With Us, reveal a stark truth at the source of the polarization that has a powerful grip on American politics: While most Americans agree on the core principles underlying American democracy, they no longer recognize that the other side also holds those values.

"This is a hidden opportunity for Americans to reestablish a sense of shared values," said Tom Fishman, chief executive at Starts With Us, a nonpartisan organization that works to bridge political polarization. Americans from both parties need to understand that they still share common values, he said, and to recognize their misconceptions about the opposing party.

Americans have a long tradition of quarrelsome politics, dating back to before the Boston Tea Party. But with the notable exception of the Civil War, a sense of unity has kept those forces of division at bay. Experts who study partisanship and trust say that while a certain amount of polarization is natural, it can become a significant problem when it's exploited by political parties or when one party no longer views the other as legitimate opposition but as an enemy.

A number of factors are cited as possible causes for an increase in division, including the decline and fragmentation of legitimate news sources, politicians who stoke distrust, and social media platforms that spread misinformation while too often sorting users into echo chambers where they seldom encounter an opposing view.

This loss of unity is tied to growing distrust in the media, government, science and public health while political anger has sometimes boiled over into hate speech or violence like that seen on Jan. 6, 2021, when supporters of then-President Donald Trump violently attacked the U.S. Capitol in a bid to overturn the Republican's 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

"When you get worried is when polarization turns into dehumanization — a sense that the other is somehow less than human, or evil, or unable to share your decent human values," said Nealin Parker, executive director of Common Ground USA, a group that works to resolve conflict by building trust among Americans. "That should be concerning to anybody, because those are the necessary psychological steps

to doing harm to each other.”

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of six principles: personal responsibility, fair enforcement of the law, representative government, government accountability, compassion and respect across differences, and learning from the past. In each case, about 90% of both Democrats and Republicans rated these values as very or extremely important.

When asked if members of the opposing party shared those values, however, about two-thirds of respondents said no.

For example, while 91% of Republicans said they think citizens should learn from the past to improve the country, only 29% of Democrats said they believed that to be true of GOP voters. And while only 31% of Republicans say Democrats value government accountability, 90% of Democratic respondents said they consider it very or extremely important.

The findings reflect a phenomenon known as “affective polarization,” in which disagreements are based on animosity and a lack of trust instead of an actual debate over values or policy. Julia Minson, a professor who studies conflict and collaboration at Harvard University’s Harvard Kennedy School, said recognizing common values is a good start to bridging America’s divides.

Too often, Minson said, “We ascribe negative things to people we disagree with. We see them as an adversary that doesn’t want to be a partner. It’s very much about emotions and trust and largely divorced from actual differences.”

The nationwide survey of 1,003 adults was conducted May 11-15 using NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Silvio Berlusconi’s polarizing force in Italy remains strong as his funeral is held in Milan

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Silvio Berlusconi’s legacy — positive or negative — was being hotly debated among Italians as the nation prepared for a national day of mourning and a state funeral in Milan’s Gothic-era Duomo cathedral on Wednesday.

Most Italians identify Berlusconi, a media mogul, soccer entrepreneur and three-time former premier, as the most influential figure in Italy over recent decades. But they remain sharply divided on whether his influence was for the better or worse. They are split over whether the three-time former premier merits all the fuss and ceremony.

Berlusconi died at the age of 86 on Monday in a Milan hospital where he was being treated for chronic leukemia. His family held a private wake Tuesday at one of Berlusconi’s villas near Milan, the city where he made his billions as the head of a media empire before entering politics in 1994.

Political opponents are questioning not only the decisions of Premier Giorgia Meloni’s government to hold a state funeral — an honor that can be afforded all former premiers — but to also declare a national day of mourning, which is more rarely invoked. In the case of the latter, flags are flown at half-staff and all political events not involving charity are put on hold, but it is otherwise business as usual.

“Berlusconi split Italy, he insulted adversaries for 30 years, he criminalized the magistrates and he didn’t recognize laws. What are we talking about?” journalist Marco Travaglio, a long-time Berlusconi critic and co-founder of the *il Fatto Quotidiano* daily, told private La7 TV on Monday.

Nevertheless, thousands of Italians are expected to fill the piazza outside Milan’s Duomo to follow the funeral on two maxi-screens, while family members, political allies and opponents gather inside.

Hungarian President Viktor Orban is among the highest-ranking of the foreign dignitaries whose attendance at the funeral is confirmed.

Meloni, who got her first government experience as a minister in a Berlusconi coalition, also will attend, along with League leader Matteo Salvini, whose party has long been allied with Berlusconi’s Forza Italia.

Opposition politicians also are expected in a show of respect for a political figure with whom many had sparred.

Berlusconi is widely recognized as a precursor to the type of populist politics that later would bring Donald Trump to power in the United States, both using their high profile as businessmen to springboard into the political arena, upending politics as usual along the way.

Supporters of Berlusconi's legacy cite his success in unifying the Italian center-right after the collapse of the post-war political landscape with the 1990s "Clean Hands" corruption scandal. They also see his years as leader as periods of stabilization, after years of quickly rotating governments, while admiring his bold rule-breaking and irreverence, perhaps especially in the face of other global leaders.

"He did many big and small things, while suffering a mediatic and judicial aggression that only Craxi before him had endured," Stefania Craxi, a senator in Berlusconi's party and the daughter of late Italian leader Bettino Craxi told private TV La7 on Tuesday. Her father died in exile in Tunisia in 2000 after being convicted in absentia for involvement in illegal party financing.

Berlusconi's detractors' list of political damage is long, including conflicts of interest relating to his media empire, dozens of trials mostly for business dealings, revelations of sex-fueled bunga-bunga parties at his villa near Milan and questionable associations, including his enduring friendship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

"He is not a leader who helped us grow," said Beppe Severgnini, a long-time foreign correspondent and writer for Corriere della Sera. "He tapped all of our weaknesses: moral, fiscal, sexual, everything."

How Europe is leading the world in the push to regulate AI

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Authorities worldwide are racing to rein in artificial intelligence, including in the European Union, where groundbreaking legislation is set to pass a key hurdle Wednesday.

European Parliament lawmakers are due to vote on the proposal — including controversial amendments on facial recognition — as it heads toward passage.

A yearslong effort by Brussels to draw up guardrails for AI has taken on more urgency as rapid advances in chatbots like ChatGPT show the benefits the emerging technology can bring — and the new perils it poses.

Here's a look at the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act:

HOW DO THE RULES WORK?

The measure, first proposed in 2021, will govern any product or service that uses an artificial intelligence system. The act will classify AI systems according to four levels of risk, from minimal to unacceptable.

Riskier applications, such as for hiring or tech targeted to children, will face tougher requirements, including being more transparent and using accurate data.

Violations will draw fines of up to 30 million euros (\$33 million) or 6% of a company's annual global revenue, which in the case of tech companies like Google and Microsoft could amount to billions.

It will be up to the EU's 27 member states to enforce the rules.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

One of the EU's main goals is to guard against any AI threats to health and safety and protect fundamental rights and values.

That means some AI uses are an absolute no-no, such as "social scoring" systems that judge people based on their behavior.

Also forbidden is AI that exploits vulnerable people, including children, or uses subliminal manipulation that can result in harm, for example, an interactive talking toy that encourages dangerous behavior.

Predictive policing tools, which crunch data to forecast who will commit crimes, is also out.

Lawmakers beefed up the original proposal from the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, by widening the ban on remote facial recognition and biometric identification in public. The technology scans passers-by and uses AI to match their faces or other physical traits to a database.

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But it faces a last-minute challenge after a center-right party added an amendment allowing law enforcement exceptions such as finding missing children, identifying suspects involved in serious crimes or preventing terrorist threats.

"We don't want mass surveillance, we don't want social scoring, we don't want predictive policing in the European Union, full stop. That's what China does, not us," Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian member of the European Parliament who is co-leading its work on the AI Act, said Tuesday.

AI systems used in categories like employment and education, which would affect the course of a person's life, face tough requirements such as being transparent with users and taking steps to assess and reduce risks of bias from algorithms.

Most AI systems, such as video games or spam filters, fall into the low- or no-risk category, the commission says.

WHAT ABOUT CHATGPT?

The original measure barely mentioned chatbots, mainly by requiring them to be labeled so users know they're interacting with a machine. Negotiators later added provisions to cover general purpose AI like ChatGPT after it exploded in popularity, subjecting that technology to some of the same requirements as high-risk systems.

One key addition is a requirement to thoroughly document any copyright material used to teach AI systems how to generate text, images, video and music that resemble human work.

That would let content creators know if their blog posts, digital books, scientific articles or songs have been used to train algorithms that power systems like ChatGPT. Then they could decide whether their work has been copied and seek redress.

WHY ARE THE EU RULES SO IMPORTANT?

The European Union isn't a big player in cutting-edge AI development. That role is taken by the U.S. and China. But Brussels often plays a trend-setting role with regulations that tend to become de facto global standards and has become a pioneer in efforts to target the power of large tech companies.

The sheer size of the EU's single market, with 450 million consumers, makes it easier for companies to comply than develop different products for different regions, experts say.

But it's not just a crackdown. By laying down common rules for AI, Brussels is also trying to develop the market by instilling confidence among users.

"The fact this is regulation that can be enforced and companies will be held liable is significant" because other places like the United States, Singapore and Britain have merely offered "guidance and recommendations," said Kris Shrishak, a technologist and senior fellow at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

"Other countries might want to adapt and copy" the EU rules, he said.

Others are playing catch up. Britain, which left the EU in 2020, is jockeying for a position in AI leadership. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak plans to host a world summit on AI safety this fall.

"I want to make the U.K. not just the intellectual home but the geographical home of global AI safety regulation," Sunak said at a tech conference this week.

Britain's summit will bring together people from "academia, business and governments from around the world" to work on "a multilateral framework," he said.

WHAT'S NEXT?

It could be years before the rules fully take effect. The vote will be followed by three-way negotiations involving member countries, the Parliament and the European Commission, possibly facing more changes as they try to agree on the wording.

Final approval is expected by the end of this year, followed by a grace period for companies and organizations to adapt, often around two years.

To fill the gap before the legislation takes effect, Europe and the U.S. are drawing up a voluntary code of conduct that officials promised at the end of May would be drafted within weeks and could be expanded to other "like-minded countries."

This story has been corrected to show that Kris Shrishak's last name was misspelled.

18-year-old trainee accused of shooting 3 soldiers at firing range on Japanese army base, killing 2

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — An 18-year-old army trainee shot three fellow soldiers at a firing range on a Japanese army base Wednesday, killing two of them, officials said.

The suspect was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder at the scene in Gifu prefecture in central Japan, police said.

The suspect fired a rifle at the soldiers during a shooting exercise at the Hino Kihon firing range, police said.

The Ground Self Defense Force, Japan's army, confirmed that two of those wounded were later pronounced dead at a hospital.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Yasunori Morishita said the suspect joined the military in April and the three soldiers were assisting his shooting exercise as instructors.

"An organization that handles weapons should never allow an incident like this to happen," Morishita said at a news conference. "As head of the army, I take this very seriously."

Morishita said he has ordered a temporary suspension of exercises involving shooting and explosives across the country while the army investigates and prepares safety measures to prevent a recurrence.

A number of other people were believed to be participating in the training when the shooting occurred, but details are still under investigation, an army official said on condition of anonymity, citing protocol.

Japan has been known for its safety, with strict gun control laws, but high-profile violence has occurred in recent years, including shootings and random knifings on subways and arson attacks, and there is growing concern about homemade guns and explosives.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was almost hit by a pipe bomb thrown by a person at an election campaign venue in April.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated in July 2022 by an attacker using a handmade gun.

Last month, a man was arrested after he allegedly shot two police officers to death after killing two women with a knife in Nagano prefecture.

An Amazon rainforest rite of passage in threatened territory

By LUCAS DUMPHREYS and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

ALTO RIO GUAMA INDIGENOUS TERRITORY, Brazil (AP) — The Indigenous adolescents danced in a circle under the thatched-roof hut from nearly dawn to dusk while parents looked on from the perimeter. Some of the adults smoked tobacco mixed with the wood from a local tree in Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

The seemingly endless loop of the procession, taking place over six long days this month, was leaving some Temb  Tenehara youngsters with swollen and bandaged feet. They were receiving little to eat and spending each night sleeping in hammocks slung in the hut. But in the Alto Rio Guama territory, it is all part of a vital rite of passage known as "Wyra'whaw."

Girls taking part in the coming-of-age ritual had already had their first period. Boys' voices had begun to slip into lower registers. Upon the final day, the girls and boys would be viewed by the Teko-Haw village as women and men, and assume their roles leading the community into an uncertain future.

"We know of other ethnic (Indigenous) groups in Brazil that have already lost their culture, their tradition, their language. So we have this concern," Sergio Muti Temb , leader of the Temb  people in the territory, told The Associated Press. Indigenous people in the Brazilian Amazon customarily adopt their ethnic group's name as their surname.

Their culture has been increasingly threatened over recent years. The Alto Rio Guama territory is a 280,000-hectare (1,081-square-mile) triangle of preserved forest surrounded by severely logged landscape in the northeastern Amazon, home to 2,500 people of the Temb , Timbira and Kaapor ethnicities.

But it has also been occupied by some 1,600 non-Indigenous settlers. Some of those invaders have

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been there for decades. Many log the territory's trees or grow marijuana, according to public prosecutors in Para state.

The local Indigenous people already patrol and try to expel outsiders themselves. With limited capacity and authority, however, they have been eager for help. State and federal authorities last month put into motion a plan to remove them. The operation represents the first effort under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to remove landgrabbers, following an initiative to remove illegal gold miners from the Yanomami people's territory.

Authorities threatened forcible expulsion of settlers who failed to leave, and pledged to eliminate access roads and irregular installations, according to a prosecutors' statement detailing plans. As of Monday, 90% of settlers had voluntarily departed, with rain-ravaged roads impeding the rest, according to a statement from the general secretariat of Brazil's presidency.

"The expectation is that, by the end of the week, we can complete the total eviction," Nilton Tubino, the operation's coordinator, was quoted as saying in the statement.

Sergio Muti Temb e, the leader, said the government's effort came not a moment too soon, and that his people are hopeful it will ensure the future of both their land and their customs.

On the second to last day of the Wyr whaw ritual, mothers painted their children's bodies with the juice of the genipap fruit. Within hours, it had dyed their skin black; girls were transformed from head to toe, while boys exhibited designs and an upside-down triangle across the lower half of their face, almost resembling a beard.

The following morning, each adorned adolescent was given a white headband with dangling feathers. Pairs of boys and girls locked arms as they skipped barefoot around villagers gathered in the circle's center, and made their final approach to adulthood.

Billier reported from Rio de Janeiro. AP writer Mauricio Savarese contributed from Sao Paulo.

As conditions for Syrians worsen, aid organizations struggle to catch the world's attention again

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BAR ELIAS, Lebanon (AP) — Six months after she got the call informing her that her U.N. assistance would be cut, Najwa al-Jassem is struggling to feed her four children and pay rent for their tent in a Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley.

She once received food rations and cash that covered most of their modest monthly expenses. The family now only gets the equivalent of \$20 a month, which just covers the rent for their cramped tent.

Her husband gets only sporadic day labor and "my kids are too young for me to send them to work the fields," she told The Associated Press in the camp near the town of Bar Elias. "We're eating one meal a day."

Aid agencies will struggle to draw the world's attention back to the plight of Syrians like al-Jassem on Wednesday at an annual donor conference hosted by the European Union in Brussels for humanitarian aid to respond to the Syrian crisis.

Funding from the two-day conference will also go toward providing aid to Syrians within the war-torn country and to some 5.7 million Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

This year, organizers aim to raise some \$11.2 billion, though humanitarian officials acknowledged that pledges will likely fall short.

On Tuesday, a day before the conference, the World Food Program announced that it was faced with an "unprecedented funding crisis" and would cut aid to 2.5 million out of the 5.5 million people in Syria who had been receiving food assistance.

The conference comes as Syria's protracted uprising-turned-civil-conflict has entered its 13th year, and after a deadly 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked large swaths of Syria in February, further compounding its misery. The World Bank estimated over \$5 billion in damage s, as the quake destroyed homes and

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hospitals and further crippled Syria's poor power and water infrastructure.

It also comes at a politically precarious time for refugees living in neighboring countries. Syrian President Bashar Assad recently received a major political lifeline with the return of Damascus to the Arab League, and Syria's neighbors have, in return, called for a mass repatriation of refugees.

Anti-refugee rhetoric has surged in neighboring Lebanon and Turkey, both dealing with economic and political crises.

In Lebanon, where officials have put the blame for the country's economic crisis onto the country's estimated 1.5 million refugees, authorities have imposed curfews on refugees and restricted their ability to rent homes. Rights groups have said the Lebanese military has deported hundreds of Syrian refugees in recent months.

In Turkey, where Syrians were once welcomed with compassion, repatriation of the roughly 3.7 million refugees became a top theme in last month's presidential and parliamentary elections, which ended in a new term for incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Erdogan's government for years defended its open-door policy, but has in recent years been building housing developments in areas of northwestern Syria controlled by Ankara-backed Syrian opposition groups, with the stated aim of encouraging refugee returns. Ankara and Damascus have also been holding talks in Moscow to improve strained relations.

The government has also carried out sporadic forcible deportations, while Erdogan's challengers took a harder line, vowing to deport refugees en masse.

While some Syrian refugees have voluntarily returned from Turkey and Lebanon, most say the situation is too volatile.

At the camp in Lebanon, Fteim Al-Janoud struggled to hold back her tears as she talked about how she and her husband can only afford to send one of her six children to school. But the refugee from Syria's northern Aleppo province said the situation there is even worse, both in terms of security and material concerns.

"If the conditions were good and if our homes were fixed so we could live peacefully and comfortably, we wouldn't have a problem going back to Syria, even with Assad still there," she said.

Despite the deteriorating situation for Syrians, aid has dwindled in recent years, as donors rushed to support over 5 million Ukrainian refugees and over 7 million internally displaced in the conflict-hit European country. The war in Ukraine, a global bread basket, also sparked a food inflation surge on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic that rocked the global economy for years.

"We see needs are increasing, and we also see that that donor funding is gradually going down," said Ivo Freijsen, the U.N. refugee agency's representative to Lebanon, where some 90% of refugees live in extreme poverty and are dependent on aid.

"From a humanitarian point of view, it means that more people will be suffering," he said. "We need to be seeking to see funding levels stay at the same level and actually increase."

At last year's conference in Brussels, donors pledged \$6.7 billion, falling billions short of the U.N.'s \$10.5 billion appeal, split almost evenly to assist Syrians inside the war-torn country and refugees. The funding shortage forced hospitals in opposition-held northwestern Syria to cut back services, while the U.N. World Food Program cut the size of its monthly rations for the more than 1 million people it serves in that area.

"We know that Ukraine has taken a big toll," said U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Lebanon Imran Riza. "We know that Sudan has now become also quite a priority. It's a difficult time and it's a time that's also following COVID and everything else that happened that hit economies so hard across the globe."

Given those difficulties, he said international donors need to "move towards much more sustainable interventions" rather than remaining in crisis mode.

At the camp in the Bekaa Valley, Al-Jassem says she's struggling to cope with mounting debts she and her husband have to cover unpaid rent and medical expenses.

But she's more worried about the well-being of her children, who have lived their entire lives in a refugee camp in worsening conditions.

meeting.

If Republicans pass the budget cuts Vos proposed, the UW System could come up nearly half a billion dollars short of what school officials say they need over the next two years.

The fallout could land on the backs of students as UW leaders look to fill gaps in funding.

Rothman proposed tuition and fees hikes ranging from 3% to 5.4% for undergraduates across the 13 colleges in the UW System after Evers proposed giving UW \$130 million less than it wanted.

Republicans on the finance committee have largely ignored Evers' proposals, scrapping more than 500 of the governor's budget items last month including proposals for a cabinet-level chief equity officer, 18 equity officers in state agencies and a state-funded diversity, equity and inclusion conference.

The Legislature is expected to complete its budget plan by the end of June, at which point Evers can make adjustments using partial vetoes or send it back to lawmakers for revisions.

Associated Press writer Scott Bauer contributed to this report.

Harm Venhuizen is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Harm on Twitter.

Prosecutors: Weapons expert in Alec Baldwin case was hungover on set; defense calls case mishandled

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The weapons supervisor on the film set where Alec Baldwin shot and killed a cinematographer was drinking and smoking marijuana in the evenings during the filming of "Rust," prosecutors are alleging, saying she was likely hungover when she loaded a live bullet into the revolver that the actor used.

They leveled the accusations Friday in response to a motion filed last month by Hannah Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys that seeks to dismiss her involuntary manslaughter charge. The prosecutors accused her of having a history of reckless conduct and argued that it would be in the public interest for her to "finally be held accountable."

Jason Bowles, Gutierrez-Reed's attorney, said Tuesday that the prosecution has mishandled the case.

"The case is so weak that they now have chosen to resort to character assassination claims about Hannah," Bowles told The Associated Press. "The prosecution has abandoned the idea of doing justice and getting to the actual truth apparently."

A preliminary hearing for Gutierrez-Reed is scheduled in August. A judge is expected to decide then if there's probable cause for Gutierrez-Reed's charge to move forward.

In the response, the prosecutors also noted that they expected to decide within the next 60 days whether to recharge Baldwin, depending on the results of an analysis of the gun and its broken sear. The items were sent to the state's independent expert for further testing.

The involuntary manslaughter charge faced by Baldwin, who also was a producer on the film, was dismissed in April, with prosecutors citing new evidence and the need for more time to investigate.

Baldwin was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on the New Mexico film set in October 2021 when it went off, killing her and wounding the film's director, Joel Souza.

Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys had argued in their motion that the prosecution was "tainted by improper political motives" and that Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies and the initial special prosecutor she appointed, Andrea Reeb, "both used the tragic film set accident that resulted in the death of Halyna Hutchins as an opportunity to advance their personal interests."

The defense lawyers contend that the permanent damage done to the gun by FBI testing before the defense could examine it amounted to destruction of evidence and a violation of the court's rules of discovery. They also argued that the "selective prosecution" of Gutierrez-Reed was a violation of the equal

protection clause of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment.

New special prosecutors who were appointed after Reeb stepped down disputed those claims in their response, saying "nothing about this prosecution has or will be selective."

The prosecutors also acknowledged the unanswered question of where the live rounds found on set came from, saying they were trying to find out and that the investigation was ongoing. They also suggested there was evidence to support the theory that Gutierrez-Reed herself may be responsible and if so, more charges may follow.

They offered no specifics in the filing as to what that evidence might be.

Golden Knights blast Panthers 9-3 in Game 5 to capture first Stanley Cup title

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Golden Knights games have always been as flashy as any show on the Las Vegas Strip, the sword-fighting mascot taking the ice before what seems like a legion of players marching out through the mirrored entrance into the roar of the crowd.

If this team was ever going to win the Stanley Cup, it was going to do it with Vegas flash.

The Knights delivered just that from dazzling passes to Mark Stone's hat trick to all-out goal celebrations, capturing the young organization's first title with a 9-3 romp over the beaten up and exhausted Florida Panthers on Tuesday night.

Coach Bruce Cassidy, in a nod to the Knights' brief history, started five of the original Vegas players known as the Misfits and put the sixth on the second shift. Cassidy sounded confident the day before the game that his team would play well, and it certainly did, blowing open a one-goal game in the second period to lead 6-1. The nine goals tied the record for the most in a Cup Final.

"Vegas, you certainly know how to throw a party," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman told the crowd. "What's going on inside this arena and outside is incredible and a testament to what a great hockey market this is."

Vegas closed out the series in five games to win the cup before a delirious franchise-record crowd of 19,058 at T-Mobile Arena that drowned out the pregame introductions of forward Jonathan Marchessault and goalie Adin Hill and cheered all the way through the final buzzer.

Marchessault, who ended the postseason with a 10-game points streak, received the Conn Smythe Trophy for playoff MVP.

"I couldn't be more proud of our team, our organization," Marchessault said. "Everybody stepped up at different times and that's why we're winners."

Stone's hat trick — with the third into an empty net with 5:54 left — was the first in a Stanley Cup Final since Colorado's Peter Forsberg in 1996, also against the Panthers.

The Knights got the rest of their scoring from Nic Hague, Alec Martinez, Reilly Smith, Michael Amadio, Ivan Barbashev and Nicolas Roy. Martinez's goal in the second period came nine years to the day after he delivered the double-overtime goal in Game 5 to give the Los Angeles Kings' the cup.

Hill came through with another strong performance with 31 saves that has quickly made him a Knights fan favorite, even earning "MVP! MVP!" chants in the third period. Jack Eichel, the eight-year pro playing in his first postseason, had three assists.

"This is what everyone dreams of," Eichel said. "You come to an organization like this and the expectation is to win this thing. It's a special place to play."

As captain, Stone was the first to lift the cup before handing it over to the six Misfits to each get their turn skating with the trophy before handing it down the line to the rest of the team.

"Unbelievable," Stone said. "The look in my teammates' eyes when I got it, one of the craziest feelings I've ever had. I can't even describe the feelings in my stomach right now. It's everything you can imagine."

Aaron Ekblad, Sam Reinhart and Sam Bennett scored for Florida, and Sergei Bobrovsky was overwhelmed in another tough performance against Vegas — allowing eight goals on 30 shots on goal — after carrying

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Florida to the final. Missing from the lineup was star forward Matthew Tkachuk after playing injured in Game 4.

"It was a privilege for me to play with them and fight with them," Bobrovsky said. "It's definitely tough to lose that way and end the season that way. But we have done a fantastic job and I want to stick to that."

The Knights have set the standard of what an expansion franchise should look like, making the Cup Final in their first season and the playoffs in every year but one. Six players remain from the initial 2017-18 team that lost in five games to the Washington Capitals in the final.

Those players watched the Capitals skate with the Stanley Cup that night, and then they got the chance to do the same Tuesday to fulfill owner Bill Foley's quest to win the championship in the sixth year.

"We waited a long time for that moment to come back." Marchessault said. "We wanted to make sure we cash in this time."

By creating such a lofty standard at the outset, the Knights played with high expectations, but repeatedly fell short despite four runs to at least the NHL semifinals – until Game 5 against the Panthers.

This is Las Vegas' second pro title in nine months – the Aces claimed the WNBA championship in September – and continues the stunning growth of a sports market that was limited largely to prize fights, UNLV athletics, NASCAR and lots of golf before the Golden Knights took the city by storm. The Raiders began playing here in 2020, the Oakland Athletics appear headed to the desert, Las Vegas will host a Formula One race this year and the Super Bowl will be at Allegiant Stadium in February.

As for the Knights, their connection to Las Vegas was sealed ever since the shooting Oct. 1, 2017, that took 60 lives. They played an integral role in helping the city heal, reaching out to the community off the ice and winning big on it.

Beating Florida justified the many moves Knights management made to remake the roster over the years. Stone, Eichel and Alex Pietrangelo are the most notable players Vegas has acquired to get to this moment.

And Cassidy, hired a week after getting fired by the Boston Bruins last year, proved to be the coach to get them there.

"He came in, brought an intensity to our locker room that maybe we needed," Stone said. "He wanted to win as badly as anybody else in that locker room."

Cassidy seemingly pushing all the right buttons in helping Vegas become the Western Conference's top seed and then the NHL's champion.

"It's a great story — very, very grateful to get another opportunity," Cassidy said. "I'm just here to do my job and it worked out well."

The Knights also won with an unlikely goalie in Hill, who was injured when the playoffs began. Laurent Brossoit was the starter until going out with an injury in Game 3 of the second-round series against the Edmonton Oilers, and then Hill got his chance.

"You dream about it every day growing up as a child." Hill said. "To be here with this group of guys, in this city, in this building, is a dream come true."

AP NHL playoffs: <https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

To fight berry-busting fruit flies, researchers focus on sterilizing the bugs

By MELINA WALLING Associated Press

Paul Nelson is used to doing battle with an invasive fruit fly called the spotted wing drosophila, a pest that one year ruined more than half the berries on the Minnesota farm he and his team run. In recent years, they've cut their losses closer to 5%, but it's been labor-intensive and expensive.

"It's a pest that if you're not willing to stick the time into it, it's going to take over your farm," said Nelson, the head grower at Untiedt's, a vegetable and fruit operation about an hour west of Minneapolis.

Nelson and other growers may someday get a new tool as a result of research at North Carolina State

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University into the insects, which ruin the berries by laying their eggs in them and have been estimated to cost growers hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The researchers, using a concept called "gene drive," manipulated the insects' DNA so that the female offspring would be sterile, and the method they used to achieve it significantly reduced the chance that a population could rebound.

The researchers, whose work was published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found if they bred one of their modified flies with a non-modified fly, up to 99% of the offspring would inherit the sterility trait. They used mathematical modeling to show that if they released one modified fruit fly for every four that were not and did that every two weeks, they could collapse a population in about five months.

Genetically modifying insects as a form of pest control isn't a new idea. Scientists have already released genetically modified mosquitoes, for instance, which mate with the native population to produce offspring that die before adulthood to hold down populations and help combat the spread of insect-borne diseases like yellow fever, dengue and Zika viruses. But the technology hasn't taken off as widely in agriculture because pesticides have been cheaper and easier to deploy.

Max Scott, a professor of entomology and a co-author of the paper, said some methods of releasing genetically modified insects to curb populations would become expensive if applied on a large scale because it has to be done over and over again before pests are wiped out. But he said his team's method, which hinges on an idea called "gene drive," more quickly facilitates the spread of sterility throughout successive generations, and that could mean fewer times the modified bugs need to be released.

"We're really excited about this," Scott said. "The system is working really efficiently."

If the researchers' genetic process works in the field, it could be an important addition to farmers' arsenal of pest management techniques against a persistent bug that can wipe out 20-30% of a raspberry yield even after pesticide use, said Bill Hutchison, a professor and extension entomologist with the University of Minnesota. And the fight against pests has been growing with climate change, he added, as warmer winters are allowing invasive species like the spotted wing drosophila to better survive the winter and extend their range for overwintering north.

At Untiedt's, Nelson said he's noticed warmer winters and earlier springs. He's still waiting to see this year's first fruit flies, but they've been coming earlier each year to the farm's roughly 35 acres of strawberries, raspberries and tomatoes, he said.

"For years they kept telling us you'll never see (spotted wing drosophila) in your June-bearing strawberries because they're done too early. That's not true. We've found them in our June-bearing strawberries," he said.

To combat the pests, Nelson and his team have used pesticides and traps and spend significant time looking for the tiny bugs. Hutchison said some farmers use ventilated netting or plastic that effectively creates a type of greenhouse over their fruits. But all those methods have drawbacks. Pesticides can kill beneficial insects, and spraying can require farmers who let people pick their own berries halt operations for a few days. Netting can be tough to set up, and plastic coverings can overheat crops.

Luciano Matzkin, an associate professor of entomology at the University of Arizona, studies drosophila and other pest species with an eye toward agriculture. Matzkin, who was not part of the study, said Scott's team's focus on stopping the pest by sterilizing females solved a problem that sometimes occurs with gene drive technology — that a lucky gene mutation can arise and get passed down, resisting what scientists were hoping to achieve.

Lyric Bartholomay, a professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies integrated pest management and public health entomology who was not part of the study, said "increasingly tailored genetic approaches" will be necessary in the future to protect crops and people from pests, especially as insecticide resistance increases.

The research is years away from practical application. Scott and his team are moving on to more lab trials to see if their mathematical modeling is correct, and would then go through a regulatory process before moving to field trials. More research will also be needed to take into account considerations like

regional genetic variation within the same species and the ecological impact of interactions with other species, something both Scott and Matzkin highlighted.

Matzkin said if there are no negative environmental risks, "a successful bio-control approach is always preferable" to pesticides, which have significant environmental consequences and costs of their own. That's why, he says, entomology departments across the country are studying the biology and ecology of the insects at the same time that other researchers work on transgenic approaches to population control in a wide array of pests.

In the meantime, Nelson will wait to see whether new solutions arise to help him manage pests. He farms with his 24-year-old son and says he's concerned about the future.

"The experts are all going to tell us what's going on. But as we farm, we look at it, how is this going to change things for the next generation?" he asked. "If we lose our sales on our crops of berries, that's a very large deal for our farm."

Follow Melina Walling on Twitter at @MelinaWalling

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Historic Boston church where the Revolution was sparked to host its first play

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Old North Church played a pivotal role in the nation's fight for independence and has continued to be an active house of worship for 300 years.

Today, one of Boston's most popular tourist attractions is also, for the first time, a theater hosting an original play.

"Revolution's Edge," set the day before the start of the American Revolution, is a dramatic imagining of the interactions of three real people with different views whose lives are about to be upended by the impending war, and explores what the events will mean for their families.

The play opening Thursday is set just hours before two men hung two lanterns in the church's bell tower on April 18, 1775 — to signal that British soldiers were heading across the Charles River, and to Lexington and Concord. The event has been immortalized in the line "One if by land, and two if by sea" in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1860 poem "Paul Revere's Ride."

"This is a moment of intense drama and a moment of pivotal importance to the lives of these three men," said playwright Patrick Gabridge.

One of the characters is Minister Mather Byles Jr., who remains loyal to the British crown while another, vestry member Capt. John Pulling Jr., is an ardent Patriot, and one of the two men who would hang the lanterns in the tower.

Cato, who does not have a last name, is a man enslaved by Byles.

Gabridge is the producing artistic director of Plays in Place, an organization that works with historic sites and cultural institutions to create site-specific plays and presentations. To ensure historical accuracy, he did six months of painstaking research into historical archives.

"In the end, it has to be a dramatic play that's going to engage an audience and it has to be a play that's going to work for a modern ear," he said. "But we want to make sure we're not telling things that we know aren't true."

A play seemed like a natural way to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the church located in Boston's North End, said Nikki Stewart, the executive director of Old North Illuminated, the secular nonprofit that operates the historic site, which draws about 500,000 tourists per year and is also still home to an active Episcopal congregation.

The organization's primary purpose is to teach — and a play aligns with that perfectly, she said.

"The kids sometimes go to school without having breakfast," she explained. "Their teacher would sometimes call me and ask why they didn't bring a sandwich with them, and I would say it's because I have nothing in the pantry."

Associated Press writer Abby Sewell in Beirut contributed to this report.

Republicans delay vote on University of Wisconsin budget after promises to cut diversity funds

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Republican state lawmakers on Tuesday suspended a vote on funding for University of Wisconsin campuses, just hours after a top GOP leader promised to slash the college system's budget as part of an ongoing fight over diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, the state's top Republican, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he expected the GOP-controlled Legislature's budget-writing committee to cut all funding that the university system would use for diversity initiatives. He estimated the cuts would total \$32 million.

"I hope we have the ability to eliminate that spending. The university should have already chosen to redirect it to something that is more productive and more broadly supported," Vos said.

That generated a wave of angry reactions from Gov. Tony Evers and other Democrats. After nearly seven hours of closed-door discussions, Republicans who control the finance committee could not come to an agreement and postponed consideration of UW's budget.

Talk of university budget cuts comes just days after Republicans refused to fund the university's top building project priority — a new engineering facility on the flagship Madison campus.

Tensions between Republicans who control the Legislature and the state's university system are nothing new. But the fight this year centers on issues of free speech and UW's work to advance diversity and racial equity.

UW spokesperson Mark Pitsch said salaries for current system employees specifically tasked with working on diversity, equity and inclusion amount to roughly \$15.6 million annually. That number does not include funding for diversity events or other initiatives.

Vos has called campus diversity offices a waste of taxpayer money and said they further racial divides. Meanwhile, UW System President Jay Rothman hired a new chief diversity officer with an annual salary of \$225,000 who began work on Monday. He did not publicize the hiring at a UW Board of Regents meeting earlier this month.

"I want the university to grow and succeed, but if they are obsessed with spending all the scarce dollars that they have on programs that are clearly divisive and offer little public good, I don't know why we'd want to support that," Vos said.

The fight reflects a broader cultural battle playing out across the nation over college diversity initiatives. Republican lawmakers this year have proposed more than 30 bills in 12 states to limit diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in higher education, an Associated Press analysis found in April.

Democratic Sen. Kelda Roys, whose district includes the UW-Madison campus, called Vos petty ahead of the finance committee meeting and criticized the push to eliminate diversity initiatives.

"You'd be hard pressed to find a major organization in this country that isn't doing something to help them achieve equity and inclusion," Roys said. "The UW is the economic engine of the state. Making any cuts to the UW, especially politically motivated ones, is just going to harm every person in this state."

UW regents asked the Legislature in September for a total spending increase of nearly \$436 million in state money over the next two years, citing low revenue from a decadelong tuition freeze and rising costs due to inflation. The budget committee almost certainly will not approve that request, which was about \$130 million higher than even Evers wanted for UW, but it did not say when it would reschedule the vote.

Republican Rep. Mark Born, co-chair of the finance committee, declined to take questions at Tuesday's

"The reason we teach history at Old North Illuminated is to help people understand how we came to the present and then to help people think about and feel inspired to change the future or to impact the future," she said.

It's a message that Gabridge took to heart. The three people in the play are not fictional characters; they were real people. They walked the floors of the church's sanctuary, where the play will be performed, and sat in the pews where the audience will sit.

"I think for a play like this, we want them to appreciate that the people in our past were real people who had complex decisions to make and real lives," Gabridge said. "Sometimes we look back in history and we feel like it was easy for them to make their choices. You know, 'It was so much simpler back then.' But I think when we look at them as real complex humans, we realize that just like us today, they didn't know what was going to happen next, just like we don't."

Nathan Johnson, the actor who plays Cato, says it is one of the most important projects in which he's been involved.

Johnson, who is Black, promised himself early in his acting career that he would never play an enslaved person. But the depiction of Cato, and the importance of the play's message, made the role too compelling to pass up.

"I want everyone to see that we have all something to contribute to our history," Johnson said. "I want everyone to see that it is not a matter of white and Black. It is a matter of America. It is a matter of progress. It is a matter of stakes, it is a matter of tension. And not just for Pulling and Byles, but for Cato as well."

The 45-minute play, funded in part by a grant from the Mass Cultural Council and will have three performances per week in the church through mid-September.

"One thing I hope people will feel is that after they've seen this play, they will never see Old North the same way again," Gabridge said. "They will have a different relationship, a deeper relationship to this place than they did before."

Leader of Belarus says he wouldn't hesitate to use Russian nuclear weapons to repel aggression

MOSCOW (AP) — Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko declared Tuesday that his country had already received some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons and warned that he wouldn't hesitate to order their use if Belarus faced an act of aggression.

The brash comments from Lukashenko contradicted earlier statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who said Russian nuclear weapons would be deployed to Belarus next month and emphasized that they would remain under Moscow's exclusive control.

Earlier this year, Putin announced the planned deployment of short-range nuclear weapons to Moscow's neighbor and ally Belarus in a move widely seen as a warning to the West as it stepped up military support for Ukraine.

During his meeting Friday with Lukashenko, Putin said work on building facilities for the weapons would be completed by July 7-8, and they would be moved to Belarusian territory quickly after that.

Lukashenko said Tuesday that "everything is ready" for the Russian nuclear weapons' deployment, adding that "it could take just a few days for us to get what we had asked for and even a bit more."

Asked later by a Russian state TV host whether Belarus had already received some of the weapons, Lukashenko responded coyly by saying: "Not all of them, little by little."

"We have got the missiles and bombs from Russia," he said, adding that the Russian nuclear weapons to be deployed to Belarus are three times more powerful than the U.S. atomic bombs that were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

"God forbid I have to make a decision to use those weapons today, but there would be no hesitation if we face an aggression," Lukashenko, known for his blustering statements, said in comments released by his office earlier Tuesday.

Speaking later Tuesday in remarks broadcast by Russian state TV, he clarified that he would consult with

Putin before using any of the weapons.

"Listen, if a war starts, do you think I will look around?" he said. "I pick up the phone, and wherever he is, he picks it up," Lukashenko said in a reference to Putin. "If he calls, I pick it up any time. It's no problem at all to coordinate launching a strike."

Russian officials had no immediate comment on Lukashenko's remarks.

Lukashenko emphasized that it was he who had asked Putin to deploy Russian nuclear weapons to Belarus. He argued that the move was necessary to deter a potential aggression.

"I believe no one would be willing to fight a country that has those weapons," Lukashenko said. "Those are weapons of deterrence."

Tactical nuclear weapons are intended to destroy enemy troops and weapons on the battlefield. They have a relatively short range and a much lower yield than nuclear warheads fitted to intercontinental ballistic missiles that are capable of obliterating whole cities.

Lukashenko said that Belarus didn't need the deployment of Russia's strategic nuclear weapons to its territory. "Am I going to fight America? No," he said.

He added, however, that Belarus was readying facilities for intercontinental nuclear-tipped missiles as well, just in case.

Along with Ukraine and Kazakhstan, Belarus hosted a significant share of Soviet nuclear arsenals when they were all part of the Soviet Union. Those weapons were withdrawn to Russia after the 1991 Soviet collapse under a deal sponsored by the U.S.

Russia didn't say how many of its tactical nuclear weapons would be sent to Belarus. The U.S. government believes Russia has about 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons, which include bombs that can be carried by aircraft, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery rounds.

Russia used Belarus' territory to send its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, and has kept forces and weapons on the territory of its ally. Lukashenko said Tuesday that Belarus would bolster production of unguided rockets for multiple rocket launchers

Lukashenko, who has been in power for 29 years, has relied on Russia's political and economic support to survive months of protests, mass arrests and Western sanctions following an election in 2020 that kept him in power but was widely seen at home and abroad as rigged.

Drug deal likely sparked Denver mass shooting after Nuggets' NBA win, police say

By JESSE BEDAYN and COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A shooting in downtown Denver amid fans celebrating the Nuggets' first NBA championship win was likely sparked by a drug deal gone wrong, police said Tuesday. The violence left 10 people wounded, including one of two people arrested in connection with the shooting.

All of the injured — nine men, one woman — are expected to survive, including five or six people that police believe were bystanders not involved in the drug deal, Chief Ron Thomas said at a news conference. He said 20 rounds were fired at the scene, roughly a mile from Ball Arena where the Nuggets defeated the Miami Heat on Monday night.

A total of five handguns were found by investigators but testing still needs to be done to determine whether they were used at the shooting, the police chief said. A "significant quantity" of suspected fentanyl pills were also found at the scene, Commander Matt Clark said, along with cash.

Of the 10 people taken to the hospital, four underwent emergency surgery at the same time at Denver Health Medical Center. Five were still there on Tuesday afternoon, all in fair condition, said Dr. Eric Campton, a trauma surgeon.

The Nuggets' win drew thousands of people downtown and the shooting happened as the celebration was winding down after midnight, authorities said. Still, hundreds of police officers were massed in the area when the gunfire broke out.

Scott D'Angelo was livestreaming the celebrations when he heard several loud pops one after another, sparking pandemonium as people dove for cover or jumped over cement barricades. Police in riot gear ducked and drew their guns while yelling for people to find shelter.

Crouching on the ground, the 58-year-old said his arms were shaking with nerves and he felt an asthma attack coming. He heard a female voice not a dozen feet (3 meters) away screaming in pain. Another victim lay just beyond the first, D'Angelo said, as officers rushed to provide care.

An overhead city surveillance video without audio released by police showed officers swarming toward the apparent scene of the shooting after gunshots were heard.

The firing stopped after roughly 20 seconds, D'Angelo said after consulting his footage, which he has handed over to investigators. As ambulances arrived, D'Angelo saw bullet casings only feet from where he'd dropped to the ground.

Authorities were still investigating how many people were involved in the shooting. Two men are being held on suspicion of being felons who are barred from having a firearm, said Clark, the police commander. Neither man had lawyers listed as representing them in court records yet.

One of the men ran from the scene despite being wounded and was arrested several blocks away with a handgun and fentanyl. The other was arrested in a car in a parking lot across the street from the shooting after police found a firearm hidden in its floorboards, Clark said. No one in the car was wounded, he said.

The gunfire broke out in downtown Denver's LoDo district, which is known for its restaurants and nightlife. Yellow police tape had sealed off the area overnight Tuesday as investigators with flashlights scoured the scene, which was dotted with evidence markers and what appeared to be detritus left over from the celebrations, including an e-scooter and a green rental bike.

D'Angelo said he felt "kind of numb" after witnessing a mass shooting firsthand.

"To target somebody, and indiscriminately shoot innocent bystanders, even trying to think about it, it's like — I have a huge emotional, a lot of feelings that I really can't explain," he said.

The shooting happened in the same area where fans celebrated the Colorado Avalanche hockey team winning the Stanley Cup last year without any serious problems. Thomas said police made similar preparations for the Nuggets' possible championship.

"What we couldn't have planned for was a drug deal right in the middle of a celebration," Thomas said.

The story has been updated to correct that suspect was one of 10 people shot at scene, according to police.

Activists work to get giraffe removed from small enclosure in dusty Mexican border city

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Benito the giraffe arrived in Mexico's arid northern border city of Ciudad Juarez just last month, and already the climate appears to be a problem — and he's only had to deal with the scorching heat of summer.

The snow and freezing temperatures of winter are still to come, and animal activists are up in arms and pushing a campaign under the hashtag "Save Benito" seeking to have the animal moved somewhere more hospitable.

On a recent day, the 3-year-old male giraffe could be seen crouching with only its head under a small, circular canopy for shade. The structure did little to protect him from a pelting rain and a hail storm later.

There is also a small shed for winter, but activists say it is cruel for the city-run Central Park to keep the giraffe in a small fenced enclosure, by himself alone, with only about a half-acre to wander and few trees to nibble, in a climate he's not used to.

"We have been fighting for a month, a group of animal activists, to demand that he be taken to an animal sanctuary, a zoo, somewhere where there are appropriate facilities and qualified personnel to care

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for this type of animal," said Ana Félix, a Ciudad Juarez animal rights activist. "We are in the desert here and the climate here is extreme in winter and in summer."

Blue Hills, a sanctuary ranch in Texas that rescues animals and books private tours to help offset the cost, has offered to buy or adopt Benito.

"We can offer him a brand new heated barn, so in the winter he doesn't stand in the snow and freeze," ranch operator Matt Lieberman wrote in response to The Associated Press. "We have an on staff vet that cares for our animals and we have 24 hour staff for him."

He added that the giraffe would have 320 acres to roam in. "He doesn't have any trees to browse from" at the park in Mexico, Lieberman said. "He needs trees to eat from and keep stimulated."

Benito appears to have just about finished off the only small trees within his reach at Central Park and can do little more than walk in circles.

Officials at the park reject the criticism, though they acknowledge they can't provide more trees. They say they are working to improve Benito's compound, saying his presence has been important in boosting the park's popularity among visitors, largely children. Monthly visits rose from about 140,000 before Benito arrived to 200,000.

Park visitor Derek Reyes, 11, had mixed feelings about Benito.

"He could be fine here," Reyes said, "but it would also be good if they could take him to a place where they belong, with a herd."

Park director Rogelio Muñoz said authorities are planning to build Benito a new, heated winter house by September.

The park is also building a larger sun canopy for the giraffe and dredging out garbage and fetid water from a pool that takes up much of the enclosure. Benito will have fresh water in a trough.

"The conditions, attention and care in the habitat of the park's new resident are optimal for his stay," the park wrote in a social media message.

Benito was donated by a zoo in the much more temperate climate of Sinaloa, a state on Mexico's northern Pacific coast. Himself a rescue, Benito couldn't stay with two other giraffes at the Sinaloa zoo because they were a couple, and the male could become territorial and attack the younger Benito.

The giraffe's arrival was a point of pride for Ciudad Juarez, a tough, dusty city across from El Paso, Texas, that is best known for its hundreds of maquiladora assembly factories and its endemic gang violence. El Paso has giraffes at its zoo, the thinking goes, so why can't Ciudad Juarez?

"We want to be like El Paso," Muñoz said.

Central Park, which also holds a few other animal species like ducks and donkeys, invited kids from across the city to come visit the new giraffe; the government of the border state of Chihuahua sponsored a contest among grade schoolers to name him.

The first prize — about \$500 — went to a little girl who proposed the name "Benito." One critic, Alfredo Casas, commented on Facebook, "They would have done better spending that money on better shade for the giraffe."

The park had a giraffe for 21 years named Modesto. He died last year, and activists say they don't want his experience — being alone and sometimes caught in the snow and frost — to be repeated for Benito.

"When Modesto died, we thought that was the end of it," said Félix. "But then they bring us a new animal, and that really isn't fair. It isn't fair to repeat the story of Modesto."

Muñoz acknowledged that Modesto's life was far from the best — children who used to visit the giraffe would feed him potato chips and snack foods. But park officials have launched a campaign to teach kids to bring Benito only lettuce and carrots.

Muñoz said he also doesn't want Benito to live out his life alone.

"When his quarters are fixed up, his house, with heating ... then we want to bring in a female, because he cannot be alone," Muñoz said.

Federal Reserve is likely to skip a rate hike at pivotal meeting Wednesday yet signal more to come

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve, having raised interest rates at the fastest pace in four decades, is poised Wednesday to leave rates alone for the first time in 15 months to allow time to gauge the impact of its aggressive drive to tame inflation.

Yet top Fed officials have made clear that any such pause may be brief — more of a “skip” — with another rate hike likely as soon as their next meeting in late July.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell and other top policymakers have also indicated that they want to assess how much a pullback in bank lending might be weakening the economy. Banks have been slowing their lending — and demand for loans has fallen — as interest rates have risen.

Some analysts have expressed concern that the collapse of three large banks last spring could cause nervous lenders to sharply tighten their loan qualifications and worsen the drop in lending. Economists at Goldman Sachs have estimated, though, that such damage will be modest.

For the Fed, “skipping” a rate hike at this week’s meeting may be the most effective way for Powell to unite a fractious policymaking committee. The 18 committee members appear split between those who favor one or two more rate hikes and those who would like to leave the Fed’s key rate where it is for at least a few months and see whether inflation further moderates. This group is concerned that hiking too aggressively would heighten the risk of causing a deep recession.

A government report Tuesday on inflation offered some ammunition to both camps, with overall price increases sharply slowing but some measures of underlying inflation remaining high. Consumer prices as a whole rose a modest 4% in May from 12 months earlier, the smallest such rise in more than two years and way below April’s 4.9% annual increase.

Yet much of that drop reflected sharply lower gas prices and slowdown in food inflation. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, uncomfortably high inflation persisted: So-called core prices rose 5.3% year over year, down from 5.5% in April but far above the Fed’s 2% annual target.

At the same time, the gradual but steady decline in overall inflation suggests that the Fed’s rate hikes have had some success. The central bank has jacked up its key rate by a substantial 5 percentage points since March 2022.

Those hikes have led to much higher costs for mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and business borrowing. The Fed’s goal is to achieve the delicate task of slowing borrowing and spending enough to cool growth and tame inflation, without derailing the economy in the process.

Tuesday’s inflation data showed that most of the rise in core prices reflected high rents and used car prices. Those costs are expected to ease later this year.

Wholesale used car prices, for example, fell in May, raising the prospect that retail prices will follow suit. And rents are expected to ease in the coming months as new leases are signed with milder price increases. Those lower prices, though, will take time to feed into the government’s measure.

Some economists have suggested that if those measures start to fall and reduce core inflation, the Fed might end up keeping its key rate unchanged for the rest of the year. Or the policymakers might decide to raise their key rate one last time in July, to about 5.4%, and keep it there.

“We think next month’s increase is probably the last of the cycle,” said Alan Detmeister, an economist at UBS.

On Wednesday, Fed officials will also update their quarterly economic projections, including a forecast of what their key rate will be at year’s end. Most economists expect that rate to tick up from the current 5.1% to 5.4%. That would signal that the central bank doesn’t think it has yet curbed inflation. If inflation were to remain chronically high in the months ahead, the Fed might decide to continuing raising rates.

The economy has fared better than the central bank and most economists had expected at the beginning of the year. Companies are still hiring at a robust pace, which has helped encourage many people to keep spending, particularly on travel, dining out and entertainment.

As a result, the Fed's updated forecasts Wednesday may reflect its expectation that economic growth will pick up, albeit modestly. Analysts say the policymakers will likely project that the economy will expand 1% this year — a sluggish figure but up from a forecast in March of an anemic 0.4%.

Fed officials will also likely forecast a lower unemployment rate than they did three months ago, perhaps to 4.1% by year's end, compared with their forecast in March of 4.5%. (The current jobless rate is 3.7%.)

In addition, they will likely raise their inflation estimate, with year-over-year core inflation envisioned to reach 3.8% by the end of this year, up from a forecast of 3.6% in March.

The Beatles are releasing their 'last' record. AI helped make it possible

By SYLVIA HUI and MARIA SHERMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Artificial intelligence has been used to extract John Lennon's voice from an old demo to create "the last Beatles record," decades after the band broke up, Paul McCartney said Tuesday.

McCartney, 80, told the BBC that the technology was used to separate the Beatles' voices from background sounds during the making of director Peter Jackson's 2021 documentary series, "The Beatles: Get Back." The "new" song is set to be released later this year, he said.

Jackson was "able to extricate John's voice from a ropey little bit of cassette and a piano," McCartney told BBC radio. "He could separate them with AI, he'd tell the machine 'That's a voice, this is a guitar, lose the guitar.'"

"So when we came to make what will be the last Beatles record, it was a demo that John had that we worked on," he added. "We were able to take John's voice and get it pure through this AI so then we could mix the record as you would do. It gives you some sort of leeway."

McCartney didn't identify the name of the demo, but the BBC and others said it was likely to be an unfinished 1978 love song by Lennon called "Now and Then." The demo was included on a cassette labeled "For Paul" that McCartney had received from Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, the BBC reported.

McCartney described AI technology as "kind of scary but exciting," adding: "We will just have to see where that leads."

The same technology enabled McCartney to "duet" virtually with Lennon, who was murdered in 1980, on "I've Got a Feeling" last year at Glastonbury Festival.

Holly Herndon, a multidisciplinary artist with a doctorate in composition from Stanford University, used nascent AI machine technology on her last album, 2019's "Proto," and developed Holly+, an online protocol that allows the public to upload tracks to be reinterpreted and performed by a deepfake version of her voice. She theorizes that the Beatles' recording was likely created using a process called "source separation."

"Source separation has become much easier to do with machine learning. This allows you to extract a voice from a recording, isolating it so that you might accompany it with new instrumentation," she explains.

That differs from a deepfake vocal. "A deepfake is an entirely new vocal line spawned from a machine learning model trained on old vocal lines," she said. "While it does not appear to be happening in this example, it is now possible to spawn infinite new media from analyzing older material, which is a similar process, in spirit, to this song."

McCartney is set to open an exhibition later this month at the National Portrait Gallery in London featuring previously unseen photographs that he took during the early days of the Beatles at the start of "Beatlemania," when the band rose to worldwide fame.

The exhibition, titled "Eyes of the Storm," showcases more than 250 photos McCartney took with his camera between 1963 and 1964 — including portraits of Ringo Starr, George Harrison and Lennon, as well as Beatles manager Brian Epstein.

This story has been corrected to show that the title of McCartney's photo exhibition is "Eyes of the Storm," not "Eye of the Storm."

Sherman reported from Los Angeles.

Microsoft's planned Activision Blizzard merger temporarily blocked by US judge

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Microsoft's planned \$69 billion purchase of video game company Activision Blizzard was blocked by a federal judge Tuesday, giving more time for an antitrust review of the deal.

U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley in San Francisco ruled in support of a temporary restraining order sought by the Federal Trade Commission that will stop Microsoft from closing the deal.

In a court filing Monday, the commission had sought both a restraining order and injunction to stop Microsoft's acquisition of the California company behind hit games such as Call of Duty, World of Warcraft and Candy Crush Saga.

Microsoft, maker of the Xbox game system, has spent months trying to win worldwide approval for the merger. While a number of countries have approved the acquisition, regulators for two important economies — the U.S. and the U.K. — have taken action to stop it, arguing it could suppress competition in the video game market.

The judge said her order temporarily blocking the deal "is necessary to maintain the status quo" while the Federal Trade Commission's legal cases against it are still pending. The bar for issuing an urgent restraining order is lower than it is to issue a preliminary injunction blocking the deal. A hearing on the commission's request for an injunction is set for June 22.

The trade commission already took Microsoft to court last year to block the merger, but that case was brought to the U.S. agency's in-house judge in a trial set to start Aug. 2.

The commission said it brought its case to a federal court this week because it was concerned that Microsoft was trying to imminently close the deal before the trial begins, which would make it "difficult, if not impossible" to reverse course if the acquisition was later found to be illegal.

Microsoft said in a written statement late Tuesday that "accelerating the legal process in the U.S will ultimately bring more choice and competition to the gaming market."

"A temporary restraining order makes sense until we can receive a decision from the Court, which is moving swiftly," the company said.

Putin threatens to seize more of Ukraine to block attacks on border regions

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested Tuesday that he could order his troops to try to seize more land in Ukraine to protect bordering Russian territory — a threat with questionable credibility because the Kremlin lacks full control over areas it already annexed.

In some of his most detailed remarks about the war in months, the Russian leader also asserted that Ukrainian forces had suffered "catastrophic" losses in a new counteroffensive, and he said he was not contemplating a new troop mobilization, as many Russians have feared. But he did not rule out another troop call-up later. And he reiterated Russia's claim that Ukraine was responsible for blowing up a Dnieper River dam that caused vast flooding on both sides of the front line last week in the country's south.

Putin's comments at an open meeting with military journalists and bloggers followed Kyiv's claims that Ukrainian troops had captured a handful of villages in the early stages of the counteroffensive as they seek to push Russian troops out of four regions of Ukraine the Kremlin illegally annexed last fall. The meeting, which lasted more than two hours, came after Russian missile strikes in central Ukraine killed at least 11 people overnight.

Putin said Ukraine's counteroffensive has been unsuccessful. He asserted that Ukraine lost 160 tanks and over 360 other armored vehicles, while Russia lost 54 tanks since the new assault began. Those claims could not be immediately verified. Ukrainian officials typically do not comment on losses.

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The White House offered no immediate reaction to Putin's claims.

A U.S. official familiar with American intelligence said Putin's comments were "not accurate" and cautioned against putting any stock in Russia's public assessments. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to offer an internal assessment, did not detail how Putin's claims were misleading.

Referring to alleged Ukrainian incursions into Russia and shelling of border regions, Putin said he was considering whether "to create on Ukrainian territory a kind of sanitary zone at such a distance from which it would be impossible to get our territory."

It was not clear whether Russia — which failed to capture Kyiv and its surroundings early in the war and later had to give up other territory it had captured, even in annexed areas — could afford to risk expanding its gains in Ukraine while trying to repel the evolving counteroffensive in several sectors of the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line.

In recent weeks, Russia's border areas have come under increasing attack, with the Kremlin blaming Ukrainian forces for incursions of fighters and drone strikes.

Ukrainian authorities have not confirmed Kyiv's involvement in the attacks but have obliquely welcomed them. Russian volunteer units sympathizing with Ukraine have claimed responsibility for the incursions.

Local leaders in Russia have pleaded with the Kremlin to do more to protect residents, some of whom have been evacuated to safer areas.

Putin acknowledged that Russian authorities should have foreseen and prepared to stop such attacks. Earlier in the war, the border was better protected because Russia held more adjacent Ukrainian territory, but Kremlin forces withdrew from much of it last fall under the brunt of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Putin's long meeting with military bloggers, along with war correspondents from traditional news media, was a dramatic acknowledgement of their importance in conveying the Kremlin's viewpoint.

In other remarks, Putin also said:

— Russia's defense industry has ratcheted up production of drones and other weapons but needs more, and the West is also struggling to produce more weapons and ammunition.

— Russia might pull out of a U.N.-backed deal to allow grain shipments from Ukraine through a demilitarized Black Sea maritime corridor.

— The United States could stop the war by halting weapons shipments to Ukraine, leaving it too weak to carry on the fight.

— The West will eventually realize it won't succeed in Ukraine. "They will never see it happen. Never."

While Putin spoke, the State Department announced that the United States would send Ukraine a new military aid package worth up to \$325 million, including a range of rockets, missiles and other munitions.

Putin mocked alleged Ukrainian battlefield losses, including of high-tech Western equipment Kyiv has received. He said German-made Leopard battle tanks and U.S.-made Bradley infantry fighting vehicles "are burning really well."

Earlier Tuesday, his defense ministry published a video showing what it said was a Leopard 2 tank and a Bradley fighting vehicle captured from Ukrainian forces. According to the ministry, Russian soldiers shot the video after fierce fighting in Zaporizhzhia. It was not immediately possible to verify the video's authenticity.

Ukrainian officials have been nearly as forceful as Putin in vowing to win the war, with Zelenskyy insisting his people will not relent until all of Ukraine is liberated from Russian control.

Contrasting with Putin's dim view of Ukraine's progress in its counteroffensive, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told President Joe Biden on Tuesday that Ukrainians are "making progress," and that could bolster their position in any peace talks.

"It's still early days, but what we do know is that the more land that Ukrainians are able to liberate, the stronger hand they will have at the negotiating table," Stoltenberg said at a White House meeting.

Also Tuesday, Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar, told Ukrainian TV that the country's forces are continuing the offensive in four areas in the south and east.

The head of Ukraine's ground troops said forces were "moving forward" outside Bakhmut, in Ukraine's east. Oleksandr Syrskyi wrote on Telegram that Russian forces are "losing positions on the flanks."

Elsewhere, Ukrainian authorities said at least 11 people were killed and 36 wounded overnight in a Rus-

sian missile strike on the city of Kryvyi Rih, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown.

Images from the latest missile attack relayed by Zelenskyy on his Telegram channel showed firefighters battling a blaze as flames poked through broken windows in a damaged apartment building. Charred and damaged vehicles littered the ground.

"More terrorist missiles," he wrote. "Russian killers continue their war against residential buildings, ordinary cities and people."

Without providing details of the locations or timing, the Russian Defense Ministry said Russian forces used long-range air-launched cruise missiles to hit Ukrainian military reserves and depots holding Western weapons and ammunition.

The governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region, Serhiy Lysak, wrote on Telegram that the bodies of seven people were recovered from a private company's warehouse, and "another four destinies were cut short" at the apartment building.

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani in Washington and Andrew Katell in New York contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Trump turns his day in court into a campaign event despite serious political and legal threats

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's four years in the White House, even on some of the most consequential days of his presidency, were punctuated by the spectacle and attempts at showmanship he cultivated from years as a tabloid fixture and reality star.

The former president's history-making appearance Tuesday as a criminal defendant in a Florida federal court was no different.

The former commander in chief, accused of being careless with some of the country's most sensitive secrets and obstructing authorities as they tried to recover critical documents, pleaded not guilty to 37 charges. But he treated the day like a campaign event, even as he faces serious threats to his political ambitions and his freedom.

Takeaways from Trump's day in federal court:

ALWAYS CAMPAIGNING

Despite the seriousness of the charges, Trump, ever the showman, sought to maximize any political benefits from the day. The Republican had encouraged supporters to show up at the federal courthouse — and hundreds did — while the 2024 presidential candidate fired off a few posts on his social media app, calling it a "WITCH HUNT" and "ONE OF THE SADDEST DAYS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY."

After leaving the courthouse, his motorcade ferried him to an iconic Cuban restaurant in Miami, where he bowed his head with two pastors and a rabbi for a moment of prayer, shook hands with supporters and even managed to crack some smiles and jokes as he posed for photos, including one with UFC fighter Jorge Masvidal.

He initially kept a fairly grim expression as people in the restaurant began serenading him with "Happy Birthday," a day before his 77th birthday.

"Some birthday. Some birthday," he said. "We've got a government that is out of control."

Just like he did after his arraignment in New York, Trump planned a speech afterward from one of his golf clubs. He spoke Tuesday night from his Bedminster, New Jersey, resort, where he is spending the summer.

In a maundering speech, Trump grimaced and repeated his claims of the investigation being politically motivated, called prosecutors "thugs" and claimed he was so busy that he hadn't had time to go through all the boxes of documents and memorabilia he had kept. He also said that if elected president next year,

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he would appoint a special prosecutor to investigate President Joe Biden and his family.

The whirling drama surrounding Trump overshadowed most other news Tuesday. His GOP presidential rivals largely refrained from any campaign events of their own. One Republican competitor, Vivek Ramaswamy, sought to capitalize on the spectacle by showing up outside the courthouse to tell reporters that he was encouraging other 2024 candidates to commit to pardoning Trump if elected to the White House.

Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a Republican presidential candidate who has frequently criticized Trump, lamented in a CNN interview that candidates were not talking about issues but Trump and his legal challenges.

"It sucks a lot of energy out of the room," he said.

SMITH PERSONALLY OVERSEEING

Special counsel Jack Smith, who has been running the case for the Justice Department in Washington, appeared in the Miami courtroom Tuesday, sitting right behind federal prosecutors.

Smith's presence in the courtroom was notable and underscores the extent to which he has surfaced as the public face of the investigative team and its decision-making. He, not Attorney General Merrick Garland, was the one who announced the indictment Friday.

It's also striking given that the last special counsel who investigated Trump, Robert Mueller, steered clear of court appearances in cases brought by his team and never personally announced any of the indictments his prosecutors brought.

The two public appearances by Smith in under a week suggest he's likely to be a central protagonist in the historic saga of his investigation.

FROM NEW YORK TO FLORIDA

There was less visibility in the proceedings in Miami federal court than there had been in New York, where Trump appeared in state court and pleaded not guilty to charges related to hush money payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign.

In New York, journalists were allowed to film and photograph Trump inside the courthouse and photograph him in the courtroom before the arraignment began. In Miami federal court, journalists were barred from taking photos or video of Trump inside and were not allowed to have electronic devices, delaying the transmission of news to the public.

While only a handful of Trump supporters showed up to demonstrate in heavily Democratic New York during Trump's Manhattan appearance, the former president had urged supporters to turn out in Republican-leaning Florida.

Some officials were concerned about the possibility of violence Tuesday, but it was largely calm outside the courthouse as hundreds of Trump supporters waved flags, some getting into occasional shouting matches with small groups of anti-Trump demonstrators.

TRUMP IN TRICKY SPOT WITH AIDES

The magistrate judge overseeing Trump's court appearance ruled that the former president can talk to his co-defendant, valet Walt Nauta, and potential witnesses about their jobs but not about the case.

That could be a problem for Trump, who is not known to hold back or refrain from talking about sensitive subjects and is facing charges in the documents case because prosecutors say he defied orders from a court.

Trump's attorney Todd Blanche noted that Nauta and potential witnesses are people with whom Trump interacts daily, whether at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida or his other clubs.

Demonstrating Nauta's continued loyalty to Trump, the personal aide traveled with the motorcade to and from the courthouse and stood by the former president's side during a stop at the Miami restaurant after the court appearance.

MORE TROUBLE BREWING

While the federal case over classified documents in Florida and the New York hush money case play out in court, Trump will have other legal worries on his mind.

A separate Justice Department investigation — also led by special counsel Smith — into efforts by Trump

and his allies to overturn the 2020 presidential election continues in Washington. A federal grand jury has heard from witnesses including Trump's former vice president, Mike Pence.

A probe in Georgia is examining Trump's efforts to interfere with his narrow loss in the state's 2020 election. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has suggested that any charges would come in August.

Trump also faces a civil trial in October in New York related to allegations he and his company misled banks and tax authorities over the values of their assets.

And on Tuesday, shortly after Trump appeared in court in Florida, a federal judge in New York ruled against him in a civil case for sexual abuse and defamation. The judge granted a request from a columnist who won a \$5 million award against Trump to update a similar lawsuit to include his more recent public comments about her. She is seeking more than \$10 million against him in the amended lawsuit.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

Los Angeles city councilman charged with 10 counts, including embezzlement and perjury

By STEFANIE DAZIO and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors charged a Los Angeles city councilman with 10 counts, including embezzlement and perjury, Tuesday in the latest criminal case to upend the scandal-plagued governing board of the nation's second-largest city.

Curren Price Jr. faces five counts of embezzlement of government funds, three counts of perjury and two counts of conflict of interest, according to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

Price was charged for having a financial interest in projects that he voted on as a council member, and having the city pay nearly \$34,000 in medical benefits for his now-wife while he was still married to another woman, Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón said in a statement.

Between 2019 and 2021, Price's wife allegedly received payments totaling more than \$150,000 from developers before Price voted to approve projects, according to Gascón's statement. He also is accused of failing to list the money his wife received on government disclosure forms.

"This alleged conduct undermines the integrity of our government and erodes the public's trust in our elected officials," Gascón said.

Price called the charges "unwarranted."

In a letter to City Council President Paul Krekorian, Price said he was stepping down from committee assignments and leadership responsibilities "while I navigate through the judicial system to defend my name."

"The last thing I want to do is be a distraction to the people's business," he wrote.

The council and city government have been shaken by a series of recent scandals.

In March, former Democratic City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas — a one-time legislator, county supervisor and a fixture in local politics for decades — was found guilty in federal court of seven felonies, including conspiracy, bribery and fraud.

Last year, a racism scandal that shook public trust in Los Angeles government triggered the resignations in October of then-City Council President Nury Martinez and a powerful labor leader, Ron Herrera.

After an FBI investigation, two other former council members pleaded guilty to federal corruption charges in recent years.

Former Mayor Eric Garcetti, who left office in December, was shadowed by sexual harassment allegations against one of his former top aides.

To residents, the cumulative effect "makes the whole body politic of L.A. look rotten, look illegal," said Jaime Regalado, former executive director of the Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles.

At a time when the city is struggling with an out-of-control homeless crisis, crime and soaring housing and rent costs, "it makes everything harder," Regalado said.

A criminal complaint said a consulting firm operated by Price's wife received a series of payments from

companies incorporated or co-owned by Thomas Safran & Associates, GTM Holdings/Works and GTM Holdings, before the councilman voted to approve funding for the companies' projects.

Emails seeking comment from those entities were not immediately returned Tuesday evening.

Price was first elected to the council in 2013 and currently serves as its president pro tempore. His district includes South Los Angeles and parts of the city's downtown. His term is set to expire in 2026.

Price, who is Black, has successfully navigated changing demographics in his district — which has become increasingly Latino — and is known for being attentive to communities that are diverse.

The councilman had attended a city council meeting earlier in the day Tuesday.

Mayor Karen Bass' office said in a statement that she had not seen the charges but was "saddened by this news."

Price's attorney, David Willingham, declined to comment, saying he had not seen a copy of the criminal complaint.

The charges were first reported Tuesday by the Los Angeles Times.

Associated Press writer Chris Weber contributed.

Teacher who was shot by 6-year-old student in Virginia has resigned, school officials say

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

The first-grade teacher who was shot by her 6-year-old student in Virginia has resigned from her position, school officials said Tuesday, more than two months after she sued the district for \$40 million.

The last day of Abby Zwerner's contract was Monday, Newport News Public Schools said in a statement. The district said that Zwerner notified human resources in March that she wouldn't be returning next school year.

Zwerner, 25, was shot in the hand and chest as she sat at a reading table in her first-grade classroom on Jan. 6. She spent nearly two weeks in the hospital, has endured multiple surgeries and told NBC that she sometimes "can't get up out of bed."

Zwerner filed her lawsuit in early April, alleging that school officials ignored multiple warnings that the boy had a gun and was in a violent mood that day.

The school board has pushed back, asking a judge to dismiss the case and arguing that Zwerner should get workers compensation instead.

WAVY-TV first reported that Zwerner no longer worked for the district on Tuesday. In an interview with the station, an attorney for Zwerner characterized her departure as a firing.

Lawyer Jeffrey Breit cited an email that school officials sent Zwerner in May, stating they had "processed a separation of employment for you effective the close of business 06/12/2023."

Breit told WAVY: "I don't think you can read this any other way than you've been fired. And that's what she thinks. She doesn't understand it; there's no other communication."

Newport News Public Schools refuted Breit's claim in a statement Tuesday.

"Every employee who is separating from the school division receives a similar communication," the district said.

The school system also provided emails between the district and Zwerner in which the teacher wrote: "I wish to resign. Thank you."

Breit did not respond to an email and a phone call from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Zwerner's resignation is yet another development in the aftermath of the shooting, which has reverberated through the shipbuilding city of about 180,000 people near the Atlantic coast.

The boy who shot Zwerner had used his mother's gun. His mother, Deja Taylor, pleaded guilty Monday in federal court to using marijuana while owning a firearm, which is illegal under U.S. law.

Taylor is facing charges on the state level of felony child neglect and reckless storage of a firearm. A trial for those counts is set for August.

Meanwhile, Zwerner's \$40 million lawsuit is pending.

Zwerner's attorneys have said school officials knew the boy "had a history of random violence" at school and at home, including an episode the year before in which he "strangled and choked" his kindergarten teacher.

"Teachers' concerns with John Doe's behavior (were) regularly brought to the attention of Richneck Elementary School administration, and the concerns were always dismissed," the lawsuit states.

In asking a judge to dismiss the case, the school board has argued that Zwerner's injuries fall under the state's workers compensation act.

The school board rejected Zwerner's claim that she could reasonably expect to work with young children who pose no danger, pointing to numerous incidents of violence against teachers across the U.S. and in Newport News.

"While in an ideal world, young children would not pose any danger to others, including their teachers, this is sadly not reality," the board stated.

The school board said Zwerner has refused to accept workers compensation.

Amazon says AWS is operating normally after outage that left publishers unable to operate websites

SEATTLE (AP) — Amazon's cloud computing unit Amazon Web Services experienced an outage on Tuesday, affecting publishers that suddenly found themselves unable to operate their sites.

The company said on its website that the root cause of the issue was tied to a service called AWS Lambda, which lets customers run code for different types of applications.

Roughly two hours after customers began experiencing errors, the company posted on its AWS status page that many of the affected AWS services were "fully recovered" and it was continuing to recover the rest. Soon after 6:30 pm E.T., the company announced all AWS services were operating normally.

Amazon said it had experienced multiple error rates for AWS services in the Northern Virginia region where it clusters data centers. The company said customers may be dealing with authentication or sign-in errors when using some AWS services, and experiencing challenges when attempting to connect with AWS Support. The issue with Lambda also indirectly affected other AWS services.

Patrick Neighorn, a company spokesperson, declined to provide additional details about the outage.

AWS is the market leader in the cloud arena, and its customers include some of the world's biggest businesses and organizations, such as Netflix, Coca-Cola and government agencies.

Tuesday's outage was first confirmed shortly after 3 p.m. ET. and it was unclear how widespread the problem extended. But many companies, including news organizations such as The Verge and Penn Live, said they were experiencing issues. The Associated Press was also hampered by the outage, unable to operate their sites amid breaking news that former President Donald Trump was appearing in court in Miami.

Morgan Durrant, a spokesperson for Delta Air Lines, said the company experienced "some slowing of inbound calls for some minutes" on Tuesday afternoon. But he said the outage did not impact bookings, flights or other airport operations.

The episode on Tuesday is reminiscent of a much longer AWS outage in December 2021, which affected a host of U.S. companies for more than five hours.

The outage comes as Amazon is holding a two-day security conference in Anaheim, California to tout its cloud offerings to its clients or other companies that might be interested in storing their data on its vast network of servers around the world. Companies have been cutting back their spending on the unit, causing growth to slow during the most recent quarter.

Impassioned appeals by ousted churches spotlight Southern Baptists' stance against women pastors

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

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NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Longtime pastors of two churches — one massive and one modest-sized — made their final appeals to Southern Baptists on Tuesday, asking to have their churches returned to the denomination's fold after being ousted for having women pastors.

Rick Warren, the retired founding pastor of Saddleback Church and author of the best-selling phenomenon, "The Purpose Driven Life," called for the reinstatement of the California megachurch in a brief but impassioned address here at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Rev. Linda Barnes Popham of Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, made a similar appeal to rejoin the convention.

"We should remove churches for all kinds of sexual sin, racial sin, financial sin and leadership sin — sins that harm the testimony of our convention," Warren told the convention. But churches with "women on pastoral staff have not sinned," he said. "If doctrinal disagreements between Baptists are considered sin, we all get kicked out."

The more than 12,700 messengers, or church representatives, voted by ballot on whether to uphold the decision by the denomination's Executive Committee in February to deem the two churches not in friendly cooperation.

Results aren't expected until Wednesday morning. But if crowd reaction is any indication, Warren may be accurate in his earlier prediction that he'll fall short, as a far louder applause went to the person he sparred with — Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who gave rebuttals to both churches' appeals.

"Thirty years ago, this issue threatened to tear this denomination apart," Mohler said, citing controversies of the late 20th century that culminated in the denomination's conservative shift. He said the denomination has had a consensus in the past two decades on the issue that is now being threatened.

Saddleback had been the denomination's second-largest church and until recently was deemed a model of church growth in a denomination experiencing membership decline overall.

Popham, pastor of Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville for the past three decades, described her congregation as a "very conservative, evangelical mission-minded ... church like many of you."

She said she's a lifelong Southern Baptist who disagrees with fellow Baptists on some issues, "but I don't want to kick you out. ... We don't all interpret every Scripture the same way. We believe the Bible allows women to serve in ways in which all of you do not agree. But we should still be able to partner together."

Mohler said churches have the right to choose their practices, but so does the convention.

"We do not seek to invade the autonomy of any local church," he said. "At the same time, this convention has the sole responsibility to establish its own membership."

Mohler had a leading role in revisions to the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000. The faith statement says the office of pastor is limited to qualified men.

Warren said he spoke with several members who served on the commission that revised the faith statement and disputed Mohler's claim that this was referring to more than just the senior pastor of a church.

Mohler disputed that and said the issue is one of "biblical authority."

He said the action is based on Saddleback "establishing a woman as a campus pastor and having women with the title of pastor to teach in the teaching role on Sunday morning."

That's not to discredit "every good gospel thing that is represented" by Warren and Saddleback, but the convention has to uphold its beliefs, Mohler said.

Saddleback began ordaining women in 2021 and in May appointed Katie Edwards as campus pastor of its flagship Lake Forest location. Warren retired as lead pastor last year and was succeeded by Andy Wood, whose wife, Stacie Wood, serves as a teaching pastor. The church is led by an all-male elder board.

Warren recently issued an apology to Christian women for only belatedly embracing their ordination as pastors.

The convention also heard an appeal from Freedom Church of Vero Beach, Florida, which the Executive Committee ousted for what it said was a failure to address a situation of sexual misconduct. The church said it had addressed the issue, but a committee representative disputed that.

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The Executive Committee ousted five churches in February over the issue of women pastors, but only Fern Creek and Saddleback opted to appeal.

All Baptist churches are independent, so the convention can't tell them what to do, but it can decide which churches are "not in friendly cooperation," the official verbiage for an expulsion. The SBC's official statement of faith says the office of pastor is reserved for men, but this is believed to be the first time the convention has expelled any churches over it.

Also Tuesday, the convention overwhelmingly voted to re-elect Texas pastor Bart Barber to a second term as president over Georgia pastor Mike Stone. It was a contest between Barber, a staunch conservative with a folksy manner conveyed in video talks from his Texas cattle farm, where livestock are named for famous Southern Baptists, and Stone, part of a movement seeking to move the denomination even further to the right.

Barber received 68% of the votes to Stone's 31%.

Houston pastor Jarrett Stephens, nominating Barber, said he has spoken with "compassion, composure and conviction" in insisting on reforms over sexual abuse.

Barber has described himself as staunchly conservative and among other things used his presidential talk earlier Tuesday to briefly address LGBTQ issues: "Boys can't become girls. Marriage is between a man and a woman."

But it's the third year in a row that a candidate with ties to the Conservative Baptist Network, which has contended the denomination is in liberal drift, has come up short. Stone was also defeated as a candidate in 2021. Barber defeated Florida pastor Tom Ascol in 2022.

Deepa Bharath reported from Los Angeles.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Cormac McCarthy, lauded author of 'The Road' and 'No Country for Old Men,' dies at 89

By SUE MAJOR HOLMES and HILLEL ITALIE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Cormac McCarthy, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist who in prose both dense and brittle took readers from the southern Appalachians to the desert Southwest in such novels as "The Road," "Blood Meridian" and "All the Pretty Horses," died Tuesday. He was 89.

Publisher Alfred A. Knopf, a Penguin Random House imprint, announced that McCarthy died of natural causes at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"For 60 years, he demonstrated an unwavering dedication to his craft, and to exploring the infinite possibilities and power of the written word," Penguin Random House CEO Nihar Malaviya said in a statement. "Millions of readers around the world embraced his characters, his mythic themes, and the intimate emotional truths he laid bare on every page, in brilliant novels that will remain both timely and timeless, for generations to come."

McCarthy, raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, was compared to William Faulkner for his expansive, Old Testament style and rural settings. McCarthy's themes, like Faulkner's, often were bleak and violent and dramatized how the past overwhelmed the present. Across stark and forbidding landscapes and rundown border communities, he placed drifters, thieves, prostitutes and old, broken men, all unable to escape fates determined for them well before they were born. As the doomed John Grady Cole of McCarthy's celebrated "Border" trilogy would learn, dreams of a better life were only dreams, and falling in love an act of folly.

"Every man's death is a standing in for every other," McCarthy wrote in "Cities of the Plain," the trilogy's final book. "And since death comes to all there is no way to abate the fear of it except to love that man who stands for us."

McCarthy's own story was one of belated, and continuing, achievement and popularity. Little known to

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the public at age 60, he would become one of the country's most honored and successful writers despite rarely talking to the press. He broke through commercially in 1992 with "All the Pretty Horses" and over the next 15 years won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer, was a guest on Oprah Winfrey's show and saw his novel "No Country for Old Men" adapted by the Coen brothers into an Oscar-winning movie. Fans of the Coens would discover that the film's terse, absurdist dialogue, so characteristic of the brothers' work, was lifted straight from the novel.

"The Road," his stark tale of a father and son who roam a ravaged landscape, brought him his widest audience and highest acclaim. It won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and was selected by Winfrey for her book club. In his Winfrey interview, McCarthy said that while typically he didn't know what generates the ideas for his books, he could trace "The Road" to a trip he took with his young son to El Paso, Texas, early in the decade. Standing at the window of a hotel in the middle of the night as his son slept nearby, he started to imagine what El Paso might look like 50 or 100 years in the future.

"I just had this image of these fires up on the hill ... and I thought a lot about my little boy," he said.

He told Winfrey he didn't care how many people read "The Road."

"You would like for the people that would appreciate the book to read it. But, as far as many, many people reading it, so what?" he said.

McCarthy dedicated the book to his son, John Francis, and said having a child as an older man "forces the world on you, and I think it's a good thing." The Pulitzer committee called his book "the profoundly moving story of a journey."

"It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, 'each the other's world entire,' are sustained by love," the citation read in part. "Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation."

After "The Road," little was heard from McCarthy over the next 15 years and his career was presumed over. But in 2022, Knopf made the startling announcement that it would release a pair of connected novels he had referred to in the past: "The Passenger" and "Stella Maris," narratives about a brother and sister, mutually obsessed siblings, and the legacy of their father, a physicist who had worked on atomic technology. "Stella Maris" was notable, in part, because it centered on a female character, an acknowledged weakness of McCarthy's.

"I don't pretend to understand women," he told Winfrey.

His first novel, "The Orchard Keeper" — written in Chicago while he was working as an auto mechanic — was published by Random House in 1965. His editor was Albert Erskine, Faulkner's longtime editor.

Other novels include "Outer Dark," published in 1968; "Child of God" in 1973; and "Suttree" in 1979. The violent "Blood Meridian," about a group of bounty hunters along the Texas-Mexico border murdering Indians for their scalps, was published in 1985.

His "Border Trilogy" books were set in the Southwest along the border with Mexico: "All the Pretty Horses" (1992) — a National Book Award winner that was turned into a feature film; "The Crossing" (1994), and "Cities of the Plain" (1998).

McCarthy said he was always lucky. He recalled living in a shack in Tennessee and running out of toothpaste, then going out and finding a toothpaste sample in the mailbox.

"That's the way my life has been. Just when things were really, really bleak, something would happen," said McCarthy, who won a MacArthur Fellowship — one of the so-called "genius grants" — in 1981.

In 2009, Christie's auction house sold the Olivetti typewriter he used while writing such novels as "The Road" and "No Country for Old Men" for \$254,500. McCarthy, who bought the Olivetti for \$50 in 1958 and used it until 2009, donated it so the proceeds could be used to benefit the Santa Fe Institute, a nonprofit interdisciplinary scientific research community. He once said he didn't know any writers and preferred to hang out with scientists.

The Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University-San Marcos purchased his archives in 2008, including correspondence, notes, drafts, proofs of 11 novels, a draft of an unfinished novel and materials

related to a play and four screenplays.

McCarthy attended the University of Tennessee for a year before joining the Air Force in 1953. He returned to the school from 1957 to 1959, but left before graduating. As an adult, he lived around the Great Smoky Mountains before moving West in the late 1970s, eventually settling in Santa Fe.

His Knoxville boyhood home, long abandoned and overgrown, was destroyed by fire in 2009.

Retired AP reporter Sue Major Holmes in New Mexico was the primary writer of this obituary. AP National Writer Hillel Italie reported from New York.

Starbucks denies claims that it's banning Pride displays but union organizers are skeptical

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Starbucks is denying union organizers' claims that it is banning Pride displays in its U.S. stores in the wake of Target and other brands experiencing a backlash.

But Starbucks Workers United, the union organizing U.S. Starbucks stores, says store managers around the country have been curtailing or removing displays during a monthlong celebration of LGBTQ+ people. In some cases, the union said, managers told workers that Pride displays were a safety concern, citing recent incidents at Target where some angry customers tipped over merchandise and confronted workers.

"There has been no change to any policy on this matter and we continue to encourage our store leaders to celebrate with their communities, including for U.S. Pride month in June," the Seattle coffee giant said Tuesday in a statement.

Starbucks has been outspoken in its support for LGBTQ+ employees for decades and said Tuesday that support is "unwavering." It extended full health benefits to same-sex partners in 1988 and added health coverage for gender reassignment surgery in 2013.

The company is also currently selling Pride-themed tumblers in its stores designed by Toronto artist Tim Singleton, who is gay.

But Ian Miller, a union organizer and Starbucks supervisor in Olney, Maryland, said the company's tone has changed this year, citing his own store manager informing him that he needed prior approval to put up Pride decorations and that the company was seeking more "uniformity" in its stores.

The manager also allegedly cited the backlash against Bud Light when it partnered with a transgender influencer and then tried to walk back its support. Its U.S. sales subsequently plummeted.

Miller said the manager ultimately let an employee put up small rainbow flags in the store, but the company credit card wasn't used to buy them, as had been allowed in the past.

"It's disrespectful and counterintuitive," Miller said.

Miller's manager declined to comment Tuesday when contacted by The Associated Press. Starbucks didn't respond to questions about the policies at Miller's store.

Miller's store is one of more than 300 Starbucks stores that has voted to unionize since 2021. Starbucks opposes the unionization effort.

House passes resolution to overturn new federal gun regulation; Biden vows veto

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans passed a resolution that would repeal a Biden administration rule tightening federal regulations on stabilizing braces for firearms, an accessory that has been used in several mass shootings in the U.S. over the last decade.

The resolution passed 219-210 nearly on party lines and after a contentious floor debate where Republicans accused the administration of "executive overreach" and Democrats condemned a bill they said would "help kill people." Two Democrats voted in support and two Republicans voted against it.

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The resolution, which was introduced by Rep. Andrew Clyde, R-Ga., will now go to the Senate, which could take up the measure as soon as this week. Should it pass, President Joe Biden has promised a veto. Overriding a presidential veto would require two-thirds majorities in the House and Senate.

The new rule issued by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in January treats guns with the accessories like short-barreled rifles, a weapon that is like a sawed-off shotgun and has been heavily regulated since the 1930s.

The regulation, which went into effect June 1, was one of several steps Biden announced in 2021 after a man using a stabilizing brace killed 10 people at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado. A stabilizing brace was also used in a shooting in Dayton, Ohio, that left nine people dead in 2019 and most recently in a school shooting in Nashville, Tennessee.

Stabilizing braces transform a pistol into a weapon that's powerful and easy to conceal, Attorney General Merrick Garland said when he announced the rule. Originally developed for disabled veterans, gun-control groups have said the accessories have become a loophole exploited by gunmakers to make weapons more deadly.

Since taking effect earlier this month, the rule requires anyone who has a gun with an arm-stabilizing brace to register the weapon with the federal government and pay a fee, or remove the brace from their weapons.

Republicans employed the Congressional Review Act, which allows Congress to undo recently enacted executive branch regulations, to try and nullify the new rule that they claim has turned millions of gun owners into felons.

"This rule doesn't just infringe upon Americans' Second Amendment liberties. It represents a dangerous government overreach by the administration," Clyde said during debate Tuesday. "Congress maintains sole legislative authority, not government agencies, not the executive branch."

Several lawsuits have been filed against the regulations by gun owners and state attorneys general. They say it violates Second Amendment protections by requiring millions of people to alter or register their weapons. In some cases, judges have recently agreed to temporarily block enforcement of the rule for the plaintiffs in a setback for the Biden administration.

House Democrats defended the rule on Tuesday, saying it could save lives.

"How many more mass shootings need to happen, how many more kids need to die before my Republican colleagues pull their heads out of the sand and realize that the NRA money is not worth the damage that's been done to our country," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

The main sponsor for the measure, Clyde, is a member of the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus and the owner of a gun store in his district in Georgia. His proposal to overturn the ATF rule first came to the House Judiciary Committee in late March for markup. But House Republicans postponed debate of the measure after a gunman used a weapon with a stabilizing brace to fatally shoot three children and three adults at an elementary school in Nashville, Tenn.

Last week, Clyde claimed GOP leadership had blocked his resolution from reaching the floor as retribution for his no vote on a bipartisan agreement to lift the debt ceiling, which leaders denied.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said he and Rep. Tom Emmer, the GOP's chief vote-counter, had been working intensely to ensure enough support to pass the legislation in the narrowly divided House.

"We've been moving people every week on this bill," Scalise said. "It has not been easy."

Tory Lanez sentencing on Megan Thee Stallion shooting delayed to August

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Tory Lanez's sentencing for shooting and wounding hip-hop star Megan Thee Stallion was delayed on Tuesday.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge David Herriford accepted the defense's request to delay Lanez's sentencing, which is now scheduled for Aug. 7. Prosecutors are seeking a 13 year prison sentence and Lanez faces deportation to his native Canada.

Herriford decided to give Lanez's lawyers more time to prepare their sentencing recommendation, which is due Aug. 1. The judge, who will sentence Lanez, denied a motion from Lanez' defense attorneys for a new trial on May 9.

During the brief court hearing, Lanez mostly kept his head down and barely made eye contact with anyone. He wore an orange jail outfit and black cap.

Lanez was convicted in December of three felonies: assault with a semiautomatic firearm; having a loaded, unregistered firearm in a vehicle and discharging a firearm with gross negligence.

Attorneys for Lanez, whose legal name is Daystar Peterson, argued that there was insufficient evidence to convict him, and some of the evidence presented to jurors should not have been allowed.

Lanez began releasing mixtapes in 2009 and saw a steady rise in popularity, moving on to major-label albums. His last two reached the top 10 on Billboard's charts.

Megan Thee Stallion, whose legal name is Megan Pete, testified during the trial that Lanez fired a handgun at the back of her feet and shouted for her to dance as she walked away from an SUV in which they had been riding in the Hollywood Hills in the summer of 2020. She said the two had gotten into a dispute that became especially heated when she started insulting his music.

She needed surgery to remove bullet fragments from her feet.

'Smartphones' for sharks: Scientists upgrade sensors to keep track of Cape Cod's white sharks

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

Scientists monitoring the white shark population in the waters off Massachusetts' Cape Cod are attaching improved sensors, including cameras, to the predators to help scientists keep track of their whereabouts and to keep beachgoers informed and safe, researchers said Tuesday.

The program comes just as tourists are filling up hotels and rental properties on the Cape for the summer — and white sharks are returning in greater numbers to feed on the region's abundant seals.

Interactions between white sharks and humans are rare. But the risk is still there. There have been five in Massachusetts since 2012 — three of them classified as bites, one of which was fatal, said Greg Skomal, the state Division of Marine Fisheries shark expert.

"So as a result, we've intensified our research off the Cape to study various aspects of white shark behavior," Skomal said.

For more than a decade, the fisheries division and the nonprofit Atlantic White Shark Conservancy have tagged about 300 sharks with acoustic sensors that emit a high-frequency sound to an array of receivers along the coast. Public safety officials and lifeguards are notified when a shark swims within range of an acoustic receiver.

This year, researchers are attaching more camera sensors to the predators.

They capture more than just video. The sensors can detect a shark's depth, direction, surrounding water temperature and whether it's accelerating or slowing down. The technology allows scientists to monitor the sharks on a second-by-second basis, Skomal said.

Megan Winton, a staff scientist at the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, calls it giving smartphones to sharks.

"They're outfitted with an incredible array of sensors that tell us about the animal's movements and their environment," she said, adding that it's "essentially just riding on the back of a white shark."

The information is downloaded to a free app available to the public to reduce encounters and promote safety.

One video captured by a camera tag clamped to a shark's dorsal fin shows the predator moving into water about 4 feet (1.2 meters) deep close to shore to go after a seal, stirring up a storm of sand from the bottom. The seal ultimately escaped.

Sharks are patient hunters.

"They slowly patrol the shoreline very methodically until they essentially have a chance to make their

move," Winton said.

The technology also has provided insight into how curious sharks are. They have been seen coming to the surface to nibble a lobster buoy or check out a bird or some other piece of flotsam, she said.

Researchers also have started using drones to help spot sharks from above, a method that has been used in other parts of the world, including Australia, Skomal said.

The drawback of the sensor system is that if a shark has not been tagged, it won't be detected. But the program does its best to provide information to the public so they can make informed decisions while at the beach.

"We want them to understand these animals and their habits the way we do," Winton said.

Grammys add new categories, including for pop dance recording and African music performance

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More change is afoot at the Grammys. The Recording Academy announced Tuesday that three new categories will be added to the awards show in 2024: best pop dance recording, best African music performance, and best alternative jazz album.

In addition, two existing categories have been moved to the general field, which means that all Grammy voters can participate in selecting the winners: producer of the year, non-classical, and songwriter of the year, non-classical, the latter of which was first introduced this year.

Previously, the general categories were made up solely of the "Big Four" awards: best new artist, as well as album, record, and song of the year. Grammy voters are eligible to vote in general categories, as well as up to ten categories across three genre fields — and are instructed only to vote in their area of expertise. The changes to those two categories reflect an evolving music industry, where songwriters and producers have become increasingly celebrated for their contributions.

The new best African music performance category will highlight "regional melodic, harmonic and rhythmic musical traditions," according to a Recording Academy press release, including genres like "Afrobeat, Afro-fusion, Afro Pop, Afrobeats, Alte, Amapiano, Bongo Flava, Genge, Kizomba, Chimurenga, High Life, Fuji, Kwassa, Ndombolo, Mapouka, Ghanaian Drill, Afro-House, South African Hip-Hop, and Ethio Jazz."

Before the addition, those artists would compete in the best global music performance category, first introduced in 2022 as part of the global music field.

Prior to 2020, the field was previously referred to as "world music." The Grammys enacted the name change to curb "connotations of colonialism," according to a press release.

The best pop dance recording category is defined by "up-tempo, danceable music that follows a pop arrangement" and recordings that "feature strong rhythmic beats and significant electronic-based instruments with an emphasis on the vocal performance, melody and hooks." Dance remixes do not apply.

And finally, the best alternative jazz album category will spotlight alternative jazz albums that blend genre, hybridizing jazz and other musical styles including "R&B, Hip-Hop, Classical, Contemporary Improvisation, Experimental, Pop, Rap, Electronic/Dance music, and/or Spoken Word."

"The Recording Academy is proud to announce these latest Category changes to our Awards process. These changes reflect our commitment to actively listen and respond to the feedback from our music community, accurately represent a diverse range of relevant musical genres, and stay aligned with the ever-evolving musical landscape," Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr. said in a statement.

"By introducing these three new Categories, we are able to acknowledge and appreciate a broader array of artists," he said. "We are excited to honor and celebrate the creators and recordings in these Categories, while also exposing a wider range of music to fans worldwide."

Fox News sends Tucker Carlson cease-and-desist letter over Twitter series, reports say

The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fox News sent Tucker Carlson a cease-and-desist letter over his new Twitter series, Axios reported Monday, amid reports of a contract battle between the conservative network and its former prime-time host.

Carlson was ousted from Fox in late April, less than a week after Fox agreed to pay Dominion Voting Systems nearly \$800 million to settle an explosive defamation case. The network provided no explanation for the firing, but a wave of reports on damaging text messages and other statements Carlson made during his time at Fox have since piled up.

Since leaving Fox, Carlson kicked off a “Tucker on Twitter” series — arguing that Twitter was “the only” major remaining platform that allows free speech as he denounced news media. The series, which has published two episodes so far, has appeared to escalate contract tensions between Carlson and Fox.

Fox has demanded Carlson stop posting videos to Twitter, The New York Times also reported Monday — as the network’s lawyers accuse Carlson of violating his contract, which runs until early 2025 and restricts his ability to appear on other media outlets. Meanwhile, Carlson’s lawyers have said the network breached the contract first.

A spokesperson for Fox News Media and attorneys representing Carlson, Bryan Freedman and Harmeet Dhillon, did not immediately return The Associated Press’ requests for comments on Tuesday.

“Doubling down on the most catastrophic programming decision in the history of the cable news industry, Fox is now demanding that Tucker Carlson be silent until after the 2024 election,” Dhillon said in a statement sent to Axios and the Times. “Tucker will not be silenced by anyone.”

Before his April firing, Carlson was Fox’s top-rated host. His stew of grievances and political theories grew to define the network over recent years and made him an influential, and widely controversial, force in GOP politics.

Carlson has previously come under fire for defending a white-supremacist theory that claims white people are being “replaced” by people of color, as well as spreading misinformation about issues ranging from the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

‘Avatar 3’ pushed to 2025 and Disney sets two ‘Star Wars’ films for 2026

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — “Avatar: The Way of Water” may have finally arrived in theaters in 2022, but that long parade of “Avatar” delays isn’t done, yet.

The Walt Disney Co. on Tuesday pushed the release of “Avatar 3” a year, bumping it from December 2024 to December 2025. The timeline is stretched even further for the next planned installments. “Avatar 4” is now slated to hit theaters in December 2029; “Avatar 5” is set to arrive in December 2031.

If those dates hold, the “Avatar” film series will have stretched across the first four decades of the century. Director James Cameron, who launched “Avatar” in 2009, has said he may not direct films 4 and 5. By December 2031, the 68-year-old Cameron would be 77. “Avatar” and “Avatar: The Way of Water” have collectively made more than \$5.2 billion at the box office.

“Each ‘Avatar’ film is an exciting but epic undertaking that takes time to bring to the quality level we as filmmakers strive for and audiences have come to expect,” “Avatar” producer Jon Landau wrote on Twitter.

Disney on Tuesday shuffled plans for some of its biggest franchises. Two “Star Wars” film are planned for 2026. One was pushed from December 2025 to May 2026. Another was added for December 2026. The studio hasn’t announced details on either untitled production.

The Marvel calendar was also remade Tuesday, as the studio continues to reshape its coming plans in its

superhero kingdom. Most notably, "Avengers: Kang Dynasty" is being postponed from May 2025 to May 2026. That film, a pivotal release for Marvel, stars Jonathan Majors, the actor who has been charged with domestic violence. Majors' attorney has denied the charges and says he's innocent.

Other shifts in Marvel releases include most films being delayed a few months. "Captain America: Brave New World" will open in July 2024 instead of May 2024, after which comes "Thunderbolts" in December 2024, "Blade" in February 2025 and "Fantastic Four" in May 2025.

From Disney's 20th Century, another "Alien" film is now on the calendar, dated for August next year. And one movie is moving up: "Deadpool 3" will debut May 2024 instead of November next year.

Playground slides doused with pool acid, injuring 2 children

LONGMEADOW, Mass. (AP) — Two children suffered what were described as "burn-like injuries" after playing on slides that had been doused with acid at a Massachusetts park, authorities said.

Police and firefighters responded to Bliss Park in Longmeadow Sunday morning for a report of a suspicious substance on the playground equipment, the fire department posted on social media. At about the same time, firefighters and emergency medical technicians went to a nearby home for a report of two children with burns who had just left the park.

"I let the kids go play. I didn't notice that there was liquid to collect at the bottom of the slide. I just assumed it was rainwater," their mother, Ashley Thielen, told Western Mass News in Springfield. "I didn't really think much of it, and then, my baby, who is one, just started crying. That was when I knew this liquid that they were around wasn't water."

The acid left mostly superficial blisters and swelling on her children's skin, Thielen said, but it could have been much worse.

"The bottom of the slide, where it was, there was a good amount of it collected there," she said. "I was surprised he didn't start splashing in it."

Authorities determined that someone broke into a storage room where chemicals are kept at the park's swimming pool and stole some muriatic acid. The acid, which can be used for cleaning or for maintaining a pool's pH balance, was then poured on three slides, authorities said.

Evidence was gathered and sent to the state crime lab for forensic analysis.

No one has been charged, but authorities said the suspect or suspects may have also been injured.

"We suspect that the perpetrators may have suffered acid burns to their hands or arms and their clothing may have indications of being degraded from contact with the acid," said the statement issued by the fire department in Longmeadow, a city adjacent to Springfield in western Massachusetts.

"If you know of someone with new burns to their hands or arms or may have had burned clothing, please also notify Longmeadow police," they said.

The playground has been cleaned of hazardous materials but remains fenced off.

'Hair,' 'Everwood' actor Treat Williams dies after Vermont motorcycle crash

DORSET, Vt. (AP) — Actor Treat Williams, whose nearly 50-year career included starring roles in the TV series "Everwood" and the movie "Hair," died Monday after a motorcycle crash in Vermont, state police said. He was 71.

Shortly before 5 p.m., a Honda SUV was turning left into a parking lot when it collided with Williams' motorcycle in the town of Dorset, according to a statement from Vermont State Police.

"Williams was unable to avoid a collision and was thrown from his motorcycle. He suffered critical injuries and was airlifted to Albany Medical Center in Albany, New York, where he was pronounced dead," according to the statement.

Williams was wearing a helmet, police said.

The SUV's driver received minor injuries and wasn't hospitalized. He had signaled the turn and wasn't

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immediately detained although the crash investigation continued, police said.

Williams, whose full name was Richard Treat Williams, lived in Manchester Center in southern Vermont, police said.

His agent, Barry McPherson, also confirmed the actor's death.

"I'm just devastated. He was the nicest guy. He was so talented," McPherson told People magazine.

"He was an actor's actor," McPherson said. "Filmmakers loved him. He's been the heart of ... Hollywood since the late 1970s."

The Connecticut-born Williams made his movie debut in 1975 as a police officer in the movie "Deadly Hero" and went on to appear in more than 120 TV and film roles, including the movies "The Eagle Has Landed," "Prince of the City" and "Once Upon a Time in America."

He was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for his role as hippie leader George Berger in the 1979 movie version of the hit musical "Hair."

He appeared in dozens of television shows but was perhaps best known for his starring role from 2002 to 2006 in "Everwood" as Dr. Andrew Brown, a widowed brain surgeon from Manhattan who moves with his two children to the Colorado mountain town of that name.

Williams also had a recurring role as Lenny Ross on the TV show "Blue Bloods."

Williams' stage appearances included Broadway shows, including "Grease" and "Pirates of Penzance."

Colleagues and friends praised Williams as kind, generous and creative.

"Treat Williams was a passionate, adventurous, creative man," actor Wendell Pierce tweeted. "In a short period of time, he quickly befriended me & his adventurous spirit was infectious. We worked on just 1 film together but occasionally connected over the years. Kind and generous with advice and support. RIP."

Justine Williams, a writer, director and producer, tweeted that Williams was "the best." Actor James Woods said, "I really loved him and am devastated that he's gone."

Instant Pot maker seeks bankruptcy protection as sales go cold

The maker of Pyrex glassware and Instant Pot has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection as the company that was already struggling is stung by inflation, with Americans pulling back on spending.

According to a filing with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas this week, Instant Brands, based outside of Chicago, has more than \$500 million in both assets and liabilities.

Inflation has buffeted consumers after a pandemic-fueled binge on goods for the home, but spending has also moved elsewhere as people are again able to travel, or go to restaurants and shows.

And Instant Pots, which became a must-have gadget several years ago, have been disappearing from kitchens.

Sales of "electronic multicooker devices," most of which are Instant Pots, reached \$758 million in 2020, the start of the pandemic. Sales had plunged 50% by last year, to \$344 million.

Dollar and unit sales have declined 20% from last year in the period ending in April, according to the market research company NPD Group.

Just last week, S&P Global downgraded the company's rating due to lower consumer spending on discretionary categories and warned that ratings could fall again if Instant Brands seeks bankruptcy protection.

"Net sales decreased 21.9% in the first quarter of fiscal 2023, relative to the same period last year," S&P analysts wrote. "This marked the seventh consecutive quarter of year-over-year sales contraction. Instant Brands' performance continues to suffer from depressed consumer demand due to lower discretionary spending on home products."

U.S. manufacturers have also been hit, like consumers, by elevated inflation and higher interest rates.

Ben Gadbois, CEO and president of Instant Brands, said the company managed its way through the COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain issues, but has run short of cash.

"Tightening of credit terms and higher interest rates impacted our liquidity levels and made our capital structure unsustainable," Gadbois said in a prepared statement Monday.

Instant Brands, whose brands also include Corelle, Snapware, CorningWare, Visions and Chicago Cut-

lery, said it has received a commitment for \$132.5 million in new debtor-in-possession financing from its existing lenders.

The company was acquired four years ago by the private-equity firm Cornell Capital and it was merged with another kitchenware company, Corelle Brands.

Instant Brands' entities located outside the U.S. and Canada are not included in the Chapter 11 filings.

A timeline of events leading to Donald Trump's indictment in the classified documents case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JILL COLVIN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

The 49-page federal indictment of former President Donald Trump lays out a stunning timeline of events, detailing allegations that he not only mishandled sensitive material, but also took steps to hide records and impede investigators.

Here are some of the key events leading to the 37 criminal charges against Trump, according to the indictment:

Jan. 20, 2021: As Trump leaves the White House, he directs the movement of dozens of storage boxes to Mar-a-Lago, prosecutors say. The boxes, packed by Trump and his White House staff, contain newspaper clippings, letters, photos and other mementos from his time in office, but also hundreds of classified documents that, as a former president, he wasn't authorized to have.

Under the Presidential Records Act, presidential records are considered federal, not private property and must be turned over to the National Archives and Records Administration. Multiple federal laws govern the handling of classified and sensitive documents, including statutes making it a crime to remove such material and keep it at an unauthorized location.

After Jan. 20, 2021: Some boxes brought from the White House are stored on a stage in one of Mar-a-Lago's gilded ballrooms. A photo in the indictment shows boxes stacked on a stage.

March 15, 2021: Boxes are moved from the ballroom to the business center at Mar-a-Lago.

April 2021: Some boxes are moved into a bathroom and shower. A photo included in the indictment shows them stacked next to a toilet, a vanity and a trash can.

May 2021: Trump directs employees to clean out a storage room in a highly accessible area on Mar-a-Lago's ground floor so it can be used to store his boxes, the indictment says. Trump also directs that some boxes be brought to his Bedminster, New Jersey, summer residence.

On or about May 6, 2021: Realizing that some documents from Trump's presidency may be missing, the National Archives asks that he turn over any presidential records he may have kept upon leaving the White House. The agency makes subsequent, repeated demands.

June 2021: The National Archives warns Trump through his representatives that it will refer the matter to the Justice Department if he does not comply.

June 24, 2021: Boxes are moved to the storage room. More than 80 boxes are kept there.

July 21, 2021: Trump allegedly shows a military "plan of attack" that he says is "highly confidential" to a writer interviewing him at his Bedminster property. Trump remarks, "as president I could have declassified it. ... Now I can't, you know, but this is still a secret," according to the indictment, citing a recording of the interview.

August or September 2021: Trump allegedly shows a classified map relating to a foreign military operation to a representative of his political action committee at his Bedminster golf course, the indictment says. Trump tells the person that he shouldn't be showing anyone the map and that the person shouldn't get too close.

November 2021: Trump directs his executive assistant and "body man" Walt Nauta and another employee to start moving boxes from a storage room to his residence for him to review. Nauta is charged in the indictment as Trump's co-conspirator.

Dec. 7, 2021: Nauta finds that several of Trump's boxes have fallen, spilling papers onto the storage room

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floor, the indictment says. Among them is a document with a "SECRET" intelligence marking. According to the indictment, Nauta texts another Trump employee, "I opened the door and found this," to which the other employee replies, "Oh no oh no."

Late December 2021: The National Archives continues to demand that Trump turn over missing records from his presidency. In late December 2021, a Trump representative tells the agency that 12 boxes of records have been found and are ready to be retrieved.

January 17, 2022: Trump turns over 15 boxes to the National Archives. According to the indictment, Nauta and another Trump employee load them into Nauta's car and take them to a commercial truck for delivery to the agency.

The boxes are found to contain 197 documents with classified markings, including 69 marked confidential, 98 secret and 30 top secret. Some documents have markings suggesting they include information from highly sensitive human sources or the collection of electronic "signals" authorized by a court under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Feb. 9, 2022: The National Archives refers the matter to the Justice Department after a preliminary review finds the boxes contain numerous classified documents. The special agent in charge of the agency's Office of the Inspector General writes, "Of most significant concern was that highly classified records were unfolded, intermixed with other records" and otherwise improperly identified.

Feb. 10, 2022: Trump's Save America PAC releases a statement insisting the return of the documents had been "routine" and "no big deal." Trump insists the "papers were given easily and without conflict and on a very friendly basis," and adds, "It was a great honor to work with" the National Archives "to help formally preserve the Trump Legacy."

Feb. 18, 2022: In a letter to a congressional oversight committee, the National Archives reveals the boxes contained classified information and confirms the Justice Department referral. Trump's Save America PAC releases another statement insisting, "The National Archives did not 'find' anything," but "were given, upon request, Presidential Records in an ordinary and routine process to ensure the preservation of my legacy and in accordance with the Presidential Records Act."

March 30, 2022: The FBI opens its investigation.

April 12, 2022: The National Archives informs Trump that, at the Justice Department's request, it intends to provide the FBI with the 15 boxes he turned over on Jan. 17, 2022. Trump's representative asks for an extension until April 29.

April 26, 2022: The grand jury investigation begins.

April 29, 2022: The Justice Department asks Trump's lawyers for immediate access to the 15 boxes, citing national security interests and the need for "an assessment of the potential damage resulting from the apparent manner in which these materials were stored and transported." Trump's lawyers again ask for an extension, saying they need to review the material to "ascertain whether any specific document is subject to privilege."

May 10, 2022: The National Archives informs Trump's lawyers that it will provide the FBI access to the boxes as soon as May 12.

May 11, 2022: A grand jury issues a subpoena to Trump and his office requiring that they turn over all classified materials in their possession.

May 23, 2022: Trump's lawyers advise him to comply with the subpoena, but Trump balks, telling them, "I don't want anybody looking through my boxes." Prosecutors, citing notes from one of the lawyers, say Trump wondered aloud about dodging the subpoena, asking his counsel, "Wouldn't it be better if we just told them we don't have anything here?" and "isn't it better if there are no documents?"

May 26, 2022: Nauta is interviewed by the FBI and, according to prosecutors, repeatedly lies about his knowledge of the movement of boxes at Mar-a-Lago. Nauta claims he wasn't aware of boxes being brought to Trump's residence for his review and says he didn't know how boxes turned over to the National Archives got to Trump's residence.

Nauta also lies when asked whether he knew where Trump's boxes were stored before they went to his residence and whether they'd been in a secured or locked location, prosecutors say. His reply, according

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to the indictment: "I wish, I wish I could tell you. I don't know. I don't — I honestly just don't know."

June 2, 2022: One of Trump's lawyers returns to Mar-a-Lago to search boxes in the storage room and finds 38 additional classified documents — five documents marked confidential, 16 marked secret and 17 marked top secret. After the search, prosecutors say, Trump asks: "Did you find anything? ... Is it bad? Good?" and makes a plucking motion that the lawyer takes to mean that he should take out anything "really bad" before turning over the papers.

Prior to the search, prosecutors say, Trump had Nauta move 64 boxes from the storage room to his residence. Of those, 30 were moved back to the storage room, leaving 34 boxes in Trump's residence and out of the lawyer's sight.

June 3, 2022: FBI agents and a Justice Department lawyer visit Mar-a-Lago to collect the 38 classified documents from Trump's lawyer. They are in a single accordion folder, double-wrapped in tape. While there, investigators are allowed to go to the storage room, but are "explicitly prohibited" from looking inside boxes, "giving no opportunity" for them "to confirm that no documents with classification markings remained," according to a court filing.

Trump tells investigations he's "an open book," according to the indictment. Another Trump lawyer, acting as his custodian of records, provides investigators a sworn certification that prosecutors say falsely claimed they had conducted a "diligent search" of boxes moved from the White House and "any and all responsive documents" were turned over.

Earlier in the day, prosecutors say, some boxes were loaded onto a plane so Trump could take them to Bedminster for the summer.

June 8, 2022: The Justice Department sends Trump's lawyer a letter asking that the storage room be secured, and that "all of the boxes that were moved from the White House to Mar-a-Lago (along with any other items in that room) be preserved in that room in their current condition until farther notice."

July 2022: The grand jury is shown surveillance video of boxes being moved at Mar-a-Lago.

Aug. 5, 2022: The Justice Department applies for a warrant to search Mar-a-Lago, citing "probable cause" that additional presidential records and classified documents were being stored there. U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart approves the application the same day.

Aug. 8 2022: The FBI searches searches Mar-a-Lago, seizing 102 classified documents — 75 in the storage room and 27 in Trump's office, including three found in office desks.

The Justice Department says in a subsequent court filing that the results call "into serious question" earlier representations by Trump's legal team that they had conducted a "diligent search" and that no classified documents remained.

Aug. 12, 2022: Reinhart makes public the warrant authorizing the Mar-a-Lago search. The document reveals that federal agents are investigating potential violations of three federal laws, including the Espionage Act.

Aug. 26, 2022: A highly redacted version of the affidavit laying out the FBI's rationale for searching Mar-a-Lago is made public.

Aug. 30, 2022: After Trump's lawyers request a special master to review the documents for possible executive privilege, the Justice Department responds with a filing that reveals new details about the investigation and a photo of seized documents with marking like "TOP SECRET//SCI" splayed out on a Mar-a-Lago carpet.

March 24, 2023: One of Trump's lawyers, M. Evan Corcoran, testifies before the Mar-a-Lago grand jury in Washington after being forced to do so by a judge. The Justice Department, in a hugely significant moment in the investigation, succeeded in piercing the attorney-client privilege by arguing that Trump had used Corcoran's legal services in furtherance of a crime.

June 8, 2023: A grand jury in Miami indicts Trump and Nauta. Trump announces the indictment on his Truth Social platform, calling it "a DARK DAY for the United States of America." In a video post, he says, "I'm innocent and we will prove that very, very soundly and hopefully very quickly."

June 9, 2023: The indictment is made public. It shows that Trump is charged with 37 felony counts, including conspiracy to obstruct justice, corruptly concealing a document or record and willful retention

of national defense information. Nauta is charged with six counts, including conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Special counsel Jack Smith, who brought the case, makes a brief public statement at his office in Washington, saying: "Our laws that protect national defense information are critical to the safety and security of the United States and they must be enforced. Violations of those laws put our country at risk."

June 13, 2023: Trump is scheduled to make an initial court appearance at 3 p.m. alongside Nauta at the federal courthouse in Miami.

More on Donald Trump-related investigations: <https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump>

Olympic sprinter Tori Bowie died from complications of childbirth, autopsy report concludes

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — U.S. Olympic champion sprinter Tori Bowie died from complications of childbirth, according to an autopsy report.

Bowie, who won three medals at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, was found dead last month. She was 32.

The report from the office of the medical examiner in Orlando, Florida, said Bowie was estimated to be eight months pregnant and showing signs of undergoing labor when she was discovered dead on May 2. It said she was found in bed in a "secured residence" with possible complications including respiratory distress and eclampsia. The autopsy report said "the manner of death is natural."

Black women have the highest maternal mortality rate in the United States — 69.9 per 100,000 live births for 2021, almost three times the rate for white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

According to the Orange County Sheriff's Office, deputies responded in early May to a home in the area "for a well-being check of a woman in her 30s who had not been seen or heard from in several days." She was later identified as Frentorish "Tori" Bowie.

The toxicology results were negative and the autopsy report listed bipolar disorder in her medical history.

Bowie grew up in Mississippi after being taken in by her grandmother as an infant. She considered herself a basketball player and only reluctantly showed up for track as a teenager, where she blossomed into an elite sprinter and long jumper. She attended Southern Mississippi, where she swept the long jump NCAA championships at the indoor and outdoor events in 2011.

At the 2016 Rio Olympics, Bowie won silver in the 100 and bronze in the 200. She then ran the anchor leg on a 4x100 team with Tianna Bartoletta, Allyson Felix and English Gardner to take gold.

A year later, she won the 100 meters at the 2017 world championships in London. She also helped the 4x100 team to gold.

More AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Transgender and nonbinary people are often sidelined at Pride. This year is different

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Kara Murphy, a transgender woman helping to organize the Union County Pride in a suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina, is heartened to see Pride celebrations across the country, big and small, shining a spotlight on transgender rights this year.

"When we look and see who's standing up for us, it kind of signals the strength of the movement," she said.

Whether it's transgender grand marshals at the massive New York City Pride parade or a photo display of transgender victims of violence at the much smaller festival in Hastings, Nebraska, many celebrations this June are taking a public stand against state legislation targeting transgender people.

Some Prides are putting transgender people front and center at events where they've often been side-

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lined because of a historical emphasis on gay and lesbian rights, along with the same sorts of prejudice and misinformation held by many straight, cisgender people about trans lives.

The growing number of new laws and policies, including restrictions on gender-affirming care, public bathroom use and participation in sports, has prompted Pride organizers to more fully embrace a segment of the LGBTQ+ populace that hasn't always felt included.

While trans activists have always been integral to steps toward greater LGBTQ+ rights, "too often, the larger LGBTQ movement ignored or even actively erased the voices of trans and nonbinary folks," Kierra Johnson, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, said in an email.

"Uplifting trans voices and fighting for trans liberation must be at the forefront of our movement" when the rights of transgender and nonbinary people are "under a coordinated attack," Johnson said.

"We are specifically standing by and being supportive of those who are transgender, because we understand that they're under assault, that their rights are under assault," said Jonathan Swindle, organizer of Pride in Corpus Christi, Texas. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott recently signed legislation that would make Texas the most populous state to ban gender-affirming treatments for minors. At least 20 others have similar bans.

This year, Swindle said, steps to show solidarity include displaying the blue, pink and white transgender flag, offering Pride T-shirts in just pink and blue, involving trans advocacy groups at events, and offering resources for trans people, including legal help with changing gender designations.

Smaller events are also planned that bring people together, but Swindle said those won't be widely advertised because of security concerns and potential threats. This year, he said, "the static in the air and the temperament is so much different" from 2022, when Pride seemed more celebratory.

One transgender board member, he noted, abruptly resigned last month and deactivated their social media accounts because they didn't want to be in the public eye.

"This year, it's like no, we have to fight through our messaging, as well as reach the young generation to help them understand that it's going to be OK," Swindle said. "Yes, they're doing this, but we will be there. There are resources for you."

Prides across the U.S. are using the annual event, often held in June to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York City — an uprising partly led by trans women of color — to highlight their support for transgender people.

Many are also supporting the drag community, which has also been the target of protests and legislation.

In Reading, Pennsylvania, Pride organizer Enrique Castro Jr. said that instead of a parade, a march dedicated to both the trans and drag-performer communities is planned. In addition to displays of flags honoring those communities, there will be a rally afterward at which Dr. Ashley Grant, a specialist in gender-affirming care, will speak and march with the group to her clinic.

The recent Pride in Hastings, a central Nebraska city of 25,000, was "edgier" than past years, acknowledged organizer Randal Kottwitz. With the theme "Rise Up" and dedicated to victims of trans violence, it included a speech by state Sen. Michela Cavanaugh, who told the crowd, "You are loved and you matter." She led the unsuccessful fight against legislation signed into law by Republican Gov. Jim Pillen that bans abortion at 12 weeks of pregnancy and restricts gender-affirming medical care for people younger than 19.

In New York City, where this year's Pride theme is "Strength in Solidarity," organizers selected representatives of the trans community to be among the grand marshals of the June 25 parade. There are also plans to have a float carrying transgender people of color.

AC Dumlao, chief of staff for Athlete Ally, a group that advocates on behalf of LGBTQ and intersex athletes, and a transgender, nonbinary Filipino American, is one of the grand marshals. They welcome the attention at Pride this year.

"It's really important for me to take this opportunity and attention to spotlight kind of what is happening across the country," said Dumlao, noting how nearly half of U.S. states have banned trans athletes from playing in school sports. With a draw of about 2 million spectators on hand, they said the often-televised parade is a great opportunity to spread the message that trans athletes have "always been here."

Murphy said the number of expected spectators at her Pride in North Carolina, planned for September,

will be tiny in comparison with New York and won't include a parade — but that the message will be no less meaningful.

"You can do so much just person to person, just walking around, meeting people at Pride," she said, noting how the festival becomes an opportunity for people to tap into an informal network of people who might know a therapist or doctor or have a trans child who is trying to make friends.

"At this kind of a rural area, you don't get the big demonstrations. You get the little assistance, person to person to person to person, that kind of starts to add up," she said. "And yeah, if I could, we would have just a trans pride parade on Main Street if I could, but I can't do that."

In Connecticut, where restrictions on transgender people are not being proposed, organizers of the Middletown Pride still placed a major focus on trans rights in this year's events, which Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont attended.

"Just seeing everything that's happening in the legislation (elsewhere), we definitely wanted to make it a priority," said Haley Stafford, event coordinator for the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce which helps to organize Middletown Pride. "Just because it's not happening to us right now doesn't mean that it can't end up happening further down the line."

German curator on a mission to return silver heirlooms stolen from Jewish families by the Nazis

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

MUNICH (AP) — Matthias Weniger put on a pair of white cloth gloves and carefully lifted a tarnished silver candleholder, looking for a yellowed sticker on the bottom of it.

The candlestick is one of 111 silver objects at the Bavarian National Museum that the Nazis stole from Jewish families during the Third Reich in 1939. That's when they ordered all German Jews to bring their personal silver objects to pawn shops across the Reich — one of many laws created to humiliate, punish and exclude Jews.

What started with anti-Jewish discrimination and persecution in 1933, after the Nazis were voted to power in Germany, led to the murder of 6 million European Jews and others in the Holocaust before World War II ended with Germany's surrender in 1945.

Weniger, who is a curator at the Munich museum and oversees its restitution efforts, has made it his mission to return as many of the silver objects as possible to the descendants of the original owners.

"These silver objects handed in at the pawn shops are often the only material things that remain from an existence wiped out in the Holocaust," Weniger told The Associated Press in an interview last week at the museum's workshop where he displayed some silver items that have yet to be restituted.

"Therefore it's really important to try to find the families and give back the objects to them," he added.

Thousands of the pieces taken from Jewish families were melted into around 135 tons of silver, and used to help Germany's war efforts. But several museums ended up with hundreds of silver pieces such as candlesticks used to light candles on the eve of Shabbat, Kiddush cups to bless the wine, silver spoons and cake servers.

Some of the items were returned to Holocaust survivors in the 1950s and 1960s, if they came forward and actively tried to retrieve their stolen possessions. But many owners were murdered in the Holocaust or, if they succeeded to flee from the Nazis, ended up in far-flung corners of the globe.

"Two thirds of the last owners did not survive the Shoah," Weniger said.

Despite these odds, and with a combination of thorough detective work, dedication and deep knowledge of history, Weniger has so far managed to return about 50 objects to the family members and relatives of the original owners.

He's convinced that he may be able to return almost all remaining objects by the end of this year.

First, he searches for the identity of the original owners. The little yellowed paper stickers on some of the pieces often help his efforts. They were put on the objects by the pawn shops — a testament to Germans' obsessive bureaucracy even in times of dictatorship and war. The numbers on the stickers are also listed

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on more than 80-year-old documents naming the people who had to give away their silver — sometimes beloved heirlooms that had been passed down in families for many generations.

Once Weniger discovers the names of the original owners, he starts looking up Jewish obituary and genealogy databases, in hopes that direct descendants or more distant relatives may have posted their names online.

"And so you get from one generation to the next generation and you end up with telephone books ... with LinkedIn, with Facebook, with Instagram or email addresses that correspond to a member of the younger generation of that family," the researcher explained.

In most of the cases, Weniger says he gets lucky and is able to track down the right relatives.

The majority of descendants live in the United States and Israel, but the museum has already or is in the process of also returning silver pieces to France, the United Kingdom, Australia and Mexico.

Weniger makes a point of personally delivering the pieces to the families. He traveled to the U.S. earlier this year, and last week, he returned 19 pieces to families in Israel.

There, Weniger met up with Hila Gutmann, 53, and her father Benjamin Gutmann, 86, at his home in Kfar Shmaryahu north of Tel Aviv, and gave them a small silver cup.

Weniger had managed to track down the family with the help of the tracing service of Magen David Adom — Israel's version of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The cup was likely used for Kiddush to bless the wine on the eve of Shabbat — but nobody knows for sure because the original owners, Bavarian cattle dealer Salomon Gutmann and his wife, Karolina, who were the grandparents of Benjamin, were murdered by the Nazis in the Treblinka extermination camp.

"It was a mixed feeling for us to get back the cup," Hila Gutmann said. "Because you understand it's the only thing that's left of them."

While the grandparents of Benjamin Gutmann were murdered in the Holocaust, their son Max — Benjamin's father — survived because he fled from the Nazis to the British-mandated territory of Palestine, in what is now Israel.

Despite the pain triggered by the loss and return of the silver cup, the Gutmanns say they're happy to have it back and plan to use it in a ceremony with all their other relatives on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, in September.

As for Weniger, the Gutmanns have nothing but praise for him and his work.

"He's really dedicated to it," Hila Gutmann said. "He treats these little objects with so much care — like they are holy."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

This story has been corrected to show that Benjamin Gutmann is 86, not 83.

Creative ice cream flavors could make this a sweet, savory, scoop-worthy summer

By KIM COOK Associated Press

Travel anywhere on the planet and you'll find some version of ice cream. Grab a lemon gelato in Italy; a stick of butterscotch kulfi in Nepal; a cinnamon paleta bar in Mexico. If you're in Seoul, try a "J"-shaped puffed corn filled with soft ice cream.

North Americans tend to be loyal to chocolate, vanilla and cookies 'n' cream, according to the International Dairy Foods Association. We like our half gallons or waffle cones stuffed with the fondly familiar.

Still, the world of ice cream isn't immune to change, and like any culinary domain, it's evolving. Recent years have seen an explosion of novel flavor combos, unexpected ingredients and new presentations from ice cream makers large and small, food editors say.

On the flavor front, there are floral ingredients like rose, orange blossom, lavender and jasmine, and

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herbal notes like saffron and tarragon. Unusual combos of savory and sweet are another trend.

"Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream has an 'Everything Bagel' flavor featuring cream cheese ice cream with everything bagel gravel," says Delish.com's Assistant Food Editor Taylor Ann Spencer.

Liz Sgroi, executive director at Food Network Magazine, points to a collab this spring between Van Leeuwen and Hidden Valley on a ranch-dressing-flavored ice cream.

Ice cream makers, like a lot of chefs, are embracing an international pantry, says Alana Al-Hatlani, assistant food editor at Southern Living magazine.

"I've noticed a lot of new citrus flavors beyond lemon, orange and lime, like calamansi, kumquat and mandarin," she says. In her city, Birmingham, Alabama, the artisan ice cream company Big Spoon Creamery has a Key Lime Yuzu Pie flavor, for instance.

Spencer notes Oregon-based ice creamery Salt & Straw for "combos like Pistachio with Saffron, and Hibiscus and Coconut." Other offerings there sound like a warm hug in gelid form: Jasmine Milk Tea laced with chocolate-coated almond slivers, or Rhubarb Crumble with Toasted Anise.

Tyler Malek, who co-founded Salt & Straw with his cousin Kim Malek, says they enjoy partnering with chefs and makers to tell cultural stories through ice cream. In a regional collab, they worked with Florida-based Panther Coffee on a Coffee Chocolate Tres Leches ice cream that launched at Panther's Miami shop. It's now available nationwide through Salt & Straw's website.

One of Tyler Malek's favorites is Strawberry Honey Balsamic with Black Pepper ice cream. To showcase flavorful Oregon strawberries, he worked with a local beekeeper who'd developed a honey balsamic vinegar.

"Adding a splash of that allowed the strawberry flavor to really shine through," Malek says.

Salt & Straw's Thanksgiving lineup features turkey bacon, buttery brittle and jammy cranberry sauce flavors folded into a five-course feast of ice creams.

In Tivoli, New York, in their Fortune's Ice Cream shop, Brian Ackley and his wife, Lisa, offer Halva Honeycomb, based on Middle Eastern sesame candy, and citrus-y Olive Oil Satsuma. Both are non-dairy, born of Brian's wish to create creamy texture without using typical coconut cream or neutral oils. Tahini and oat milk are the keys to the halva flavor, while almond milk is blended with extra virgin olive oil in the satsuma ice cream.

Lisa is Persian, so the couple were delighted to find orchards in the Hudson Valley that could source perfect black cherries for a Labne Sour Cherry ice cream. The labne is similar to tangy Greek yogurt.

Texture also plays a role in the modern ice cream experience.

"Our Cider Donut flavor has whole donuts blended into the base," says Ackley. "And we've got a green apple sorbet made from whole fresh apples – chunks or not chunks, depending on what I feel delivers the best flavor and texture combo that day."

Jeni's recently launched a Ted Lasso ice cream, called Biscuits with the Boss, with shortbread cookies inside.

Sgroi has seen some fun hacks on TikTok, like blended, frozen, sweetened cottage cheese ice cream.

"Another popular one (though slightly less healthy!) is ice cream wrapped in a fruit roll-up. It's gimmicky, messy and a bit hard to eat, but no one seems to mind — the original recipe video has millions of views," she says.

Non-dairy ice creams are evolving to meet modern demand, says Al-Hatlani: "Vegan or plant-based options aren't new, but they're getting better and creamier."

Soft serve is no exception. The New York City ice cream shop Morgenstern's recently opened a dairy-free, soft-service outlet, Morgenstern's Bananas. And in Seattle, the plant-based ice cream shop Frankie & Jo's, also offers the treat.

"Coconut milk ice cream has been popular for the last five years," says Spencer, "but with the rise of oat milk as an alternative, oat milk ice cream is now trending. We're also seeing brands play with new alt-milks in their ice creams, like macadamia nut milk."

Grocery store shoppers are encountering new ice cream flavors and formats from familiar brands. To name just a few: Baskin Robbins has pints of Triple Mango Ice Cream, swirled with real mango, mango sorbet and mango ribbons; Ben and Jerry's has introduced chocolate-coated ice cream bars called pint

slices; and Entenmann's has launched an ice cream sandwich line based on some of their baked goods, like chocolate chip cookies and glazed donuts.

New York-based writer Kim Cook covers design and decor topics regularly for The AP. Follow her on Instagram at @kimcookhome.

For more AP Lifestyles stories, go to <https://apnews.com/hub/lifestyle>.

30,000 Haitian kids live in private orphanages. Officials want to shutter them and reunite families.

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAINT-LOUIS-DU-SUD, Haiti (AP) — Mylouise Veillard was 10 when her mother dropped her off at an orphanage in southern Haiti and promised her a better life. For three years, Mylouise slept on a concrete floor. When she was thirsty, she walked to a community well and hauled heavy buckets of water herself. Meals were scarce, and she lost weight. She worried for her younger brother, who struggled even more than she did at the facility.

It's a familiar story among the estimated 30,000 Haitian children who live in hundreds of orphanages where reports of forced labor, trafficking, and physical and sexual abuse are rampant. In recent months, Haiti's government has stepped up efforts to remove hundreds of these children and reunite them with their parents or relatives as part of a massive push to shut down the institutions, the vast majority of which are privately owned.

Social workers are leading the endeavor, sometimes armed with only a picture and a vague description of the neighborhood where the child once lived. It's an arduous task in a country of more than 11 million people with no residential phonebooks and where many families have no physical address or digital footprint.

"They're almost like detectives," said Morgan Wienberg, co-founder and executive director of Little Footprints, Big Steps, one of several nonprofits that help reunite children and families. "It definitely comes down to a lot of persistence."

The social workers fan out through cities, towns and villages. They walk up hills, navigate mazes of tin-roof shacks and knock on doors. With a smile, they hold up a picture and ask whether anyone recognizes the child.

They find that some orphanages relocated children without notifying their parents, or families were forced to flee violence in their community and lost touch with their kids.

On occasion, social worker Jean Rigot Joseph said he'll show children pictures of landmarks to see if they remember where they lived. If he locates the parents, he'll first determine whether they're open to reunification before revealing he found their child.

Like more than 80% of children in Haiti's orphanages, Veillard and her brother are considered "poverty orphans." Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, with about 60% of the population making less than \$2 a day. When parents can't afford to feed their children, they temporarily place them in orphanages, where they believe they'll receive better care.

"When parents give up their kids to orphanages, they really don't see it as giving their children up forever," Wienberg said.

Roughly 30,000 children out of some 4 million nationwide live in about 750 orphanages across Haiti, according to government figures. Many were built after the devastating 2010 earthquake that killed at least 200,000 people. In the months that followed, the number of orphanages in Haiti skyrocketed by 150%, leading to an increase in trafficking, forced labor and abuse.

A 2018 report by Haiti's Institute of Social Welfare and Research and others found that just 35 of 754 orphanages — less than 5% — met minimum standards and were allowed to operate. Meanwhile, 580 orphanages received the lowest score, meaning the government should order them closed.

In response to the report, Haiti's government has banned construction of new orphanages and shut down existing ones. But closing orphanages can be dangerous. Government officials have been threatened

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or forced to go into hiding as owners seek to keep generous donations flowing from abroad; U.S. faith-based donors are the largest funders of orphanages in Haiti, according to Lumos, a nonprofit that works to reunite children in orphanages worldwide with their families.

There is no group or association that speaks on behalf of orphanages in Haiti since the vast majority are individually owned.

Homes are a necessity for children whose parents cannot feed them or protect them from violence, said Sister Paesie, who founded religious organization Kizito Family in Port-au-Prince. It houses and offers free schooling to some 2,000 children from impoverished slums.

"The idea is to remove them from violence," she said, and parents are invited to visit.

Gangs control up to 80% of Port-au-Prince, according to the U.N., and have been blamed for a surge in killings and kidnappings, especially in areas where children at Kizito Family are from.

Sister Paesie condemned orphanages that are linked to the lucrative adoption business.

"It gives rise to so much abuse instead of trying to help the parents, which we always try to do," she said.

But reuniting children with parents is hard when they've fled violence and have no home, she said.

"In the last month, I have seen so many mothers sleeping on the streets with their children," she said. "I have dozens of mothers asking me every single day to take their children because they have no food to give them."

Reunification efforts have been successful in more rural parts of Haiti where gangs don't have as much control and families can grow their own food.

In rural southern Haiti, some 330 children are now living again with their families. When that day arrived for Mylouse, now 17, and her brother, they were so excited they ran out of the orphanage and left their sandals behind, recalled Renèse Estève, their mother.

They joined Estève, her new partner, their new child and one other sibling in a one-bedroom home by the foot of a mountain where farmers grow corn, potatoes and vetiver, a plant whose oil is used in high-end perfumes.

Wienberg's nonprofit built Estève the home as part of an effort to help support families after reunification to avoid further economic strain and another separation. Other efforts include hiring an agronomist to help families produce crops to eat or sell amid the crippling inflation that has pushed Haitians into even deeper poverty.

Two of the children sleep on the concrete floor; there are only two small beds in their house. Near the beds, the children keep their only toys: a small stuffed moose and teddy bear, a Hello Kitty purse and a "Black Panther" lunchbox.

Estève said leaving children at the orphanage was painful, even though she visited them occasionally. She didn't have a job or a partner to help feed and care for them. During their visits, the kids told her they weren't doing well and asked for food. Estève herself struggled to eat at home, thinking of her two children.

"Sometimes I felt like killing myself," she said.

One day, startled at the weight they'd lost, she decided to pick up the children with the help of social workers. She was convinced they'd be better off in grinding poverty than at the orphanage.

Key to reunification efforts are mentors such as Eluxon Tassy, 32, who works with children living on the street, in orphanages or in transition preparing to return home.

"I understand exactly what they're going through," he said.

He was 4 when his mother dropped him off at an orphanage on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, where he lived for nearly 15 years. He said he also was forced to spend two years with a family that exploited him as a child domestic worker, known in Haiti as a restavek. He never went to school despite promises from the family to enroll him in exchange for cleaning the house and tending to farm animals.

Tassy's first priority when helping children navigate the transition back home is gaining trust and building confidence. He uses art and music, singing the alphabet with the younger ones. He asks how they feel about their orphanage but is careful not to question them too much.

Sometimes he has to explain the concept of a family and the importance of affection if a child doesn't

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remember his parents or has spent much time away from them.

In Estève's case, her children reconnected almost immediately with her. To celebrate, she cooked two meals that day: the traditional Haitian spaghetti breakfast, and later, rice and beans laden with a fish sauce.

"It was easy," she said. "We were a family again."

Today in History: June 14, Continental Army is created

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 14, the 165th day of 2023. There are 200 days left in the year. This is Flag Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Army, forerunner of the United States Army, was created.

On this date:

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the design of the original American flag.

In 1846, a group of U.S. settlers in Sonoma proclaimed the Republic of California.

In 1911, the British ocean liner RMS Olympic set out on its maiden voyage for New York, arriving one week later. (The ship's captain was Edward John Smith, who went on to command the ill-fated RMS Titanic the following year.)

In 1919, John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown embarked on the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1940, German troops entered Paris during World War II; the same day, the Nazis began transporting prisoners to the Auschwitz concentration camp in German-occupied Poland.

In 1943, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, ruled 6-3 that public school students could not be forced to salute the flag of the United States.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a measure adding the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1967, California Gov. Ronald Reagan signed a bill liberalizing his state's abortion law.

In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered a ban on domestic use of the pesticide DDT, to take effect at year's end.

In 1982, Argentine forces surrendered to British troops on the disputed Falkland Islands.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton nominated Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2005, Michelle Wie, 15, became the first female player to qualify for an adult male U.S. Golf Association championship, tying for first place in a 36-hole U.S. Amateur Public Links sectional qualifying tournament.

Ten years ago: The Associated Press reported Minnesota resident Michael Karkoc (KAHR'-kahts) had been a top commander of a Nazi SS-led unit accused of burning villages filled with women and children, then lied to American immigration officials to get into the United States after World War II. Karkoc died Dec. 14, 2019, according to cemetery and public records. He was 100. Major League Baseball came down hard on the Los Angeles Dodgers and Arizona Diamondbacks, handing out eight suspensions and a dozen fines as punishment for a bench-clearing brawl on June 11.

Five years ago: A Justice Department watchdog report on the FBI's handling of the Hillary Clinton email probe criticized the FBI and its former director, James Comey, but did not find evidence that political bias tainted the investigation. AT&T and Time Warner completed their merger, one of the biggest media deals ever, two days after a federal judge approved the combination. Betting on professional sports became legal in New Jersey; the state had fought for eight years against a federal law that limited sports betting to Nevada, Delaware, Montana and Oregon. Attorney General Jeff Sessions cited the Bible in defending the border policy that was separating children from parents; he said the Apostle Paul had commanded that the laws of government should be obeyed because "God has ordained them for the purpose of order."

One year ago: Ukrainian officials said Russian troops controlled about 80% of the fiercely contested eastern city of Sievierodonetsk and destroyed all three bridges leading out of it but authorities were still trying to evacuate the wounded. Raging floodwaters that pulled houses into rivers and forced rescues by

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air and boat across the Yellowstone region began to recede, but tourists and others were still stranded after roads and bridges were knocked out by torrential rains. New York's top court rejected an effort to free Happy the elephant from the Bronx Zoo. The court decided she did not meet the definition of a "person" who was being illegally confined.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Marla Gibbs is 92. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., is 84. Country-rock musician Spooner Oldham is 80. Rock singer Rod Argent (The Zombies; Argent) is 78. Former President Donald Trump is 77. Singer Janet Lennon (The Lennon Sisters) is 77. Rock musician Barry Melton is 76. Actor Will Patton is 69. Olympic gold medal speed skater Eric Heiden (HY'-dun) is 65. Jazz musician Marcus Miller is 64. Singer Boy George is 62. Rock musician Chris DeGarmo is 60. Actor Traylor Howard is 57. Actor Yasmine Bleeth is 55. Actor Faizon Love is 55. Actor Stephen Wallem is 55. International Tennis Hall of Famer Steffi Graf is 54. Actor Sullivan Stapleton is 46. Screenwriter Diablo Cody is 45. Classical pianist Lang Lang is 41. Actor Lawrence Saint-Victor is 41. Actor Torrance Coombs is 40. Actor J.R. Martinez is 40. Actor-singer Kevin McHale is 35. Actor Lucy Hale is 34. Pop singer Jesy Nelson (Little Mix) is 32. Country singer Joel Crouse is 31. Actor Daryl Sabara is 31.