

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, May 24

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, mashed potatoes, sauerkraut, 3 bean salad, chocolate pudding with bananas.

State Track Meet at Sioux Falls

Groton Locke Electric Amateurs at Clark, 8 p.m.

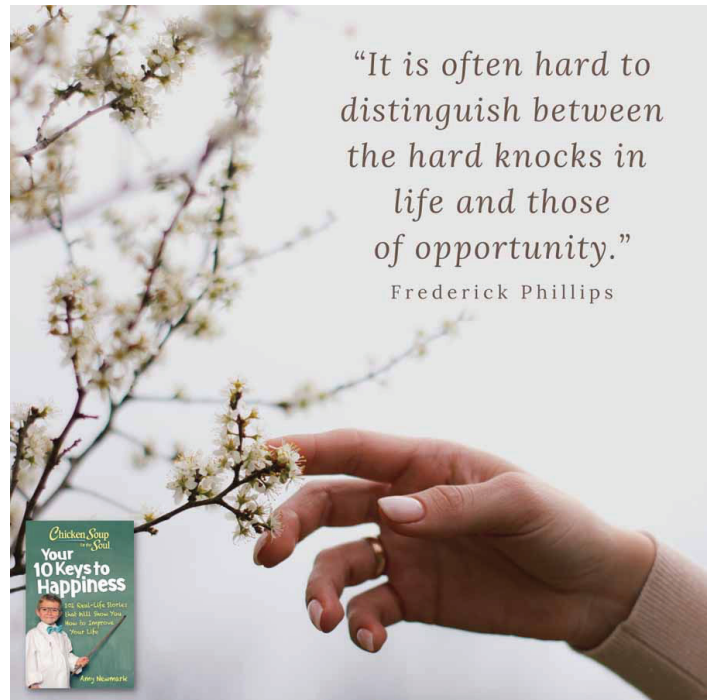
Saturday, May 25

State Track Meet at Sioux Falls

Common Cents Community Thrift Store hours 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



"It is often hard to distinguish between the hard knocks in life and those of opportunity."

Frederick Phillips

Sunday, May 26

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, May 27

Memorial Day

Groton Legion Memorial Day service at Groton Union Cemetery

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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1440

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The National Collegiate Athletic Association and five power conferences—collectively representing more than 60 schools—agreed yesterday to a \$2.8B class-action settlement, paving the way for universities to directly pay college athletes for the first time. If finalized, the plan would go into effect as soon as next year and reverse the amateur college sports model in place since 1906.

The Justice Department and 30 states launched an antitrust lawsuit against Live Nation yesterday in a bid to break up the country's largest concert promoter and ticket seller. The suit alleges Live Nation and its subsidiary Ticketmaster wield a monopoly to reduce competition and increase prices for customers.

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season is expected to have above-normal activity, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicting an 85% chance of 17 to 25 named storms, the highest number NOAA has ever forecast in its preseason outlook.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 108th Indianapolis 500 takes place Sunday (12:30 pm ET, NBC) from Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Footage released of world No. 1 golfer Scottie Scheffler's arrest last week outside PGA Championship venue.

Charlie Colin, founding member of rock band Train, dies at 58 after slipping and falling in shower.

Toronto awarded WNBA franchise, will be first non-US WNBA team when they begin play in 2026. NBA MVP Nikola Jokić, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, and Luka Dončić headline All-NBA team.

Science & Technology

Atomic-level images reveal the first few layers of ice begin to melt around minus 240 degrees Fahrenheit, far below the bulk freezing point; helps resolve decades-old debate over why ice is so slippery.

Researchers discover crows can produce deliberate number of calls on demand, demonstrating counting skills only previously seen in humans.

Study finds two distinct cell groups involved in fentanyl addiction, one developing when the drug is taken and one upon withdrawal; findings may lead to new treatments for opioid dependence.

Business & Markets

Markets tumble (Dow -1.5%, S&P 500 -0.7%, Nasdaq -0.4%), with Dow notching its worst day of 2024 and more than 400 of the S&P 500 falling on the day amid Federal Reserve concerns over persistent inflation. Boeing drops more than 7% as company forecasts negative free cash flow.

US business groups file suit to block Biden administration rule requiring mandatory overtime pay for salaried workers making less than \$1,128 per week; plaintiffs argue regulation would negatively impact small businesses and nonprofits.

Top venture funds a16z, Sequoia, and Tribe reportedly to join \$6B funding round for Elon Musk's artificial intelligence xAI startup; raise values the company at \$18B.

Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court rejects claim that removal of Black voters from swing district constitutes illegal gerrymandering. Democrats call for investigation of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito after controversial flag reported flown outside his vacation home.

Louisiana state Senate passes a bill treating abortion medication as controlled substances akin to Ambien, Valium, and Xanax; if signed into law, anyone who is not pregnant or a licensed medical provider could face up to five years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines if found carrying mifepristone or misoprostol.

China holds military drills around Taiwan following inauguration of President William Lai; Taiwanese officials say the drills mark first-ever simulation of a full-scale attack as opposed to economic blockade.

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Hours: M-F 10-6
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State Track Meet First Day Results

Boy's Division

100 Meters Class A - Prelims: 5. Keegen Tracy, 1.08.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800] Class A - Finals: 17. Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, Keegen Tracy, Blake Pauli, 3:50.31.

Girl's Division

4x100 Relay Class A - Prelims: 13. Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy, McKenna Tietz, Rylee Dunker, 52.22.

4x800 Relay Class A - Finals: 8. Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, Rylee Gilbert, Kella Tracy, 10:01.34.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800] Class A - Finals: 24. Jerica Locke, Rylee Dunker, Laila Roberts, Ashlynn Warrington, 4:36.21.

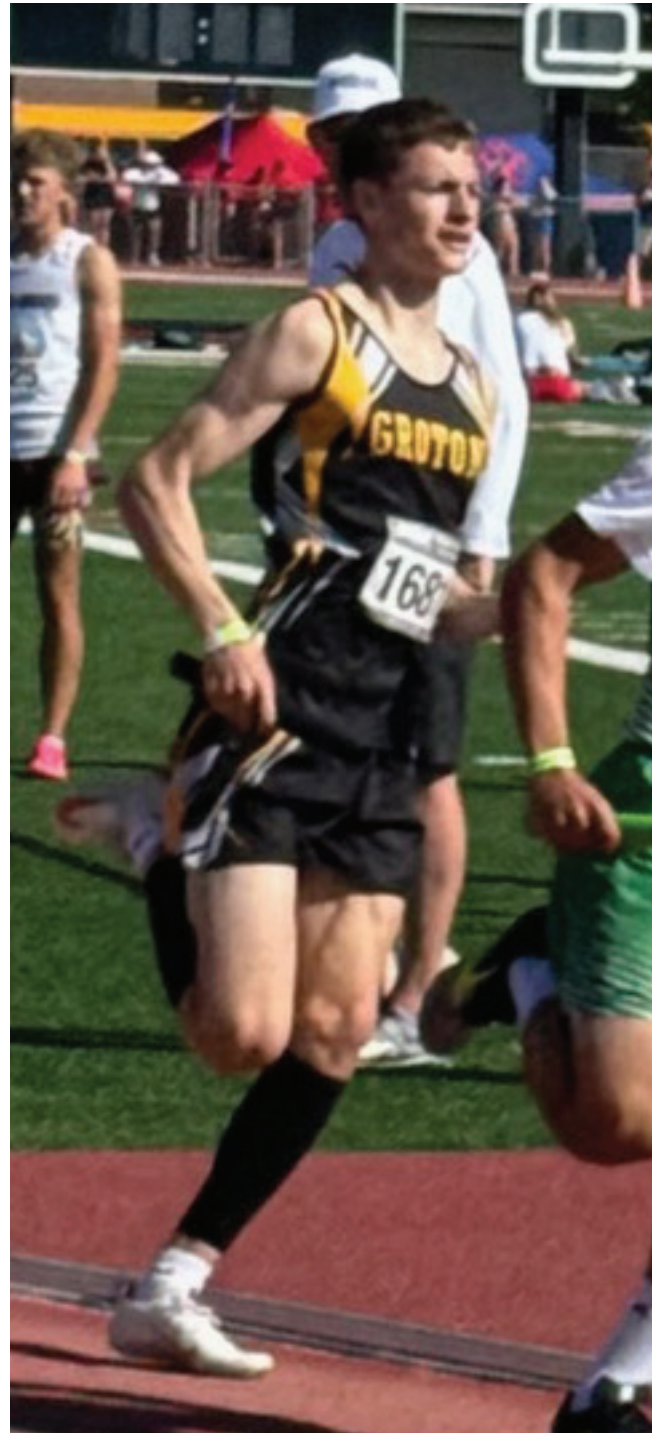
Ashlynn Warrington anchors Girls 3200 Meter Relay at the South Dakota State Track & Field meet. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Lane Tietz hands off to Colby Dunker in the Boys Sprint Relay finals. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



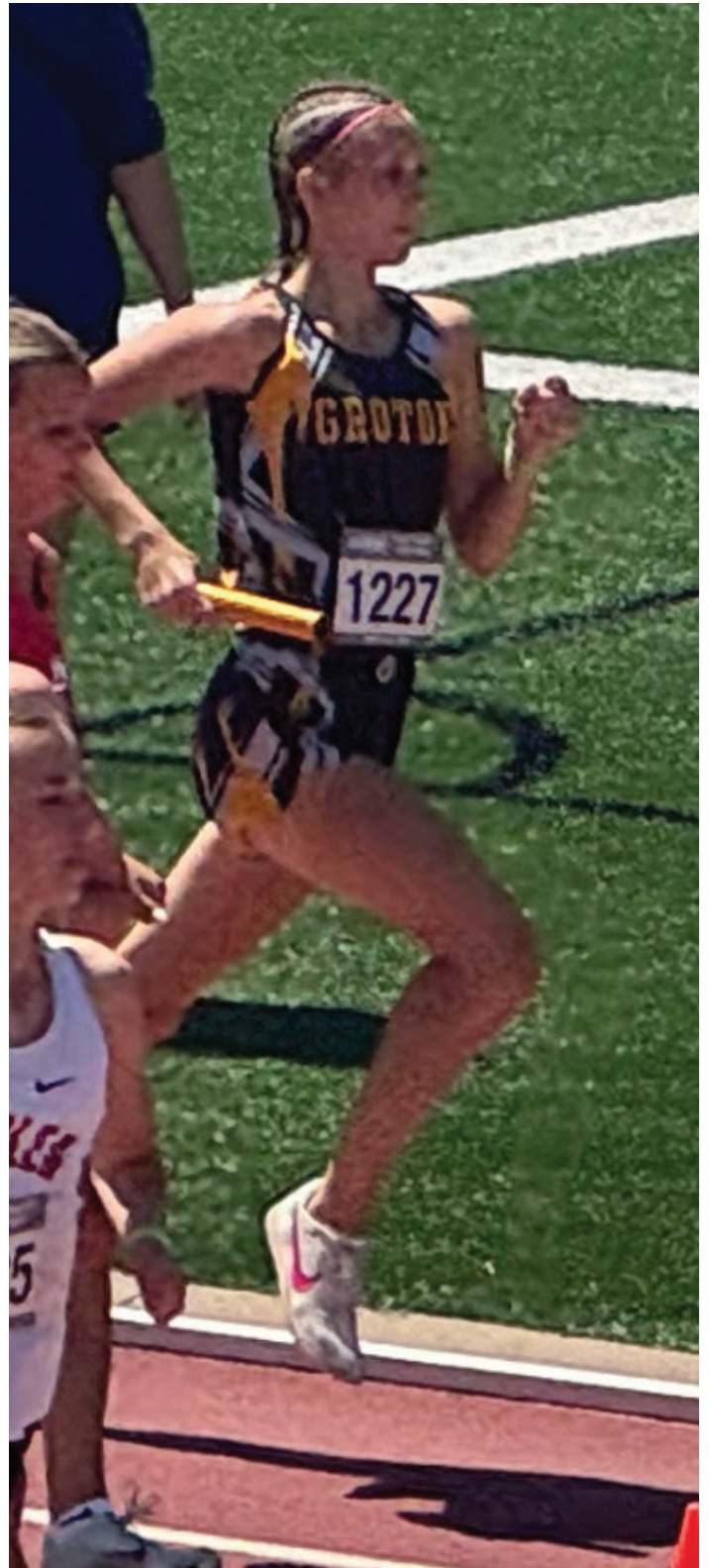
Keegen Tracy running third leg of the Boys Sprint Relay finals. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Blake Pauli runs the anchor leg of the Boys Sprint Medley final. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Taryn Traphagen leads off the Girls 3200 meter Relay finals. (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area Golf Team qualifies for state

Pictured are Carly Guthmiller, Carly Gilbert, Mia Crank, Claire Schuelke and Carlee Johnson.

(Courtesy Photo by Joel Guthmiller)

The Groton Area girls golf team qualified for state, placing in the top three in the regional meet held Thursday at the Olive Grove Golf Course in Groton.

Aberdeen Roncalli won the team title with 379 points followed by Madison with 380 and Groton Area with 407. After that it was Milbank with 451 and Sioux Valley with 454.

Carly Guthmiller placed second, just one stroke behind Roncalli's Grace Seyer. Seyer had an 88 and Guthmiller and 89. Carlee Johnson placed 14th with 103, Mia Crank was 16th with a 105, Claire Schuelke was 21st with a 110 and Carly Gilbert was 26th with a 122.

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Board of Regents Institutions Provide Annual Update

PIERRE, SD – During last week’s board meeting, South Dakota Board of Regents President Tim Rave emphasized that the South Dakota system stands strong, particularly in comparison to neighboring states. The Board of Regents (BOR) is a nine-member governing body for our state’s six public universities and two special schools and is dedicated to the betterment of the state, the advancement of education, and the success of our students. By putting the student first and freezing tuition for five years, BOR is ensuring that our graduates will save big and go far in South Dakota.

Throughout the meeting, each South Dakota Board of Regents institution provided a brief yet comprehensive overview of the latest developments and activities occurring across their campuses. This annual overview was an opportunity to publicly highlight the successes occurring within the Regental system and the current focus area of each university and special school under the Board’s control.

“The South Dakota Board of Regents system is leading the way in providing high-quality, affordable educational offerings,” said BOR Executive Director Nathan Lukkes. “The updates presented to the Board highlighted many exciting activities and opportunities on our campuses, as well as a few challenges. These initiatives will help shape the future of our public university system.”

Black Hills State University: Nearly six months into his leadership, President Steve Elliott has strategically focused on two main topics: partnerships and enrollment. Building on the existing Strategic Enrollment Plan for Black Hills State University, the institution’s focus is on graduate enrollment, growing Black Hills State University—Rapid City, and building upon its successes on Ellsworth Airforce Base. BHSU is also embarking on a new civics initiative for the university system. They will spearhead the development of the Center for Civic Engagement, which will design programming, organize events, and create supporting resources to benefit students across the state.

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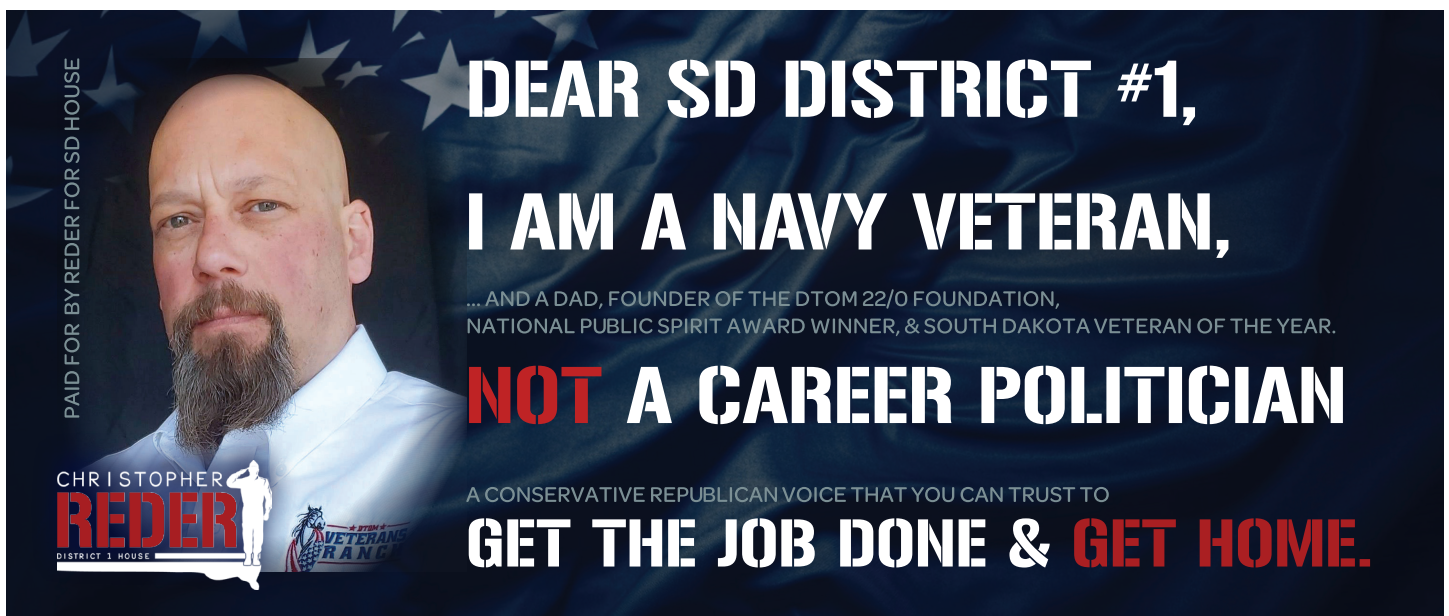
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Dakota State University: President José Marie Griffith began her update by celebrating the accomplishments Dakota State University has seen over the past year. Through the success of their recruitment marketing campaign, they have attracted faculty and students to the university's expanding computer science programs. President Griffiths highlighted DSU's programs and mentioned their impressive 99 percent placement rate. In addition, 85 percent of in-state students continue to live and work in South Dakota, and an additional 10 percent of out-of-state students join our state's workforce.

Northern State University: After years of strategic capital investments, Northern State University's campus continues to transform, with new facilities and infrastructure enhancing the Aberdeen community. Earlier this spring, NSU broke ground on the Business and Health Innovation Center, aiming to meet critical business, banking, finance, accounting, and nursing workforce needs. Gerber Hall is also transforming to better suit student, staff, and visitor needs. NSU President Neal Schnoor explained that the hall is home to vital programs such as the School of Education, Teacher Education, Sports Sciences, Psychology, and Counselor Education.

South Dakota Mines: President Rankin's update for South Dakota Mines focused on research growth. In the past six years, the special-focused university has grown its research from 13 million dollars to 23 million dollars in awards. The Nucor Mineral Industries Building will be completed later this year and will be the hub for geology, geological engineering, mining engineering, and metallurgical engineering programs. The facility will provide state-of-the-art teaching and research spaces for these core disciplines. Research numbers are just one of the factors on the rise. SDM retention rates hit 84 percent this year, and persistence rates from the fall to the spring semester were 94 percent. An excellent way to complete his final academic year, as President Rankin begins his retirement next month.

South Dakota State University: Eyes on the future were the focus of South Dakota State University's update, and for our state's largest land-grant university, the future is research. SDSU President Barry Dunn revealed the institution's plan to obtain R1 Carnegie Classification, a first for South Dakota. This reclassification would offer a vibrant and compelling learning environment for students and knowledgeable business spinoffs for the city of Brookings and other communities. South Dakota will benefit from economic growth, business expansion facilitated by emerging technology, and an educated workforce, all powered by the growing research impacts.



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CHRISTOPHER
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DISTRICT 1 HOUSE

LET'S GET THE
VETERANS
RANGING

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University of South Dakota: Building renovation and preservation has been a priority for the University of South Dakota over the past few years. The South Dakota Union Building is undergoing significant updates that will transform the space for one of USD's largest departments. Home to the Department of Psychology, Psychological Service Center, the Disaster Mental Health Institute, and the Advance Visualization Laboratory, students and faculty will be welcomed back to campus this fall to enhanced classroom and lab spaces. Preservation projects like this will continue on the Vermillion campus as the Churchill-Haines Laboratory begins renovations later this year.

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired: The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a K12 accredited school by the South Dakota Department of Education under the control of the South Dakota Board of Regents. Superintendent Jessica Vogel provided an update on the Aberdeen campus and the school's outstanding services. Located on the Northern State University campus, SDSBVI continues to build on its relationships with many of the university's programs.

South Dakota Services for the Deaf: The South Dakota Services for the Deaf is also under the control of the Board of Regents and is an all-outreach program for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. With physical locations in Sioux Falls and Rapid City and a statewide presence, SDSD was able to perform more than 22,000 hearing screenings in 2023. Since 2009, when SDSD programming switched to entirely outreach, its client numbers have grown by nearly 90 percent.



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MEMORIAL DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



Groton Post #39 Memorial Day Schedule

Hufton at 7:30 a.m.

James at 8:15 a.m.

Verdon at 8:45 a.m.

Bates-Scotland at 9:15 a.m.

Ferney at 10 a.m.

Andover Catholic at 11 a.m.

Groton at Noon
Guest speaker at Groton
is Rod Zastrow.

**Lunch to follow at the Groton Post
#39 home served by the Legion Aux-
iliary.**

**In the event of inclement weather,
the ceremony will be held at the
Post home.**

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the FREE viewing of the broadcast
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Name Released in McCook County Fatal Motorcycle Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Valley Road and 249th Street, six miles north of Montrose, SD

When: 12:55p.m. Saturday, May 18, 2024

Driver 1: Chad Carter Bauer, 55-year-old male from Hartford, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2007 Harley Davidson

Helmet Use: No

Union County, S.D.- A 55-year-old man died Saturday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash six miles north of Montrose, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Chad C. Bauer was driving a 2007 Harley Davidson motorcycle and headed southbound on Valley Road. Having stopped at a stop sign, Bauer then accelerated quickly away and continued to accelerate, losing control going into a curve and entered the west ditch. The motorcycle rolled several times throwing Bauer off. He was not wearing a helmet and died from injuries sustained in the crash.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

U.S. House panel debates nutrition benefit changes in GOP farm bill proposal

SD Rep. Johnson, other Republicans spar with Democrats over food assistance

BY: ALLISON WINTER - MAY 23, 2024 10:15 PM

WASHINGTON — Democrats and Republicans on the U.S. House Agriculture Committee clashed late into the evening Thursday over funding for food and nutrition programs as part of Republicans' sweeping proposal for the new five-year farm bill.

The committee's \$1.5 trillion omnibus farm bill would set policy and funding levels for agriculture and conservation programs for the next five years, as well as for food and nutrition programs for families in need.

House Agriculture Chair Glenn "GT" Thompson, a Pennsylvania Republican, introduced the long-awaited bill last week and his panel undertook a marathon markup Thursday. The committee is expected to vote on a series of amendments and the bill around midnight Eastern.

The bill is tied up over disagreements between Democrats and Republicans on a funding calculation that would place limits on the formula that calculates benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, the food aid program formerly referred to as food stamps.

Democrats said Thursday it would lead to cuts in SNAP and kill any future of bipartisan support for the farm bill, which it would need to pass the Senate.

"There is absolutely no way you are going to get a farm bill unless we take care of this business, which is the heart of the matter," Rep. David Scott of Georgia, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said of the SNAP funding mechanism.

As the House committee debated the bill, Michigan Democrat Debbie Stabenow, the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said in an interview Thursday that the legislation has no chance in the Senate.

"It tears up the farm and food coalition and does not have the votes to pass on the House floor. And certainly not in the Senate," Stabenow told States Newsroom.

Nutrition programs account for the majority of farm bill spending. There are more than 41 million people who use SNAP benefits, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Dems pan changes to SNAP funding

Thompson's bill would limit future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, the formula that calculates benefits for SNAP. This would result in a nearly \$30 billion reduction in spending over ten years, based on the estimates from the Congressional Budget Office, lawmakers say.

Democrats say that would significantly reduce food purchasing power for needy Americans.

"Any effort that takes the food off the table for hard-working families takes my vote off the table," said Rep. Gabe Vasquez, a Democrat from New Mexico.

"If we want a farm bill that is able to pass into law with the bipartisan levels that it requires to pass beyond this committee, it is necessary that we go back to the negotiating table and remove this provision," said Colorado Democrat Yadira Caraveo.

Connecticut Democrat Jahana Hayes offered an amendment that would have struck the changes to the program. But after more than two hours of impassioned debate on the issue Thursday night, the amend-

ment failed on a party-line vote, 25-29.

"It is unfathomable that we are once again attacking the most vulnerable in this country, the hungry," Hayes told the committee. "There are components of the bill that are promising, but that should not come at the expense of the most vulnerable."

Republicans defend new formula

The underlying issue is cost projections for the farm bill over the next 10 years. The farm bill has to remain budget neutral, so lawmakers must fit their proposals into a baseline of how much the government would spend if the current farm bill was extended.

Republicans insist the SNAP changes are a cost calculation that would not actually reduce food support for needy families. The change would not kick in until 2027 and would not directly reduce current SNAP levels. Rather, it would freeze the list of products that families can buy with their benefits and the values allowed to purchase them, except for increases from inflation.

As such, the limits would make it more difficult for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to add new items to SNAP or offer more support for certain categories, like the Biden administration did in 2021 when it increased the benefit for fruits and vegetables.

New York Republican Mark Molinaro said it is "dishonest" to describe the changes as a cut to SNAP benefits and South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson said the benefits on the electronic benefit cards for SNAP would not go down.

But Democrats pointed to the CBO cost estimates that project a reduction in federal spending for SNAP if the bill became law.

"Let's not try to make believe that this is no big deal, it is a huge deal... we need to do better," said Massachusetts Democrat Rep. Jim McGovern.

California Democrat Salud Carbajal said Republicans were trying to "have it both ways."

"If the committee's considering it a paid-for then that is funding you are taking away from hungry families," said Carbajal.

The farm bill funds programs across 12 titles for five years. The massive bill stitches together support for agriculture producers, energy and conservation programs on farmland and food and nutrition programs for families in need.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack raised concerns this week that the Republican proposal's adjustment to SNAP benefits threatened that coalition.

The Republican bill would increase farm "safety net" payments for some commodity crops, expand eligibility for disaster assistance and increase funding for speciality crops, organic farmers and dairy farmers.

It is expected to cost \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. A title-by-title summary of the 942-page bill can be available online.

Allison Winter is a Washington D.C. correspondent for States Newsroom, a network of state-based nonprofit news outlets that includes South Dakota Searchlight.

Republican runs afoul of anti-abortion groups after labeling their phone calls a 'scam'

Hansen says Secretary of State Johnson has done 'irreversible' damage to the cause

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 23, 2024 4:30 PM

A top Republican state official has run afoul of anti-abortion groups after labeling their recent phone operation a "scam."

The controversy started May 13 with a news release from South Dakota Secretary of State Monae Johnson, who oversees elections. The release warned about phone calls from people who allegedly claimed to work for her office.

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The callers were contacting people who had signed a petition to place an abortion-rights measure on the ballot in the Nov. 5 election. The phone operation was part of a coordinated attempt to gather information for a legal challenge to the petition, and to inform people that they could withdraw their signatures.

Johnson's news release said callers were "impersonating" her staff and "trying to pressure voters into asking that their name be removed" from the petitions. The release included a quote from Johnson: "Citizens in South Dakota, by law, have the right to petition and people like these scammers are eroding public trust in the election process," she said.

Johnson asked Attorney General Marty Jackley, a fellow Republican, to look into the calls. He announced one day later that no laws were broken, and subsequently told South Dakota Searchlight that callers did not impersonate anyone or claim to work for the secretary of state.

'Irreversible damage' alleged

The episode angered state Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, who was involved in the phone operation. He is the vice president of the board of South Dakota Right to Life and co-chair of the Life Defense Fund.

"By labeling our lawful activity as a scam, Secretary of State Johnson has done significant and irreversible damage to the pro-life movement in South Dakota," Hansen said in a statement to Searchlight.

Johnson did not answer Searchlight's request for a response to Hansen's comment. She was elected in November 2022 after convincing delegates to the state Republican convention earlier that year to nominate her instead of the incumbent secretary of state, Steve Barnett.

Johnson's news release labeling anti-abortion activists' efforts a scam could be a problem for her political future if it proves to be a "burr in the pro-life movement's saddle," said Lisa Hager, associate professor of political science at South Dakota State University.

The ballot measure would amend the state constitution to include abortion rights. Hager said if a legal challenge removes the measure from the ballot, or if it makes the ballot and voters reject it, Johnson's news release could end up being "a blip on the radar."

"A lot of what happens with this probably hinges on what happens with the abortion amendment," Hager said.

Jackley explains findings

Jackley said in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight that two state laws are relevant to the phone-call controversy.

One law says falsely pretending to be a public official is a crime. Although the Secretary of State's Office said callers were "impersonating" the office's staff, Jackley said that wasn't the case. He said callers read a script identifying themselves as volunteers for a group that obtained information about petition signers from the Secretary of State's Office.

"Nobody called and said they were with the secretary of state," Jackley said. "There was no impersonation."

South Dakota Petition Integrity is a political action committee that Hansen registered on May 13, the same day Johnson issued her press release.

Another state law says it's a crime to impersonate a public official while injuring or defrauding someone.

"We have to prove both," Jackley said, adding that no impersonation occurred, and there is no evidence anyone was tricked into removing their signature, nor that any other legal damages occurred.

Challenge to petition expected

Dakotans for Health is the ballot question committee supporting the abortion-rights amendment. The group's lawyer, Jim Leach, declined to comment on the lack of criminal charges against the phone operation because "we're about to be sued by Life Defense Fund."

Life Defense Fund, a ballot question committee organized to defeat the ballot measure, has already said it will challenge the validity of petition signatures. People associated with the committee have alleged some petition signers were duped into believing they were signing a petition to repeal the state sales tax

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on groceries, when they were actually signing the abortion-rights petition. Dakotans for Health circulated both petitions.

Republican legislators laid part of the groundwork for a legal challenge by passing a bill in March allowing people to withdraw their petition signatures.

Hansen, who was a prime sponsor of that bill, said the phone campaign was part of the "independent research into the validity of the petition signatures" that "is a requirement upon us to bring our challenge under South Dakota law."

The Secretary of State's Office has since announced that the abortion-rights petition had enough signatures from registered voters to be placed on the ballot. That triggered a 30-day window in which opponents can challenge the petition's validity. Hansen and his Life Defense Fund co-chair said they'll file a challenge "at the appropriate time."

Abortions are currently banned in the state, except to "preserve the life of the pregnant female." The ballot measure, if approved by voters, would legalize abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy but allow the state to impose limited regulations in the second trimester and a ban in the third trimester, with exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

Dakotans for Health Chairman Rick Weiland described the phone campaign as unethical.

"We knew all this would happen once that signature removal bill passed," Weiland said. "They did and continue to misrepresent the ballot measure."

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Commission awards millions to airports around the state

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MAY 23, 2024 4:29 PM

A state commission approved grants for more than \$3 million worth of airport improvement projects Thursday.

The projects at eight airports approved by the South Dakota Aeronautics Commission will utilize local funds with federal and state grants:

Aberdeen: \$110,000 for runway safety equipment, \$99,000 federal share, \$5,500 state share, \$5,500 local share.

Hot Springs: \$454,437 for an expansion of a hangar taxi lane and approaches, \$324,000 federal share, \$18,000 state share, \$112,437 local share.

Milbank: \$100,000 to reconstruct its runway turnaround, \$90,000 federal share, \$5,000 state share, \$5,000 local share.

Onida: \$420,000 for the design and construction of an Automated Weather Observing System to provide weather data to pilots and operational safety for both commercial and agricultural activities, \$378,000 federal share, \$21,000 state share, \$21,000 local share.

Sioux Falls: \$460,000 to expand its east cargo apron as part of a broader effort to accommodate increasing cargo traffic and operational demand, \$414,000 federal share, \$23,000 state share, \$23,000 local share.

Tea: \$1.33 million for the reconstruction of a hangar taxi lane at Marv Skie/Lincoln County Airport, \$1.197 million federal share, \$66,500 state share, \$66,500 local share.

Wagner: \$360,000 toward engineering for an Automated Weather Observing System system and subsequent construction, \$324,800 federal share, \$18,000 state share, \$18,000 local share.

Yankton: \$100,000 for the design and bidding of pavement reconstruction, \$80,600 federal share, \$4,500 state share, \$14,900 local share.

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Forced sterilizations for people with disabilities decried by members of Congress

South Dakota lacks specific law on issue, group says

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 23, 2024 6:05 PM

WASHINGTON — Three members of Congress introduced a resolution Thursday that's intended to bring attention to the experiences and challenges people with disabilities face when it comes to reproductive rights.

Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Ayanna Pressley announced the resolution during a press conference with advocates just steps from the U.S. Capitol, saying that under a Supreme Court ruling still in effect, people with disabilities can be sterilized without their consent.

"Buck v. Bell is a decision of the United States Supreme Court in which the court ruled on May 2, 1927, affirming the constitutionality of Virginia's law allowing state-enforced sterilization," Pressley said.

Pressley said people outside of the disability rights community often aren't aware of the ruling or the fact it has never been challenged.

"They're in disbelief that this even happened and that this ruling authorizes involuntary sterilization of people with disabilities and has never been overturned," Pressley said.

Unique barriers

The four-page resolution would designate one day in May as Disability Reproductive Equity Day.

The resolution says that "people with disabilities face unique barriers when accessing reproductive health care," including harmful stereotypes, communication barriers and a lack of accessible health care facilities, among other obstacles.

It adds that Congress "pledges to advance the right of people with disabilities to reproductive and sexual health, autonomy, and freedom."

Illinois Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth and Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray introduced the companion resolution in that chamber.

Murray wrote in a statement announcing the introduction that "Americans with disabilities have long had to jump through extra hoops and faced real discrimination when it comes to accessing the health care they need, including abortion care."

"Access to reproductive health care has been in crisis since the Dobbs decision, making it even harder for people with disabilities to access high-quality care from providers who understand their health care needs," Murray wrote. "It's important that we recognize the barriers millions of women face in accessing reproductive health care, and this resolution is an important marker for us all to recommit to the fight for reproductive justice for all."

Co-sponsors in the House include New Jersey Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, Pennsylvania Rep. Madeleine Dean and Washington Rep. Adam Smith. All are Democrats.

Access to full slate of care

Rebecca Cokley, program officer for disability rights at the Ford Foundation, told a story during the press conference about how after having her middle child, the anesthesiologist told the OB-GYN to "tie her tubes," adding that "people like her don't need to have any more babies."

Cokley said her OB-GYN could have "advocated for that and it would have been perfectly legal."

"When we talk about reproductive justice, it's about the idea that all women, all people have the right to have children, the right to not have children," Cokley said. "The right to nurture the children we have in a safe and healthy environment."

Jess Davidson, communications director at the American Association of People with Disabilities, discussed how access to the full slate of reproductive health care, including abortion, is crucial for people with disabilities.

Members of the community, she said, "have an 11 times greater risk of mortality from pregnancy."

"I know all too well the fear that comes with living with that kind of risk," Davidson said. "I felt deep in

my bones as a young woman that I was made for motherhood.”

After being diagnosed with an illness in her mid-20s that significantly increased her chances of miscarriage or maternal mortality, Davidson said she spoke with her doctor about whether or not she should ever get pregnant.

“I was devastated when I first learned this, but my doctor assured me that if I was willing to get an abortion if it were necessary to save my life and work closely with a high-risk obstetrician, that I could try and see how it went,” Davidson said. “After all, every person and every pregnancy is different.”

That was all before the Supreme Court in 2022 overturned the constitutional right to an abortion that had stood for nearly 50 years under two prior rulings.

“Now when I think about attempting a high-risk pregnancy, I feel so fearful that it feels like I can’t breathe,” she said. “And I am someone who lives in Colorado and Washington, D.C., two places where my right to that life-saving care is still intact.”

Many people with disabilities who want to have children, Davidson said, now live in states that ban or significantly restrict abortion access, even if continuing a pregnancy threatens their life or health.

Forced sterilization in state laws

Ma’ayan Anafi, senior counsel for health equity and justice at the National Women’s Law Center, said that 31 states have laws in place that allow forced sterilization of people with disabilities.

“These laws give judges the power to disregard a disabled person’s wishes and make the decision for them, supposedly for their own good,” Anafi said.

“In doing so they echo many of the same harmful narratives that fueled forced sterilizations ... that disabled people can’t or shouldn’t make decisions about their bodies and parenting,” Anafi added. “And that it’s justifiable to take those choices away to protect disabled people from themselves.”

Forced sterilization in South Dakota

According to the National Women’s Law Center, there is no specific law on forced sterilizations in South Dakota:

“In South Dakota, the guardian can usually make health care decisions for the person under guardianship. But the law does not say anything about sterilization specifically. In some states, courts have said that this kind of general law about health care allows forced sterilizations. In other states, courts have said that the law has to mention sterilization specifically. We do not know what a court in South Dakota would say. Also, in South Dakota, there is a law about health care during an emergency. The law says that if someone cannot consent during an emergency (like if they are not awake), a doctor cannot do a sterilization. But this law is only about emergencies.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Bipartisan border bill loses support, fails procedural vote in U.S. Senate

South Dakota Republicans Thune and Rounds both vote no

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 23, 2024 4:42 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate failed Thursday to advance a border security bill as both parties seek to hone their messages on immigration policy in the runup to November’s elections.

The Senate bill failed to advance on a 43-50 procedural vote, with South Dakota Republicans John Thune and Mike Rounds both voting no. The chamber already rejected the measure as part of a broader foreign aid package earlier this year. The bill, negotiated with the White House and a bipartisan trio of senators

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in the hopes of winning broad appeal, would have overhauled immigration law for the first time in more than 30 years.

Two of the border deal's chief Senate negotiators, Oklahoma Republican James Lankford and Arizona independent Kyrsten Sinema, voted against advancing the measure Thursday, protesting what they said was an unserious process focused on political optics. The bill's third major sponsor, Connecticut Democrat Chris Murphy, voted in favor.

The procedural vote to advance to debate on the bill came as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer aimed to contrast Democrats' approach to immigration policy with Republicans' ahead of the November elections. The issue continues to rise as a top concern for voters and remains a core campaign theme for the GOP and its presumptive presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump.

Both chambers are readying other votes seemingly aimed at highlighting election themes.

The Democratic-led Senate is teeing up votes as early as next month on access to contraceptives, and protections for in vitro fertilization, or IVF, as Democrats have continued to campaign on the issue of reproductive rights.

The Republican-controlled House is moving forward with immigration related legislation, such as barring noncitizens from voting in federal elections, something that is rare and already illegal, as the GOP continues to highlight its disagreements with the White House over immigration policy.

Shortly after the Senate vote, President Joe Biden in a statement said Senate Republicans "put partisan politics ahead of our country's national security."

"Congressional Republicans do not care about securing the border or fixing America's broken immigration system," he said. "If they did, they would have voted for the toughest border enforcement in history."

Losing support

The border security bill, S.4361, received fewer votes Thursday as a standalone bill than it had as part of the larger foreign aid package in February, when it failed on a 49-50 procedural vote. Sixty votes are needed to advance bills in the Senate.

The bill did not get all Democrats on board, which Schumer acknowledged earlier this week was a possibility.

"We do not expect every Democrat or every Republican to come out in favor of this bill," Schumer said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "The only way to pass this bill – or any border bill – is with broad bipartisan support."

But the bill failed to attract that broad support, losing backing even from Democrats who'd voted for the foreign aid package.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker said in a Wednesday statement that while he voted for the larger package in early February – mostly because it included critical aid to Ukraine – he would not do so this time around because the bill was too restrictive.

"I will not vote for the bill coming to the Senate floor this week because it includes several provisions that will violate Americans' shared values," Booker said. "The proposed bill would exclude people fleeing violence and persecution from seeking asylum and instead doubles down on failed anti-immigrant policies that encourage irregular immigration."

'Another cynical, political game'

Democratic senators who voted against moving the bill forward included Alex Padilla and Laphonza Butler of California, Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Booker. Independents Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Sinema also voted against.

Sinema said she voted against advancing her own bill because she felt Democrats were using her bill to "point the finger back at the other party."

"Yet another cynical, political game," she said.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska was the only Republican to vote to advance the bill after Lankford voted

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against the bill he helped write.

Lankford said Thursday's vote was "a prop."

"Everyone sees this for what it is," he said. "It is not an actual effort to make law, it is an effort to do political messaging."

Padilla, who voted against the larger package, said on the Senate floor Thursday that he was disappointed Democrats were voting on the bill again because it did not address the root causes of migration or create lawful pathways to citizenship for children brought into the U.S. without authorization known as Dreamers, farmworkers, and noncitizens who have been in the country for decades.

He urged other Democrats to vote no.

"The proposal before us was initially supposed to be a concession, a ransom to be paid to Republicans to pass urgent and critical aid to Ukraine," Padilla said. "What's this concession for now? It's hard to swallow."

Senate Republicans accused Democrats of bringing the bill as a political stunt.

"One thing the American people don't have to wonder about is why Washington Democrats are suddenly championing at the bit to convince their constituents that they care about border security," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said on the Senate floor Thursday. "(Americans) know the solution is not cynical Senate theater."

Biden called McConnell and House Speaker Mike Johnson on Monday night to ask them to vote for the bill, but both Republican leaders rejected that appeal.

First vote

Lankford, Sinema and Murphy introduced the bill earlier this year, optimistic that months of bipartisan negotiations could lead to the first immigration policy overhaul in decades.

But Trump opposed the measure, and after those senators released the legislative text, House Republicans said they would fall in line with the former president. Senate Republicans then walked away from the deal they had said would be needed in order for passage of a supplemental foreign aid package to Ukraine, Israel and the Indo-Pacific region.

The sweeping border security bill would have raised the bar for migrants claiming asylum, clarified the White House's parole authority, ended the practice of allowing migrants to live in U.S. communities as they await their asylum hearings, and given Biden the executive authority to close the southern border when asylum claims reached high levels, among other things.

Dueling messages

The day leading up to Thursday's vote, Senate Democrats and Republicans held dueling press conferences on the bill.

Democrats, including Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow, argued that the bill negotiated earlier in the year would address the fentanyl crisis by providing new scanning technology at ports of entry and increasing staffing for custom agents.

Stabenow said she's tired of Senate Republicans saying that "somebody should do something about the border," and that Thursday's vote would give them an opportunity to address the southern border.

She was joined by Democratic Sens. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, who talked about how many people in their states had died from fentanyl overdoses.

Republicans in their press conference argued that Democrats were holding a second vote to protect vulnerable incumbents in competitive races in Montana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

"It is an election-year political stunt designed to give our Democratic colleagues the appearance of doing something about this problem without doing anything," Tennessee GOP Sen. Marsha Blackburn said Wednesday.

She was joined by Republican Sens. Roger Marshall of Kansas, Rick Scott of Florida, Eric Schmitt of Missouri, John Coryn of Texas, J.D. Vance of Ohio and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin.

House opposition

Even if the border security bill passed the Senate, it would have no chance in the House, where Johnson has vowed it will be dead on arrival.

The Louisiana Republican in a Wednesday press conference called the measure a messaging bill and said Schumer was “trying to give his vulnerable members cover.”

And not all House Democrats were on board with the bill negotiated out of the Senate.

The chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington state and the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Nanette Barragán of California, slammed Senate Democrats for putting forth the legislation and urged them to abandon the effort.

“We are disappointed that the Senate will once again vote on an already-failed border bill in a move that only splits the Democratic Caucus over extreme and unworkable enforcement-only policies,” they wrote in a statement.

“This framework, which was constructed under Republican hostage-taking, does nothing to address the longstanding updates needed to modernize our outdated immigration system, create more legal pathways, and recognize the enormous contributions of immigrants to communities and our economy.”

Latino Democrats also voiced opposition to the bill when it was first released because it contained many hard-line policies that were reminiscent of the Trump administration.

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

SD’s Rep. Johnson defends criticized provisions in farm bill draft

Future food-assistance reductions, rollback of climate-smart requirements have drawn scrutiny

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 23, 2024 5:30 AM

South Dakota’s lone U.S. representative, Republican Dusty Johnson, is defending changes to anti-hunger and “climate-smart” programs in a new draft of the farm bill.

Johnson, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, called criticisms of the Republican-controlled committee’s draft “overblown.” Johnson and the rest of the committee will debate and consider amendments to the \$1.5 trillion, 942-page draft today. A new version of the bill — typically adopted every five years — is already overdue, and its current extension expires Sept. 30.

Among the many programs affected by the bill is the federal anti-hunger program formerly known as food stamps — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which benefits about 41 million Americans.

“Let’s be clear, there is nothing in this bill that would cut benefits for anybody on SNAP,” Johnson said. “That’s clear in black and white. Nobody on SNAP will have their benefits cut, even a single dollar.”

But critics say the draft would affect future funding levels.

According to the nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the draft would limit future updates to benefits, resulting in a roughly \$30 billion cut over the next decade. First Focus on Children, a child welfare advocacy organization, says the draft would cut SNAP benefits by \$36 billion over the next decade, an estimated \$17 billion of which would serve children.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Wednesday on a call with reporters that the Republican position on SNAP could doom the bill.

“It’s been clear that there has been a coalition historically that is central to the passage of the farm bill, which understands the importance of addressing the nutrition programs and the farm programs,” Vilsack said. “It is essentially a crack in the coalition that is absolutely necessary to the passage of the farm bill

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... The fact that we're crossing that red line raises the real possibility of being unable to get a farm bill through the process."

Another area of disagreement is the removal of some climate change-focused requirements for about \$13 billion in conservation projects funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Johnson said conservation should focus on more than climate change.

"We do take some really restrictive IRA funding, which invested only in conservation projects that were defined as 'climate-smart,' and instead we provide more flexibility so those dollars can be spent, not just on 'climate-smart' conservation, but on conservation that is also helpful to habitat, water quality and soil health," he said.

Meanwhile, Food & Water Watch, a watchdog group, said the draft provision would divert money to programs that would open up more funding for "dirty factory farm biogas," such as natural gas captured from manure.

The farm bill also sets policy in areas including financial support for crop farmers, conservation, trade programs, loans for farmers, rural development, agricultural research, forest management and support for local food systems.

Stronger price supports for farmers

Johnson said he's particularly proud of several farm bill changes his office helped write and put in the draft. They include faster internet speed requirements for new rural broadband infrastructure, more funding to help farmers and ranchers implement conservation practices, and greater payments to farmers when the sale price for their crop falls below the price set by the Price Loss Coverage program.

"This might be the biggest change in the farm bill," Johnson said of the Price Loss Coverage change.

Johnson said costs including land taxes, seed, fertilizer and equipment have gone up, but the coverage has not been adjusted since the last farm bill passed. To help, the draft bill increases the base price set by the program – by 10% for corn, 18% for soybeans and 15.5% for wheat.

"This is going to mean that when prices fall, it will be more likely for these programs to trigger and benefit producers," Johnson said.

He thinks federal farm policy does a decent job of ensuring crop subsidies do not over-incentive the conversion of grassland to cropland.

"We've got 91 million acres of corn and 90 million acres of soybeans in this county," he said. "I don't have any doubt people would be able to find hundreds of acres that should be utilized a little differently than it is, but you're looking at 180 million acres; we get a lot more right than we get wrong."

Another change that has Johnson excited is doubling the funding for two programs that create market access and promote trade for U.S. agricultural products. The Market Access Program helps fund trade organizations and state agencies to help them create, expand and maintain foreign markets. And the Foreign Market Development Program focuses on creating demand through technical assistance, capacity building and market research.

"They're fantastically successful," he said. "A number of studies have shown that both of these programs have a return on investment in excess of 20 to 1. Once we can get these markets open, American farmers and ranchers do very, very well."

Johnson provisions in the draft

Several bills Johnson has introduced or co-sponsored are incorporated in the draft. They include authorizing over \$100 million annually for loans and grants to new and expanding small or medium-sized meat processors, and ensuring common names for U.S. agricultural products can be used freely in foreign markets.

"We understand when these practices have been in place for a long time, like with 'champagne,' if it's not from that region of France then it has to be called sparkling wine," Johnson said. "But we've seen Europe really step up their frequency of using this trick, and it's just anti-competitive behavior. And this

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just makes it clear we're not going to play ball with that nonsense."

According to a prior statement from Johnson's office, parmesan, chateau and bologna are among the food-related words that could run into problems.

Another of Johnson's proposals in the draft farm bill ensures dogs imported into the U.S. are healthy and have received proper vaccines and medical treatment, which is a problem he learned about while serving on a different committee.

Another provision seeks to create uniform pesticide labeling standards nationwide, preventing states from imposing different requirements than the federal government's. The provision is a response to some states, like California, labeling certain pesticides unsafe, despite the federal government claiming otherwise.

Johnson said the change ensures "any state that is going to impose their own labeling requirements has to follow the same evidenced-based system for labeling that the EPA does."

Another Johnson-backed provision would allow livestock auction owners to invest in small meat packers. He said it's prohibited now because of conflict of interest concerns. But he said those concerns are outweighed by consolidation among "the big four" meatpackers.

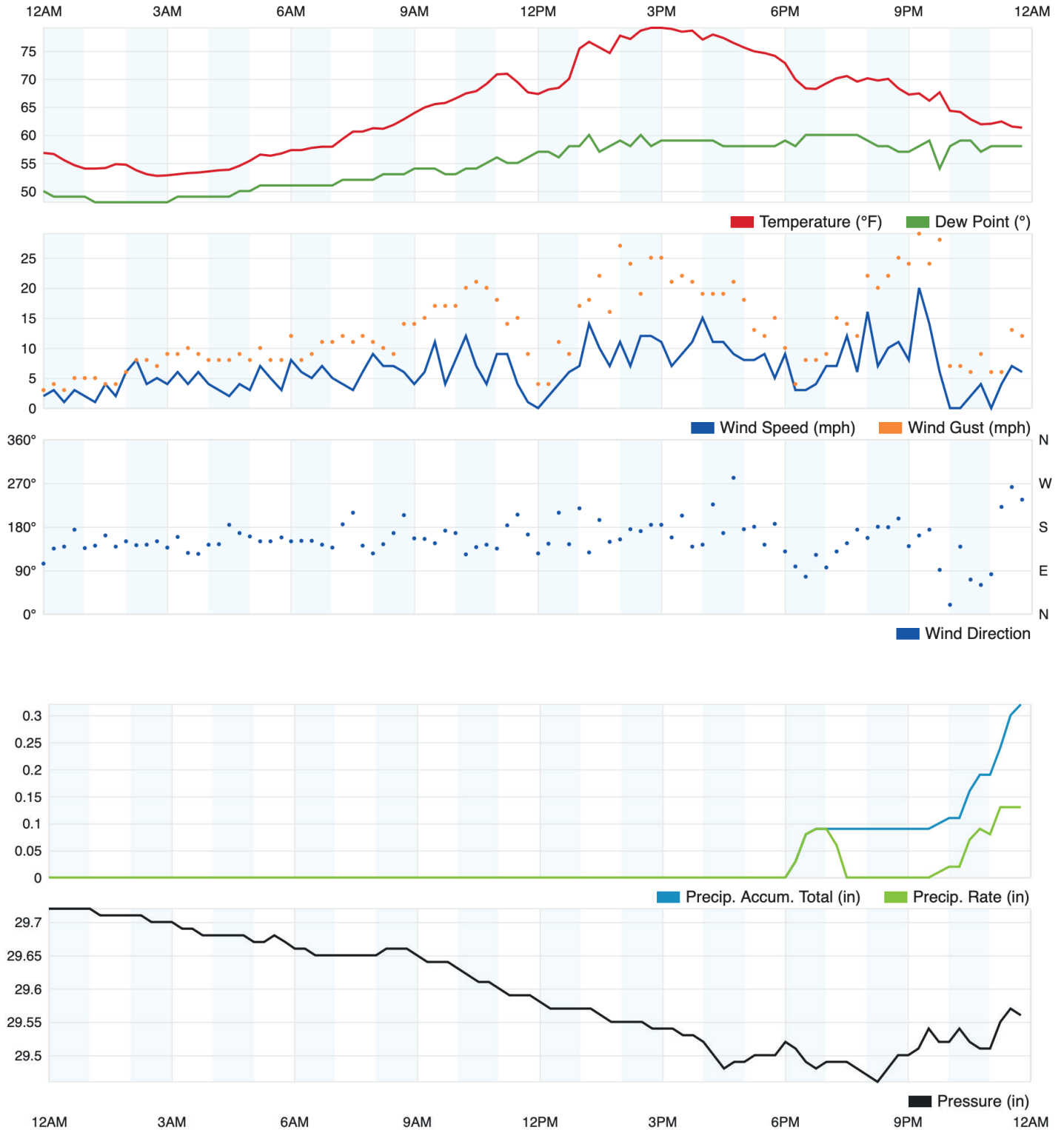
Other Johnson provisions include allowing the USDA to enter into contracts with tribes to allow them to administer SNAP benefits, and \$150 million for states to pay private landowners lease payments to allow public access to their land.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Friday



High: 61 °F

Breezy.
Chance
T-storms then
Slight Chance
Showers

Friday Night



Low: 39 °F

Mostly Clear
and Breezy
then Mostly
Clear

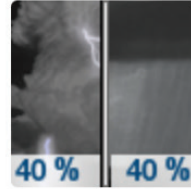
Saturday



High: 73 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
T-storms

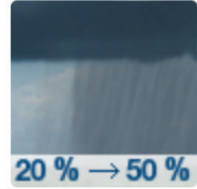
Saturday Night



Low: 49 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Chance
Showers

Sunday



High: 72 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Chance
Showers



Gusty Winds & Cooler Temperatures Today

May 24, 2024
5:40 AM

30-70% Chance of Showers and Weak T-Storms Until Late Afternoon

Temperature Forecast (°F)

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	5/24													Maximum	5/24													Maximum						
	Fri														Fri																			
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm		6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	
Aberdeen	53	53	53	54	58	58	56	54	53	53	58	56	55	55	53	49	58	12	12	17	25	28	31	35	37	38	39	39	37	33	28	23	39	
Britton	52	52	53	54	56	57	58	57	54	51	55	51	50	51	48	46	58	8	8	15	25	28	31	33	37	40	43	45	44	41	36	30	45	
Brookings	58	57	57	57	58	60	60	58	58	58	58	59	58	58	56	52	60	20	21	23	28	29	31	32	33	36	38	39	35	35	26	21	39	
Chamberlain	50	49	50	50	52	54	56	57	60	62	63	65	65	65	63	57	65	26	31	37	38	38	39	39	39	38	36	33	30	26	23	17	13	39
Clark	53	53	53	53	55	55	53	54	52	52	55	53	53	52	51	47	55	8	8	15	28	29	32	36	38	39	41	41	40	37	31	26	41	
Eagle Butte	43	41	41	41	43	45	47	52	56	57	60	60	60	61	59	55	61	30	35	39	44	46	47	46	45	44	43	39	36	32	28	23	18	47
Ellendale	52	51	52	54	56	56	54	51	50	50	54	51	52	52	49	47	56	7	7	14	24	26	30	33	35	37	39	40	39	37	33	30	26	40
Eureka	49	49	49	49	48	46	44	45	47	49	53	52	53	53	51	48	53	9	9	16	28	31	35	37	38	38	37	36	33	30	26	22	38	
Gettysburg	45	44	45	46	45	44	45	49	51	54	58	57	58	58	55	52	58	10	12	21	36	37	40	40	40	39	38	37	35	31	26	23	18	40
Huron	55	54	54	55	57	58	57	57	59	61	60	62	61	61	59	54	62	18	24	26	33	33	36	38	41	43	41	38	37	33	29	22	17	43
Kennebec	46	46	46	47	48	51	53	57	60	62	64	64	64	64	60	55	64	37	40	41	40	43	45	45	44	44	43	38	35	30	24	20	14	45
McIntosh	45	42	40	38	39	41	43	47	50	52	56	55	56	56	54	52	56	28	33	40	47	48	49	49	48	47	46	43	39	36	31	24	18	49
Milbank	59	59	59	58	58	61	62	62	62	60	61	57	55	54	51	49	62	13	13	16	22	23	26	29	30	33	36	37	39	39	37	32	29	39
Miller	50	49	49	50	52	52	51	53	55	56	59	59	59	59	57	53	59	20	22	26	32	35	38	40	40	40	39	37	36	32	28	23	18	40
Mobridge	50	50	49	46	45	46	48	51	53	56	64	64	63	63	61	57	59	13	15	23	36	39	43	43	43	41	40	38	36	32	29	23	18	43
Murdo	46	45	45	45	48	51	53	57	60	62	64	64	63	63	61	57	64	30	32	38	46	48	48	47	45	44	40	37	33	29	23	20	14	48
Pierre	49	47	47	48	48	50	53	57	60	61	64	64	64	64	62	58	64	33	37	39	41	45	46	45	45	44	41	37	33	29	24	18	14	46
Redfield	52	51	52	53	56	55	54	53	54	55	58	57	57	57	55	51	58	15	16	21	28	30	33	37	38	39	39	38	36	33	29	25	21	39
Sisseton	57	57	57	56	57	59	60	61	60	56	58	53	52	52	49	47	61	7	7	14	24	25	29	31	33	37	40	41	44	44	41	37	32	44
Watertown	56	56	56	55	57	58	57	57	57	55	58	54	54	54	51	48	58	7	7	14	24	26	30	32	35	37	39	41	43	40	38	33	29	43
Webster	55	55	54	53	55	56	56	55	53	50	54	50	50	51	48	45	56	5	5	14	28	29	32	36	38	41	43	45	46	45	41	37	32	46
Wheaton	57	57	57	57	57	60	62	63	60	61	54	53	52	48	47	63	10	10	15	23	23	24	25	26	29	32	33	36	36	35	31	29	36	



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Low pressure will exit into North Dakota and Minnesota today leaving in its wake windy conditions, cool temperatures and occasional chances for showers and a few storms. No severe weather is expected however. Gusty winds between 40-50 mph will be possible from the Missouri Valley up to the James Valley. Not as gusty, but still windy conditions are expected east of the James Valley into west central Minnesota. Temperatures won't budge much as a much cooler airmass is pulled into the region. Highs will likely remain in the upper 50s to mid 60s.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 3:06 PM

Low Temp: 53 °F at 2:41 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 9:16 PM

Precip: : 0.32

Day length: 15 hours, 17 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1926

Record Low: 25 in 1897

Average High: 73

Average Low: 48

Average Precip in May.: 2.61

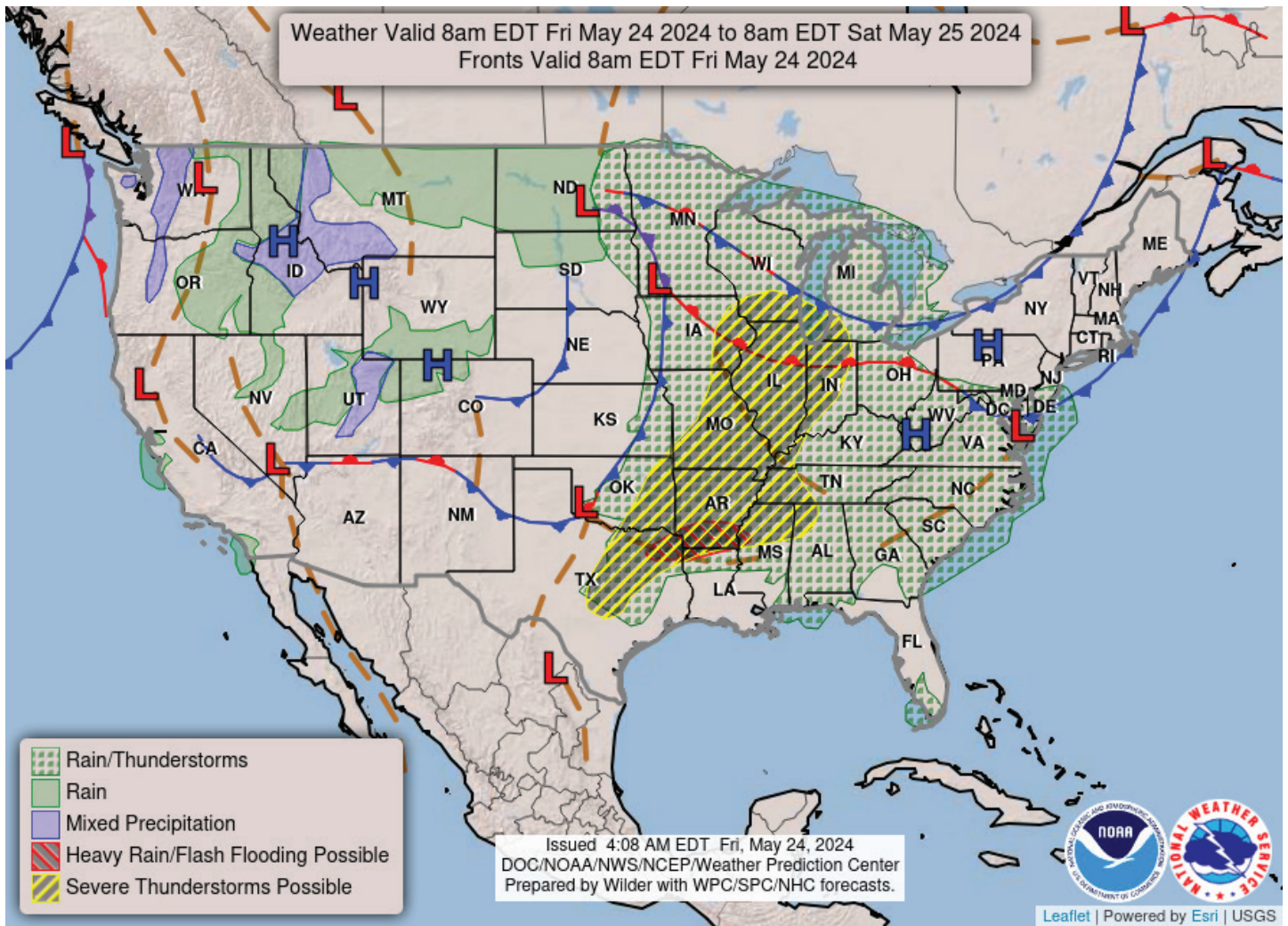
Precip to date in May: 2.03

Average Precip to date: 6.58

Precip Year to Date: 6.57

Sunset Tonight: 9:08:13 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49:36 am



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Today in Weather History

May 24, 1960: A tornado touched down about 7 miles northwest of Roscoe and destroyed a small shed near a country schoolhouse. Funnel clouds were also observed in Hosmer area, near Eureka, and 30 miles west of Aberdeen. An unofficial report of 4 inches of rain fell at Hosmer.

May 24, 2008: A supercell thunderstorm produced seven tornadoes in Dewey County. Since these tornadoes remained in the open country, all were rated EF0.

1894 - Six inches of snow blanketed Kentucky. Just four days earlier as much as ten inches of snow had fallen across Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Six days earlier a violent storm had wrecked nine ships on Lake Michigan. (David Ludlum)

1896: An estimated F4 tornado passed ten miles north of Des Moines, Iowa during the late evening. As many as seven members of one family, the at the north edge of Valeria, Iowa, died as they ran to the storm cellar. Five others died in a nearby home. A steel railroad rail was reportedly driven 15 feet into the ground. The death toll was at least 21.

1930 - A tornado touched down near the town of Pratt, KS, and traveled at the incredibly slow speed of just 5 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1940 - Hail fell near Ada OK to a depth of six to eight inches, and rainfall runoff left drifts of hail up to five feet high. (The Weather Channel)

1973: An F4 tornado tore through the small town of Union City, Oklahoma, killing two and injuring four others. This tornado was the first storm to be studied in detail by the National Severe Storms Laboratory Doppler Radar Unit at Norman, OK and an armada of researchers in the field. Research of the radar data from the storm would lead to the discovery of a "TVS," or Tornado Vortex Signature. The presence of a TVS on Doppler radar data is a very strong indication of tornadic potential in a severe thunderstorm.

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas spawned a couple of tornadoes near Silverton, and produced golf ball size hail east of the town of Happy. Thunderstorms also produced large hail and damaging winds in Louisiana and Texas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 88 mph at Columbia, NC. Baseball size hail was reported near Tifton GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather across the Upper Midwest through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned 30 tornadoes, and there were 158 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-3) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Corning, IA, and a powerful (F-4) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Traer, IA. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 88 mph killed one person and injured five others at Stephenville, WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Severe thunderstorms spawned two dozen tornadoes from Montana to Oklahoma. Four tornadoes carved a 109-mile path across central Kansas. The third of the four tornadoes blew 88 cars off an 125-car train off the track, stacking them three to four cars high in some cases, and the fourth tornado caused 3.9 million dollars damage. The third tornado injured six persons who were trying to escape in vehicles. A woman was "sucked out" of a truck and said that at one time she was "airborne, trying to run but my feet wouldn't touch the ground". She also saw a live deer "flying through the air". (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: The last measurable snow of the season fell in Marquette, Michigan. This snowfall brought the city's seasonal snowfall to 319.8 inches, by far the city's snowiest winter ever.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

SECOND PLACE

One of the great orchestra conductors of all time was Leonard Bernstein. Once he was asked, "What is the most difficult instrument to play?"

Quickly he answered, "Second violin. I can get many first violinists, but to find someone who can play second violin with great enthusiasm - that is a difficult problem to solve."

Why do orchestras need those who play second violin, second trumpet or second clarinet? Without them there is no harmony and without harmony there would be no beauty in life. Being willing to be "second" to someone else brings an added depth and breadth and width to the work of our Lord.

Selfishness can bring disaster to the life work and responsibilities of the church. That is why God is always looking for men and women who will fill in the lesser positions in His Kingdom - those who will put Him first and bring beauty and harmony to His creation.

However, to be "second" requires humility. It means having a true perspective about ourselves and our identity in Christ. In Him we find our worth and discover that we have great value to Him as we do what He wants us to do. There may be times when we measure our self-worth by the world's standards. But our true worth, our value to God, comes from our being faithful to Him even if it means we must play "second violin" in God's orchestra.

Prayer: Father, give us the grace and courage to be where You want us to be and do what You want us to do when You ask us to play "second violin." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Philippians 2:1-4



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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.24

2 5 8 28 69 14

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$453,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 20 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.22.24

2 5 15 41 43 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,600,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 35 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.23.24

4 8 9 28 29 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.22.24

13 24 25 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$113,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 50 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.22.24

10 12 19 21 67 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 19 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.22.24

5 16 18 26 67 4

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$120,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 19 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Top Russian military officials are being arrested. Why is it happening?

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

It began last month with the arrest of a Russian deputy defense minister. Then the head of the ministry's personnel directorate was hauled into court. This week, two more senior military officials were detained. All face charges of corruption, which they have denied.

The arrests began after President Vladimir Putin began his fifth term and shuffled his ally, longtime Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, into a new post.

It immediately raised questions about whether Putin was reasserting control over the Defense Ministry amid the war in Ukraine, whether a turf battle had broken out between the military and the security services, or whether some other scenario was playing out behind the Kremlin's walls.

A look at what's behind the arrests and why they are happening now:

HOW SERIOUS IS CORRUPTION IN RUSSIA?

Corruption scandals are not new and officials and top officials have been accused of profiting from their positions for decades.

Graft in Russia functions as both a carrot and stick. It's a way of "encouraging loyalty and urging people to be on the same page," as well as a method of control, said Sam Greene, director of Democratic Resilience at the Center for European Policy Analysis.

Putin wants everyone to have "a skeleton in their closet," security expert Mark Galeotti said on a recent podcast. If the state has compromising material on key officials, it can cherry-pick whom to target, he added.

Corruption, "is the essence of the system," said Nigel Gould-Davies a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

The war in Ukraine has led to ballooning defense spending that only has increased opportunities for graft.

WHO WAS ARRESTED?

Former Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov — the first official arrested in April and the highest-ranking one so far — oversaw large military-related construction projects and had access to vast sums of money. Those projects included rebuilding parts of Ukraine's destroyed port city of Mariupol.

The team headed by the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny alleged that Ivanov, 48, and his family owned elite real estate, enjoyed lavish parties and trips abroad, even after the war began. They also alleged that Ivanov's wife, Svetlana, divorced him in 2022 to avoid sanctions and to continue living a luxurious lifestyle.

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday the recent arrests are not a "campaign" against corruption but rather reflect ongoing activities in "all government bodies."

Peskov and Ivanov were once part of an embarrassing episode caught on camera. Navalny's team has shared 2022 images of the Kremlin spokesman celebrating at a birthday party for Ivanov's former wife. In the video, Peskov, with Ivanov at his side, is seen wearing a watch estimated to cost \$85,000.

In April, the Investigative Committee, Russia's top law enforcement agency, reported that Ivanov is suspected of taking an especially large bribe — a criminal offense punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Since then, other arrests on bribery charges have included Lt. Gen. Yury Kuznetsov, head of the Defense Ministry's personnel directorate; Maj. Gen. Ivan Popov, a career soldier and former top commander in Ukraine; and Lt. Gen. Vadim Shamarin, deputy chief of the military general staff. Shamarin is a deputy to Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the general staff.

A fifth ministry official was reported arrested Thursday — Vladimir Verteletsky, who headed a division in the ministry's defense procurement department. He was charged with abuse of office that resulted in damages worth over 70 million rubles (about \$776,000), the Investigative Committee said.

Also, the deputy head of the federal prison service for the Moscow region, Vladimir Telayev, was arrested

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Thursday on charges of large-scale bribery, Russian reports said.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

The arrests suggest that “really egregious” corruption in the Defense Ministry will no longer be tolerated, said Richard Connolly, a specialist on the Russian economy at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Shortly after his inauguration, Putin replaced Shoigu as defense minister with Andrei Belousov, an economist. Peskov said Russia’s increasing defense budget must fit into the country’s wider economy.

Peskov said Russia’s defense budget is 6.7% of gross domestic product. That is a level not seen since the Soviet era.

“There is a view that this needs to be spent more wisely,” Connolly said.

Before his death in a still-mysterious plane crash last year, mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin led a brief rebellion against the country’s military leadership, saying it mismanaged the war and denied weapons and ammunition to his forces.

Belousov’s appointment is “a grudging recognition from the Kremlin” that it has to pay attention to these problems, said Gould-Davies.

It’s also critical the war is managed correctly because Russia’s economy depends on it. Russians are earning higher salaries driven by the booming defense sector. While that has created problems with inflation, it allows Putin to keep delivering on promises to raise living standards.

Greene said the government needs to “keep the war going in order to keep the economy going,” but also must ensure the costs — and corruption — are not higher than needed.

Connolly said it’s also possible that Belousov, the new defense minister, is clearing out his predecessor’s associates and sending the message that “things are going to be done differently.”

Popov’s case may be different. He fought in Ukraine and was suspended in July 2023 for criticizing the Defense Ministry leadership — like Prigozhin did — and blaming it for a lack of weapons and poor supply lines that led to many Russian casualties.

He now may be facing the consequences for that criticism.

COULD THIS BE A TURF BATTLE?

It is unclear whether the Kremlin or Russia’s security services, particularly the State Security Service, or FSB, are the driving force behind the arrests.

It’s possible that officials sufficiently distant from Putin could have been caught in the middle of a turf war unconnected to the appointment of the new defense minister.

The security services, Greene said, could be trying to “push back” against the military’s dominance seen since Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

While the Kremlin denies that any kind of a purge was taking place, “if Putin didn’t want it to happen, it wouldn’t be happening,” Greene said.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

More arrests are likely as the new defense minister wants to show “there is a price to be paid” for corruption in order to rein it in, Connolly said.

Greene added that it’s also possible that “entrepreneurial” investigators will think launching a criminal case against a general is a great opportunity for career advancement.

Because corruption is so endemic, however, it could cause panic in the whole system.

If officials are arrested for behavior that previously was allowed even though it was illegal, it could shift the “red lines,” Greene said.

If the arrests continue or widen beyond the Defense Ministry, it could cause finger-pointing and for officials to “rush for the exits,” he said, and that is something the Kremlin wants to avoid.

Because the system is built on corruption, Greene said, attacking it too hard could cause it to “fall apart.”

More than 100 people believed killed by a landslide in Papua New Guinea, Australian media report

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — More than 100 people are believed to have been killed Friday in a landslide that buried a village in a remote, mountainous part of Papua New Guinea, and an emergency response is underway, the South Pacific island nation's leader and news media said.

The landslide reportedly hit Kaokalam village in Enga province, about 600 kilometers (370 miles) northwest of the capital, Port Moresby, at roughly 3 a.m., Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.

Residents said estimates of the death toll were above 100, although authorities have not confirmed that figure. Villagers said the number of people killed could be much higher.

Prime Minister James Marape said authorities were responding and he would release information about the destruction and loss of life when it was available.

"I am yet to be fully briefed on the situation. However, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the landslide disaster in the early hours of this morning," Marape said in a statement.

"We are sending in disaster officials, PNG Defense Force, and the Department of Works and Highways to ... start relief work, recovery of bodies, and reconstruction of infrastructure," he added.

Videos on social media showed residents pulling out bodies buried under rocks and trees.

Elizabeth Laruma, who runs a women's business association in Porgera, a town in the same province near the Porgera Gold Mine, said houses were flattened when the side of a mountain gave way.

"It has occurred when people were still asleep in the early hours, and the entire village has gone down," Laruma told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.. "From what I can presume, it's about 100-plus people who are buried beneath the ground."

The landslide blocked the road between Porgera and the village, she said, raising concerns about the town's supply of fuel and goods.

Village resident Ninga Role, who was away when the landslide struck, expects that at least four of his relatives died.

"There are some huge stones and plants, trees. The buildings collapsed," Role said. "These things are making it hard to find the bodies."

Belinda Kora, a Port Moresby-based ABC reporter, said helicopters were the only way of accessing the village, which is in the mountainous interior region known as the Highlands, with the main road closed.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of mostly subsistence farmers with 800 languages. There are few roads outside the larger cities.

With 10 million people, it is also the most populous South Pacific nation after Australia, which is home to some 27 million.

Telecommunications are poor, particularly outside Port Moresby where government data show 56% of the nation's social media users reside. Only 1.66 million people across the country use the internet and 85% of the population lives in rural areas.

The bodies of 3 more hostages are recovered from Gaza by the Israeli army

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The bodies of three more hostages killed on Oct 7. were recovered overnight from Gaza, Israel's army said Friday, as the top United Nations court prepares to rule on whether Israel must halt its military operations and withdraw from the enclave.

The bodies of Hanan Yablonka, Michel Nisenbaum, and Orion Hernandez Radoux were found and their families have been notified. The army said they were killed on the day of the attack at the Mefalsim intersection and their bodies were taken to Gaza.

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The announcement comes less than a week after the army said it found the bodies of three other Israeli hostages killed on Oct. 7.

Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and abducted around 250 others in the Oct. 7 attack. Around half of those hostages have since been freed, most in swaps for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of at least 39 more, while 17 bodies of hostages have been recovered.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to both eliminate Hamas and bring all the hostages back, but he's made little progress. He faces pressure to resign, and the U.S. has threatened to scale back its support over the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

On Friday Netanyahu said the country had a duty to do everything to return those abducted, both those killed and those who are alive.

In a post on X Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron gave condolences to the family of Hernández-Radoux, a French-Mexican citizen, saying France remains committed to releasing the hostages.

The country is also expecting a ruling Friday afternoon by the International Court of Justice to decide on an urgent plea by South Africa to order Israel to cease operations. Israel is unlikely to comply with any such order. Even so, a cease-fire order by judges of the International Court of Justice would heap more pressure on an increasingly isolated Israel.

On the hostages, Israelis are divided into two main camps: those who want the government to put the war on hold and free the hostages, and others who think the hostages are an unfortunate price to pay for eradicating Hamas. On-and-off negotiations mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt have yielded little.

Anger is growing at home at the government's handling of the hostage crisis.

Earlier this week a group representing the families of hostages released new video footage showing Hamas' capture of five female Israeli soldiers near the Gaza border on Oct. 7.

The video shows several of the young soldiers bloody and wounded. In one scene, a militant tells one of the terrified women she is beautiful.

The video sparked more protests across the country calling for the hostages' release.

The army said on Friday the hostages were found during an operation in Jabaliya. Military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in a news conference that the army was able to retrieve the bodies based on "critical intelligence" uncovered last week by Israeli forces operating in Gaza.

The group representing the families of the hostages said the bodies had been returned to their families for burial.

Nisenbaum, 59, was a Brazilian-Israeli from the southern city of Sderot. He was taken hostage when he went to rescue his 4-year-old granddaughter.

Oryon Hernandez Radoux, 30, was taken from the Nova music festival, which he attended with his partner Shani Louk. Louk's body was one of those found by the army nearly a week ago.

Yablonka, 42, a father of two, was also taken from the music festival. His family in December told the AP that he loved music. Yablonka's family had no news of him for nearly two months after he'd been taken, not knowing if he was alive or dead.

Israel's offensive since the war began has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and has caused a humanitarian crisis and a near-famine.

While it has weakened Hamas' capabilities, after nearly eight months of war, militants are regrouping in some of the hardest-hit areas in northern Gaza and resuming rocket attacks into nearby Israeli communities. Israel says its troops are operating in Rafah in the south, in central Gaza and in Jabaliya in the north.

More severe weather forecast in Midwest as Iowa residents clean up tornado damage

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

GREENFIELD, Iowa (AP) — The skies were blue and the wind was blowing as residents of the small city of Greenfield, Iowa, worked to clean up two days after a destructive tornado ripped apart more than 100 homes in just one minute, took the lives of four residents and injured at least 35 more.

All along the mile-long swath Thursday was the deafening clamor of heavy equipment scooping up the splintered homes, smashed vehicles and shredded trees. But on either side of that path, picturesque houses and lawns seem untouched, and one might be hard-pressed to believe a twister packing peak winds of 175-185 mph (109-115 kph) had ravaged the community of 2,000.

More severe weather was expected in the Midwest on Thursday night into Friday, including a tornado that was on the ground for nearly an hour in southwestern Oklahoma and possible tornados in areas of Iowa that were already damaged.

The havoc spun by Tuesday's tornado in Greenfield showed on the faces of people still processing how quickly homes and lives were shattered — some in mourning and many grateful to have been spared.

Among those killed were Dean and Pam Wiggins, said their grandson Tom Wiggins.

On Thursday, he tried to find any of his grandparents' mementos that remained after the tornado demolished their home, leaving little more than its foundation. He described them as "incredibly loved by not only our family but the entire town."

Not far away, Bill Yount was cleaning up.

"It's like somebody took a bomb," said Yount, gesturing to the land — covered with wood, debris, trees stripped of their leaves, heavy machinery and equipment to clean up the mess.

He waited out the storm in a closet.

"The roof raised up and slammed back down and then the windows all blew out," he said Thursday. The tornado ripped the garage off his house and damaged interior walls. "Forty seconds changed my life immensely," he said.

A black van ended up badly damaged and sitting between his house and a neighbor's.

"Nobody knows whose it is," he said.

Sherri Beitz was cleaning up outside, grateful that her mother, Ginger Thompson, 79, survived despite being unable to get to the basement of her house because she's in a wheelchair.

"She was trapped for a while," Beitz said. "It was a scary situation, but the main thing is she is OK. House can be replaced."

"You look around and are just so grateful that the community didn't lose more than what we did," Beitz said.

Colton Newbury was working in Des Moines when the twister hit, nearly 60 miles (97 kilometers) away from his wife and 10-month-old daughter in Greenfield.

He rushed back only to find their home was "a hole in the ground," he said. His wife hadn't heard the sirens. Newbury said his cousin ran out to get his wife and baby, and they rode out the tornado in the cousin's basement. The winds pulled entire homes away, he said: "About every house on the block, just foundations left."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds praised the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response on Thursday as she sought a disaster declaration for multiple counties. After surveying Tuesday's destruction, the National Weather Service determined that three separate powerful tornados carved paths totaling 130 miles (209.21 kilometers) across Iowa, according to Donna Dubberke, the meteorologist in charge in Des Moines.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said her agency will process the request as quickly as possible to get resources — which could include funding for temporary housing — to those left without homes.

More than 202 homes were destroyed by a series of tornadoes that raked the state on Tuesday, Reynolds said. Most were in and around Greenfield. The count does not include businesses or other buildings destroyed or damaged, like Greenfield's 25-bed hospital.

The unsettled weather was expected to continue in the Midwest.

A tornado was on the ground in southwestern Oklahoma for nearly an hour on Thursday evening, the National Weather Service said. There were reports of some homes damaged, but no immediate reports of injuries, said meteorologist Jennifer Thompson.

The service had also received reports of very large hail — some the size of baseballs — while flash flooding occurred after 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 centimeters) of rain fell along the path of the storm over about a three-hour period, Thompson said.

The weather service will have to investigate to determine how powerful the tornado was and for what distance it was on the ground, she said.

The weather service's Storm Prediction Center showed an enhanced severe storm risk late Thursday into Friday morning for much of Nebraska and western Iowa, including areas where tornadoes hit Iowa and hurricane-force winds, large hail and torrential rain flooded streets and basements in Nebraska.

This latest band of severe weather — including possible tornadoes — will hit Iowa "when people are sleeping," warned National Weather Service meteorologist Andrew Ansorge of Des Moines.

"Because of the damage already there, it won't take much wind to inflict even more damage on these homes," Ansorge said. "It's just a bad deal all the way around."

More severe weather also could arrive Saturday and Sunday in storm-damaged parts of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

The top UN court is set to rule on a request for it to order Israel to halt its offensive in Gaza

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The top United Nations court is ruling Friday on an urgent plea by South Africa to order Israel to halt its military operations in Gaza and withdraw from the enclave.

Israel is unlikely to comply with any such order. Even so, a cease-fire order by judges of the International Court of Justice would heap more pressure on an increasingly isolated Israel as it continues its military assault on Gaza following the deadly Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas-led militants.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also under heavy pressure at home to end the war. Thousands of Israelis have joined weekly demonstrations calling on the government to reach a deal to bring home Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity, fearing that time is running out.

The International Court of Justice has broad powers to order a cease-fire and other measures, but it does not have its own enforcement apparatus. In another case on its docket, Russia has so far ignored a 2022 order by the court to halt its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Friday's ruling comes just days after the prosecutor of another court in The Hague, the International Criminal Court, announced he is seeking arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Israel's defense minister and three Hamas leaders.

Reacting to the ICC announcement, Netanyahu said: "No amount of pressure and no decision in any international forum will prevent Israel from defending itself against those who seek our destruction."

The cease-fire request is a preliminary part of a case filed late last year by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide during its Gaza campaign. Israel vehemently denies the allegations. The case will take years to resolve, but South Africa wants interim orders to protect Palestinians while the legal wrangling continues.

At public hearings last week at the International Court of Justice, South Africa's ambassador to the Netherlands, Vusumuzi Madonsela, urged the panel of 15 international judges to order Israel to "totally and unconditionally withdraw" from the Gaza Strip.

The court has already found that Israel's military operations pose a "real and imminent risk" to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and has caused a humanitarian crisis and a near-famine.

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"This may well be the last chance for the court to act," Irish lawyer Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, who is part of South Africa's legal team, told judges last week.

Israel rejects the claims by South Africa, a nation with historic ties to the Palestinian people.

"Israel takes extraordinary measures in order to minimize the harm to civilians in Gaza," Tamar Kaplan-Tourgeman, a member of Israel's legal team, told the court last week.

In January, ICJ judges ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive. In a second order in March, the court said Israel must take measures to improve the humanitarian situation.

The ICJ rules in disputes between nations. A few kilometers (miles) away, the International Criminal Court files charges against individuals it considers most responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

On Monday, its chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, said he has asked ICC judges to approve arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and three top Hamas leaders — Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Israel is not an ICC member, so even if the arrest warrants are issued, Netanyahu and Gallant do not face any immediate risk of prosecution. But the threat of arrest could make it difficult for the Israeli leaders to travel abroad.

China sends dozens of warplanes and ships near Taiwan to show its anger over island's new leaders

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan tracked dozens of Chinese warplanes and navy vessels off its coast on Friday, the second day of a large military exercise launched by Beijing to show its anger over the self-governing island's inauguration of new leaders who refuse to accept its insistence that Taiwan is part of China.

China has issued elaborate media statements showing Taiwan being surrounded by forces from its military, the People's Liberation Army. A new video on Friday showed animated Chinese forces approaching from all sides and Taiwan being enclosed within a circular target area while simulated missiles hit key population and military targets.

Despite that, there was little sign of concern among Taiwan's 23 million people, who have lived under threat of Chinese invasion since the two sides split during a civil war in 1949. Taiwan's parliament was mired on Friday in a dispute between political parties over procedural measures, and business continued as usual in the bustling capital of Taipei and the ports of Keelung and Kaohsiung.

The defense ministry said it tracked 49 Chinese warplanes and 19 navy vessels, as well as coast guard vessels, and that 35 of the planes flew across the median line in the Taiwan Strait, the de facto boundary between the two sides, over a 24-hour period from Thursday to Friday.

Taiwanese marine and coast guard vessels along with air and ground-based missile units have been put on alert, particularly around the Taiwan-controlled island chains of Kinmen and Matsu just off China's coast and far from Taiwan's main island.

"Facing external challenges and threats, we will continue to maintain the values of freedom and democracy," Taiwan's new president, Lai Ching-te, told sailors and top security officials Thursday as he visited a marine base in Taoyuan, just south of the capital, Taipei.

In his inauguration speech on Monday, Lai urged Beijing to stop its military intimidation and said Taiwan was "a sovereign independent nation in which sovereignty lies in the hands of the people."

China's military said its expanded exercises around Taiwan were punishment for separatist forces seeking independence. It sends navy ships and warplanes into the Taiwan Strait and other areas around the island almost daily to wear down Taiwan's defenses and seek to intimidate its people, who firmly back their de facto independence.

"As soon as the leader of Taiwan took office, he challenged the one-China principle and blatantly sold

the "two-state theory," the spokesperson of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, Chen Binhua, said in a statement Thursday night.

The one-China principle asserts that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China under Communist Party rule. Beijing views Taiwan as a renegade province and has been upping its military threats even as the island's electorate overwhelmingly favors de facto independence.

In Beijing, international relations professor Shi Yinhong at Renmin University of China said the drills and China's verbal condemnations of Lai were intended to show Beijing's anger toward Lai and his administration's policies. Those include a continuance of his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen's policies of building a strong national defense and resisting Beijing's efforts to isolate Taiwan diplomatically.

"It may be regarded as chiefly necessary for convincing the Chinese people about the government's determination and the armed forces' progress in capability," Shih said.

"But Lai, and in a degree the Taiwanese in general, experienced numerous such things. It will not change them and will make the U.S. and its core allies do more in their military support to Taiwan," Shih said.

U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said it was following China's drills closely.

"We urge the relevant parties to refrain from acts that could escalate tensions in the region," he said in a statement Thursday.

Fire at chemical factory in India kills at least 9, with searchers looking for more victims

THANE, India (AP) — Rescuers combed through piles of debris and wreckage Friday searching for bodies after an explosion and fire at a chemical factory in western India killed at least nine people and injured 64 others, officials said.

The explosion in the factory's boiler on Thursday led to a fire that affected nearby factories and houses in Maharashtra state's Thane district, administrative official Sachin Shejal said.

Shejal said the blaze was extinguished and rescuers were searching through the debris to find two more bodies, though the process was hampered by the presence of huge debris.

Two bodies have been identified so far and seven are burnt beyond recognition, Shejal said.

"We have asked the family members of the victims to submit DNA samples that can help us identify the bodies," he said.

The cause of the explosion, which sent a huge cloud of gray smoke over the area, is being investigated.

The factory produced food coloring and used highly reactive chemicals that can cause explosions, India's National Disaster Response Force said. Shejal said Thursday's explosion sent huge shock waves that damaged adjacent factories and shattered glass windows in nearby houses.

Indian police filed charges Friday of culpable homicide, including negligence in handling toxic substances, against the owners of the factory.

Fires are common across India because of poor safety standards and lax enforcement of regulations. Activists say builders often cut corners on safety to save costs and have accused civic authorities of negligence and apathy.

A fire in an apartment building in Hanoi, Vietnam, kills 14 people and injures 6

By HAU DINH Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — An overnight fire in an apartment building on a narrow alley in Vietnam's capital killed 14 people and injured six others, state media said Friday.

The apartment building in central Hanoi could only be accessed through an alley just 2 meters (6.5 feet) wide, preventing firetrucks from reaching it, and firefighters eventually contained the fire by using hoses, state media said.

The fire started around 12:30 a.m. and was accompanied by several explosions, the Vietnam News

Agency said. It took an hour to extinguish.

Neighbor Nguyen Thanh Trung said he was asleep when he heard the explosions and rushed out to see what was happening. "I could feel the shock at my house," he said, adding that he along with others got a ladder to break the window to help people escape.

State media reported the building had 24 residents at the time, seven in the owner's family and 17 tenants. The injured are stable and being treated at Hanoi Transport Hospital.

The fire started in the small courtyard in front of the building that was used as a garage for the sale and repair of electric bikes, state media reported.

Trung said the family would often charge the bikes' batteries at night.

The alley was later cordoned off by police. The charred remains of burnt motorbikes and plants and scattered belongings remained at the apartment.

Authorities said that they would give \$1,962 to the families of those who died and \$1,177 to those injured as compensation.

This fire was reminiscent of a September blaze in Hanoi last year where more than 50 people died in similar circumstances. Rescue operations then were also hindered by the city's narrow lanes.

Extreme weather. A lack of lifesaving vaccines.

Africa's cholera crisis is worse than ever

By SEBABATSO MOSAMO, FARAI MUTSAKA and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

LILANDA, Zambia (AP) — Extreme weather events have hit parts of Africa relentlessly in the last three years, with tropical storms, floods and drought causing crises of hunger and displacement. They leave another deadly threat behind them: some of the continent's worst outbreaks of cholera.

In southern and East Africa, more than 6,000 people have died and nearly 350,000 cases have been reported since a series of cholera outbreaks began in late 2021.

Malawi and Zambia have had their worst outbreaks on record. Zimbabwe has had multiple waves. Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia also have been badly affected.

All have experienced floods or drought — in some cases, both — and health authorities, scientists and aid agencies say the unprecedented surge of the water-borne bacterial infection in Africa is the newest example of how extreme weather is playing a role in driving disease outbreaks.

"The outbreaks are getting much larger because the extreme climate events are getting much more common," said Tulio de Oliveira, a South Africa-based scientist who studies diseases in the developing world.

De Oliveira, who led a team that identified new coronavirus variants during the COVID-19 pandemic, said southern Africa's latest outbreaks can be traced to the cyclones and floods that hit Malawi in late 2021 and early 2022, carrying the cholera bacteria to areas it doesn't normally reach.

Zimbabwe and Zambia have seen cases rise as they wrestle with severe droughts and people rely on less safe sources of water in their desperation like boreholes, shallow wells and rivers, which can all be contaminated. Days after the deadly flooding in Kenya and other parts of East Africa this month, cholera cases appeared.

The World Health Organization calls cholera a disease of poverty, as it thrives where there is poor sanitation and a lack of clean water. Africa has had eight times as many deaths this year as the Middle East, the second-most affected region.

Historically vulnerable, Africa is even more at risk as it faces the worst impacts of climate change as well as the effect of the El Niño weather phenomenon, health experts say.

In what's become a perfect storm, there's also a global shortage of cholera vaccines, which are needed only in poorer countries.

"It doesn't affect countries with resources," said Dr. Daniela Garone, the international medical coordinator for Doctors Without Borders, also known by its French acronym MSF. "So, it doesn't bring the resources."

Billions of dollars have been invested into other diseases that predominantly affect the world's most vul-

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nerable, like polio and tuberculosis, largely because those diseases are highly contagious and could cause outbreaks even in rich countries. But that's not the case with cholera, where epidemics remain contained.

WHO said this month there is a "critical shortage" of oral cholera vaccines in the global stockpile. Since the start of 2023, 15 countries — the desperate few — have requested a total of 82 million doses to deal with deadly outbreaks while only 46 million doses were available.

There are just 3.2 million doses left, below the target of having at least 5 million in reserve. While there are currently cholera epidemics in the Middle East, the Americas and Southeast Asia, Africa is by far the worst-affected region.

Vaccines alliance GAVI and UNICEF said last month that the approval of a new cholera vaccine would boost stocks. But the result of the shortage has already been measured in deaths.

Lilanda, a township on the edge of the Zambian capital of Lusaka, is a typical cholera hot spot. Stagnant pools of water dot the dirt roads. Clean water is like gold dust. Here, over two awful days in January, Mildred Banda saw her 1-year-old son die from cholera and rushed to save the life of her teenage daughter.

Cholera shouldn't be killing anyone. The disease is easily treated and easily prevented — and the vaccines are relatively simple to produce.

That didn't help Banda's son, Ndanji.

When he fell sick with diarrhea, he was treated with an oral rehydration solution at a clinic and released. He slipped back into dehydration that night at home. Banda feels terrible guilt.

"I should have noticed earlier that my son was not feeling well," she said, sitting in her tiny concrete house. "I should have acted faster and taken him back to the clinic. I should have taken him back to save his life."

Because of the vaccine shortage, Zambia couldn't undertake a preventative vaccination campaign after neighboring Malawi's outbreak. That should have been a warning call, said de Oliveira. Zambia only made an emergency request when its cases started mounting.

The doses that might have saved Ndanji started arriving in mid-January. He died on Jan. 6.

In Zimbabwe, a drought worsened by El Niño has seen cholera take hold in distant rural areas as well as its traditional hot spots of crowded urban neighborhoods.

Abi Kebra Belaye, MSF representative for Zimbabwe, said the southern African nation normally has around 17 hard-hit areas, mostly urban. This year, cholera spread to 62 districts as the struggle to find water heightened the risk.

"This part of Africa is paying the highest price of climate change," Kebra Belaye said.

Augustine Chonyera, who hails from a cholera-prone part of the capital, Harare, was shocked when he recently visited the sparsely populated rural district of Buhera.

He said he heard grim tales of the impact of the disease: a family losing five members, a husband and wife dying within hours of each other and local businesses using delivery trucks to take the sick to a clinic several kilometers (miles) away.

"It seems now the people in rural areas are in more danger than us. I still wonder how it happened," Chonyera said.

He said he returned home as soon as he could — after giving a large bottle of treated water he had brought with him to an elderly woman.

Mexico's poorest receiving less government funds under president who brought poor to the fore

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — President Andrés Manuel López Obrador swept into office nearly six years ago with a simple motto laying out his administration's priorities: "For the good of all, first the poor."

His administration scrapped a host of existing social programs and installed their own, quickly increasing overall social spending to unprecedented heights for senior citizens, unemployed youth, students, farmers and people with disabilities.

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But less noticed was that the new roster of social programs dramatically shifted who was getting that money. Suddenly, Mexico's poorest citizens were receiving a smaller portion of the spending and less money than under previous administrations.

Meanwhile, some of Mexico's wealthiest started getting money they didn't really need.

The shift owed largely to a massive "universal" pension benefit for seniors that López Obrador launched on a chilly January day outside Mexico City in 2019, just weeks after taking office. He announced he was more than doubling the existing federal pension — it has since doubled again — and expanding it regardless of income to people who previously didn't qualify, like those who received another pension from their former employer.

If much more money isn't poured into the system, "universal programs spread benefits more thinly over the whole population with the result that the people who were most in need get worse," said Robert Greenstein, a fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "Poverty can go up. Inequality can be greater than it would be under a more targeted scheme."

But López Obrador's social programs have proven so popular that even the opposition candidates running to replace him in the June 2 election have promised to expand them. Some 28 million Mexicans will benefit from one of the programs this year. In Sunday night's final presidential debate, candidate Xóchitl Gálvez said she would lower the minimum pension age to 60 from 65.

The pension is the largest social program by budget in López Obrador's slate of handouts, far surpassing the also well known Youth Building the Future, which pays young adults who neither study nor work to apprentice, and Sowing Life, which pays farmers to plant fruit or lumber-producing trees on their land.

Combined with the elimination of predecessors' more targeted programs that had focused on Mexico's most in need, experts say the pension dramatically shifted the distribution of government funds.

Four months from the end of López Obrador's six-year term, several million people have escaped poverty. But factors beyond the social programs are involved, including López Obrador's nearly tripling of the minimum wage and Mexicans abroad continuing to send home record amounts of money to relatives.

Curiously, there are about 400,000 more Mexicans in extreme poverty than at the beginning of his term, according to government data.

A government report published every two years that divides Mexico's population into 10 segments by income says the very poorest segment in 2018 received about 19% of social spending. Just two years later, that poorest group was receiving only about 6%, said Manuel Martínez Espinoza, a researcher at Mexico's National Council of the Humanities, Sciences and Technologies. For reasons unknown the government has not published the 2022 report.

CASH TO FAMILIES, BUT WITH A CATCH

At a counter in a central Mexico City market, Arturo García leaned over a steaming bowl of tripe stew on a recent morning. The 73-year-old retired cab driver said he stopped taking fares during the pandemic.

Now the \$362 (6,000 pesos) he receives from his universal pension every two months and some money he gets renting out a storage space in his home to street vendors are his only sources of income.

"You have money or you don't have money, they give it to you," García said of the pension. "The government is trying to make us all equal."

One of the programs López Obrador ended when he took office was called Prospera. It had targeted Mexico's poorest families for some two decades under various names with what were known as conditional cash transfers. Poor families received money, but it was restricted by income level and recipients had to meet some requirements to get it, like taking their children for medical checkups.

The president said the program was clientelist and suffered from systematic corruption, though instances of corruption have also been found in López Obrador's programs.

Targeted social programs like Prospera attempt to be more precise in steering public funds to specific segments of the population. For that reason they tend to be less expensive than universal programs.

Critics, however, say they stigmatize the poor; have less political support, which makes them vulnerable to being cut; require more administration to determine eligibility and fewer people enroll, said Greenstein,

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the fellow at the Brookings Institution, adding that those risks are not inherent in targeted programs.

Mexico's Welfare Ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Prospera's funding was redirected to López Obrador's programs, principally the universal pension, signaling an important shift from a means-tested program that largely benefitted poor children to one that provided cash to all senior citizens.

One of the more cynical criticisms of the shift is that children don't vote, but seniors do.

PEOPLE WHO DON'T REALLY NEED IT ARE GETTING MORE

The other side of Mexico's poorest receiving a smaller proportion of social spending under this administration is that people who don't really need it are getting more.

One morning in late April, César Herrera brought his elderly mother to a branch of the Banco Bienestar, or Welfare Bank, in Mexico City to withdraw her pension payment. The bank was created by López Obrador as a vehicle to get payments from his administration's programs directly into the hands of Mexicans.

Herrera said he and his mother had driven by in February when the last pension deposit was made and saw the line stretching down the street. But unlike many seniors who live payment to payment, Herrera said his mother didn't need the money, so they left.

"However, it's there," he said when they returned a month and a half later. "Of course you have to take it."

The ninth out of 10 income strata, or the second highest, analyzed by the government went from receiving about \$4.40 of every \$100 in social spending in 2018 to getting about \$10 in 2020, said Martínez, the researcher at the humanities, sciences and technologies council.

Martínez said his field work in Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state, found many people who were not receiving as much money as they had previously under Prospera, but who nevertheless fervently supported López Obrador.

"I've talked with a lot of people in my field work, they feel valued, they feel the president values them, which they didn't feel before," Martínez said.

Martínez hypothesizes that the growth in extreme poverty during this administration was due in part to the elimination of Prospera but also the fact that people in extreme poverty tend to work in the informal sector — which would not have benefited equally from the increased minimum wage. Another factor was the COVID-19 pandemic forced a lot of families to exhaust their limited savings on health care.

Much of the back-and-forth between López Obrador's anointed successor Claudia Sheinbaum and the opposition candidate Gálvez has been the president and Sheinbaum insisting that Gálvez will end the social programs if she wins — and Gálvez promising that she won't. Much of that debate is unnecessary since the pension is now enshrined in the constitution.

Martínez said that even at the current 65 minimum age the program is burning through public funds too rapidly.

"In the short term, it's a time bomb because it's going to generate problems because it isn't fiscally sustainable," he said.

Trump swaps bluster for silence, and possibly sleep, in his hush money trial

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump isn't known for letting slights pass.

Yet for weeks, the famously combative presumptive Republican nominee has sat silently — to the point of sometimes seeming asleep — in a sterile Manhattan courtroom amid a barrage of accusations and insults.

There were the times his former fixer-turned-chief prosecution witness was quoted calling him a "boorish cartoon misogynist" and a "Cheeto-dusted" villain who belonged in a "cage, like an animal." There were the graphic details relayed by a porn actor about the night she claims they had sex. And there were lengthy descriptions of what the prosecution argues was an illegal scheme to conceal hush money payments to salvage his then-flailing 2016 campaign.

Through it all, even as he and his allies attacked the case outside the courtroom, Trump has spent the

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majority of his time as a criminal defendant sitting nearly motionless for hours, leaning back in his burgundy leather chair with his eyes closed. He ultimately chose not to testify in a case that made him the first former president in the nation's history to stand trial on criminal charges.

Closing arguments in the case are scheduled for Tuesday, after which a jury will decide whether to make him the first former president and major party nominee convicted of felony charges.

Trump's demeanor inside the courtroom has been a notable departure from the fight-at-all-costs persona that has defined him through decades of public life, fueling his transformation from a New York tabloid fixture to a onetime – and possible future – president.

And it has been at least partially strategic, according to people familiar with Trump's approach who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the case. Trump's attorneys have warned him that behaving as he did in his previous trials — where he tangled with judges and stormed out — could damage his standing with a jury that is likely watching his every move and will determine his fate.

Acting out, he appears to have concluded, is not in his best interest, particularly as he faces the risk of imprisonment if he's convicted.

Trump has also been able to speak several times a day to a gaggle of media camped outside the courtroom, giving him an outlet to vent his frustrations and get his message out. Facing a gag order that prohibits him from criticizing witnesses, his campaign has assembled a host of supporters — from vice presidential contenders to the House speaker — to deliver those attacks instead.

But the approach comes with its own risks. Some former prosecutors and attorneys who have been closely following the case said that while disruptive behavior could prove detrimental to the jury, there's also a risk of Trump appearing too disengaged.

"What you want is for your client to look attentive, respectful and look like nothing is bothering him — but also not falling asleep," said Randall D. Eliason, a former assistant U.S. attorney who for years specialized in white-collar crime.

EYES WIDE SHUT

Trump has repeatedly denied reports from journalists watching him via closed-circuit television that he is sleeping in court, insisting on his social media site that he simply closes "my beautiful blue eyes, sometimes, listen intensely, and take it ALL in!!!"

"No, I don't fall asleep," he told Telemundo Miami. "I sometimes will sit back, close my eyes. I hear everything perfectly. At some point I may fall asleep. But I will let you know when that is."

Eliason said Trump's demeanor was "definitely" something jurors would notice and could potentially perceive as disrespectful if they feel "he's acting like it's not even worth his attention" or think he's taking a nap.

"If it's a tactic to try to make it look like he's not concerned about the testimony, I don't think that would play well," he said. "I guess if he's really just sort of listening with eyes closed, meditating or whatever, that doesn't seem so bad. But I think falling asleep, the jury would find quite disrespectful."

On the other hand, he added, "You don't want him to get really agitated" as he did during previous trials. Actually, sleeping in court would be highly unusual for a defendant.

"I have witnessed lawyers fall asleep, but never a defendant in a criminal case. Their lives are at stake and they don't sleep in my experience," said Stephen A. Saltzburg, a professor at the George Washington University Law School who has been writing about the case.

"It's possible it's all an act to show: 'Hey, this is bogus, I'm not going to pay attention to it,'" he added, but that would also be unhelpful. "Since the jury has to pay attention, that doesn't send a message that you respect this whole jury process."

'YOUR CLIENT IS UPSET'

Trump hasn't been entirely sedated. During jury selection, he appeared alert and engaged, and was at one point reprimanded by the judge for his visible reactions to one juror's answers.

"(W)hile the juror was at the podium maybe 12 feet from your client, your client was audibly uttering something ... he was audibly gesturing," Judge Juan Merchan warned one of his lawyers in April.

"I won't tolerate that. I will not have any jurors intimidated in this courtroom," he went on. "I want to make that crystal clear."

Later, when Stormy Daniels was on the stand, Trump's reaction to her testimony once again prompted Merchan to summon his lawyers to the bench.

"I understand that your client is upset at this point, but he is cursing audibly, and he is shaking his head visually and that's contemptuous. It has the potential to intimidate the witness and the jury can see that," Merchan said, according to the transcript.

But as the trial dragged on, and particularly during his ex-attorney Michael Cohen's testimony, Trump most often sat in repose, leaning back in his chair, with his eyes closed, his lips pursed and his head tilted back or to the side. He shifted from time to time — sometimes to scratch an itch. Sometimes he appeared to doze off, his mouth falling agape as he sat for hours in the fluorescent-lit courtroom.

Other times, he re-engaged, sitting upright, chatting with his lawyers or scribbling and passing notes. He often leafed through stacks of papers, looked around the courtroom or sat upright, with his arms folded across his chest. He appeared especially alert and engaged during defense witness Robert Costello's combative testimony, during which the judge threatened to remove Costello from the stand.

But afterward, he returned to the eyes-closed, head-back position that became his default.

PAST OUTBURSTS

It's been a marked contrast from his demeanor at his earlier civil trials, when Trump stormed out of the courtroom, actively sparred with judges and made no effort to shield his disdain.

During his business fraud civil trial, during which Cohen also testified, Trump blasted a court clerk from the stand, lashed out at the judge and, at one point, marched out of the courtroom. The judge in that case issued Trump a \$355 million penalty.

And in his E. Jean Carroll defamation case, he was reprimanded for muttering while she spoke, told the judge he would love it if he were removed from the courtroom, and stood up and walked out during Carroll's closing argument, in front of the jury.

Saltzburg said he believes Trump's behavior in that case is one of the reasons the jury awarded her a whopping \$83.3 million.

"They wanted to send a clear message to him and they thought it would take a lot of money to do it," he said.

In this case, said Jeffrey S. Jacobovitz, a trial attorney with extensive experience in white-collar criminal defense, Trump's demeanor is "something that a jury would certainly notice."

The perception that he's been sleeping "is likely to have a negative effect on the jury," he said, adding, "I think I would prefer angry Trump."

'Green blitz': As election nears, Biden pushes slew of rules on environment, other priorities

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As he tries to secure his legacy, President Joe Biden has unleashed a flurry of election-year rules on the environment and other topics, including a landmark regulation that would force coal-fired power plants to capture smokestack emissions or shut down.

The limits on greenhouse gas emissions from fossil-fueled electric stations are the Democratic president's most ambitious effort yet to roll back planet-warming pollution from the power sector, the nation's second-largest contributor to climate change.

The power plant rule is among more than 60 regulations Biden and his administration finalized last month to meet his policy goals, including a promise to cut carbon emissions that are driving climate change roughly in half by 2030. The regulations, led by the Environmental Protection Agency but involving a host of other federal agencies, are being issued in quick succession as the Biden administration rushes to meet a looming but uncertain deadline to ensure they are not overturned by a new Congress — or a new president.

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"The Biden administration is in green blitz mode," said Lena Moffitt, executive director of the activist group Evergreen Action.

IT'S NOT JUST THE ENVIRONMENT

The barrage of rules covers more than the environment.

With the clock ticking toward Election Day, Biden's administration has issued or proposed rules on a wide range of issues, from student loan forgiveness and affordable housing to overtime pay, health and compensation for airline passengers who are unreasonably delayed, as he tries to woo voters in his reelection bid against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

In all, federal agencies broke records by publishing 66 significant final rules in April, higher than any month in Biden's presidency, according to George Washington University's Regulatory Studies Center. More than half the rules — 34 — were considered likely to have an economic impact of at least \$200 million, the center said.

That tally is by far the highest issued by a recent president in a single month, the center said. The next closest was 20 such rules issued by Trump in his final month in office.

Biden is not shying away from promoting the rules. For example, he went to Madison, Wisconsin, to promote his actions on student loan relief after the Supreme Court rejected his initial plan. More often, Cabinet officials are being dispatched around the country, often to the swing states, to promote the administration's actions.

THE PROBLEM WITH RULES

Policies created by rulemaking are easier to reverse than laws when a new administration takes office, especially with a sharply divided Congress.

"There's no time to start like today," Biden said on his first day in office as he moved to dismantle the Trump legacy.

Over the course of his presidency, Biden has reinstated protections for threatened species that were rolled back by Trump. He also has boosted fuel efficiency standards, reversing the former president.

The Education Department's gainful employment rule targets college programs that leave graduates with high debt compared to their expected earnings. And the Department of Housing and Urban Development moved to restore a rule that was designed to eliminate racial disparities in suburbs and thrown out by Trump.

It's widely expected that Trump would move to reverse Biden regulations if he were to win in November.

DEADLINES LOOM

The Congressional Review Act allows lawmakers to void new rules after they're finalized by the executive branch. Congressional Republicans used the once-obscure law more than a dozen times in 2017 to undo actions by former President Barack Obama. Democrats returned the favor four years later, rescinding three Trump administration rules.

The law requires votes within 60 legislative days of a rule's publication in the Federal Register, a shifting deadline that depends on how long Congress is in session. Administration officials say they believe actions taken so far this year will be shielded from the review act in the next Congress, although Republicans oppose nearly all of them and have filed challenges that could lead to a series of votes in the House and Senate over the next few months.

Biden is likely to veto any repeal effort that reaches his desk before his term expires.

"The rules are safe in this Congress," given Democratic control of the Senate and White House, said Michael Gerrard, who teaches environmental law at Columbia Law School. If Republicans take over Congress and the White House next year, "all bets are off," Gerrard said.

RULE-MAKING TO ESTABLISH A LEGACY

Besides the power plant rule, the EPA also issued separate rules targeting tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks and methane emissions from oil and gas drilling. The Interior Department, meanwhile, restricted new oil and gas leases on 13 million acres of a federal petroleum reserve in Alaska and required oil and gas companies to pay more to drill on federal lands and meet stronger requirements to clean up old or abandoned wells.

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Industry groups and Republicans slammed Biden's actions as overreach.

"This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future," said Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

In addition to climate, the EPA also finalized a long-delayed ban on asbestos, a carcinogen that kills tens of thousands of Americans every year, and set strict limits on certain so-called "forever chemicals" in drinking water. The EPA also required more than 200 chemical plants nationwide to reduce toxic emissions that are likely to cause cancer, mostly in poor and minority communities already overburdened by industrial pollution.

While recently delivered, many of Biden's actions have been planned since he took office and reinstated or strengthened more than 100 environmental regulations that Trump weakened or eliminated.

The rules come two years after Democrats approved a sweeping law aimed at boosting clean energy that is widely hailed as the most significant climate legislation ever enacted.

Taken together, Democrats say, the climate law and Biden's executive actions could solidify his standing with climate-oriented voters — including young people who helped put Biden in office four years ago — and help him fend off Trump in a likely rematch in November.

"Every community in this country deserves to breathe clean air and drink clean water," said EPA Administrator Michael Regan. "We promised to listen to folks that are suffering from pollution and act to protect them."

'CHALLENGING TIMES'

Along with votes in Congress, the rules likely face legal challenges from industry and Republican-led states, including several lawsuits that have been filed already.

"Part of our strategy is to be sure that we understand the current court culture that we're in, and make sure that every action, every rule, every policy is more durable, as legally sound as possible," Regan told a conference of environmental journalists last month.

Still, looming over all the executive branch actions is the Supreme Court, where a 6-3 conservative majority has increasingly reined in the powers of federal agencies, including the EPA. A landmark 2022 ruling limited EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants that contribute to global warming, and a separate ruling weakened regulations protecting millions of acres of wetlands.

A case pending before the court could put EPA's air pollution-fighting "good neighbor" plan on hold while legal cases continue.

"We are living in challenging times in so many ways, but we at EPA are staying focused on the mission," Regan said at the April conference. "And then we have to really just defend that case in court."

Rules issued by other agencies also face legal challenges.

Republican-led states are challenging the administration's new Title IX rules that provide expanded protections for LGBTQ+ students and new safeguards for victims of sexual assault. They're also suing to overturn a rule requiring background checks on buyers at gun shows and places outside stores.

Gerrard, the Columbia law professor, said the threat of executive-branch actions being overturned by Congress or the courts "makes it hard for either side to build up any momentum." That uncertainty also makes it harder for the industry to comply, since they are not sure how long the rules will be in effect.

STAYING POWER ON CLIMATE?

Gerrard and other experts said the climate law and the bipartisan infrastructure law passed in 2021 are more durable and will be harder for a future president to unwind. The two laws, combined with executive branch actions, will put the country on a path to meet Biden's goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, environmentalists say.

The climate law, which includes nearly \$400 billion in spending to boost clean energy, will have ripple effects on the economy for years to come, said Christy Goldfuss, executive director of the Natural Resource Defense Council and a former Obama administration official.

She pushed back on complaints by industry and Republicans that the power plant rule is a continuation of an Obama-era "war on coal."

"It's an attack on pollution," she said, adding that fossil fuels such as coal and oil are subject to the Clean Air Act "and need to be cleaned up."

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, who led the challenge in the 2022 Supreme Court case, said EPA was adhering to what he called Biden's "Green New Deal" agenda.

"Unelected bureaucrats continue their pursuit to legislate rather than rely on elected members of Congress for guidance," said Morrisey, who is the GOP nominee for governor in the state.

Hunter Biden's lawyers expected in court for final hearing before June 3 gun trial

By CLAUDIA LAUER and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Attorneys for Hunter Biden are due in court Friday for the final hearing before the president's son is expected to stand trial on federal firearms charges in Delaware as his father's reelection campaign unfolds.

Hunter Biden is charged with lying about his drug use in October 2018 on a form to buy a gun that he kept for about 11 days in Delaware. He has acknowledged an addiction to crack cocaine during that period, but his lawyers have said he didn't break the law and the case is politically motivated.

The two sides have been arguing in court documents about evidence in the case, including contents from a laptop that he allegedly dropped off at a Delaware repair shop. Defense attorneys question the authenticity of the laptop's data in court documents, but prosecutors say there's no evidence the data has been compromised and that a drawn-out fight over it at trial would be a waste of time. The laptop has been the source of controversy for years after Republicans accessed and disseminated personal data from it.

Prosecutors also plan to show jurors portions of his 2021 memoir "Beautiful Things," in which he detailed his struggle with alcoholism and drug abuse following the 2015 death of his older brother, Beau, who succumbed to brain cancer at age 46.

Defense attorneys argue prosecutors are cherry-picking evidence from the book and want to also include more information they chose.

U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika will preside over what's expected to be the last hearing before trial expected to begin with jury selection on June 3.

Hunter Biden is also facing federal tax charges in Los Angeles, and is set for trial in that case in September. He's accused of failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes over four years while living an "extravagant lifestyle" during a period in which he has acknowledged struggling with addiction. The back taxes have since been paid.

Hunter Biden's lawyers have pushed unsuccessfully in both cases to have them dismissed. They have argued, among other things, that prosecutors bowed to political pressure to indict him after a plea agreement hit the skids in court and was publicly pilloried by Republicans, including Trump, as a "sweetheart deal."

Trump, who is running to unseat Democratic President Joe Biden, faces his own legal problems. He is charged in four criminal cases, including a hush money trial underway in New York.

The long-running federal investigation into the president's son had looked ready to wrap up with a plea deal last year, but the agreement imploded after a judge raised questions about it. Hunter Biden was subsequently indicted.

Under the deal, he would have gotten two years of probation after pleading guilty to misdemeanor tax charges. He also would have avoided prosecution on the gun charge if he stayed out of trouble.

Trump holds a rally in the South Bronx as he tries to woo his hometown

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump campaigned Thursday in one of the most Democratic counties in the nation, holding a rally in the South Bronx as he tries to woo minority voters days before a

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Manhattan jury will begin deliberations on whether to convict him of felony charges in his criminal hush money trial.

Trump addressed supporters in Crotona Park, a public green space in a neighborhood that is among the city's most diverse and its most impoverished, a change from the majority-white areas where he holds most of his rallies. While the crowd was not quite as diverse as the South Bronx as a whole, it included large numbers of Black and Hispanic voters; Spanish was heard throughout the crowd.

Trump, in his speech, cast himself as a better president for Black and Hispanic voters than President Joe Biden as he railed against Biden on immigration, an issue Trump has made central to his campaign. He insisted "the biggest negative impact" of the influx of migrants in New York is "against our Black population and our Hispanic population who are losing their jobs, losing their housing, losing everything they can lose."

Some in the crowd responded by chanting, "Build the wall," a reference to Trump's push while in the White House to build a U.S.-Mexico border barrier.

With Trump confined to New York for much of the last six weeks because of his trial, the presumptive Republican nominee's campaign has planned a series of local stops across his hometown before and after court. He visited a bodega in Harlem, dropped by a construction site and held a photo op at a local firehouse.

But the Bronx rally was his first event open to the general public as he insists he is making a play to win an overwhelmingly Democratic state that hasn't backed a Republican for president since Ronald Reagan in 1984. Besides creating a spectacle of rallygoers and protesters, the rally also gave Trump an opportunity to highlight what he argues are advantages on economic and immigration issues that could cut into key Democratic voting blocs.

"The strategy is to demonstrate to the voters of the Bronx and New York that this isn't your typical presidential election, that Donald Trump is here to represent everybody and get our country back on track," said Florida Republican Rep. Byron Donalds, a potential Trump running mate who grew up in Brooklyn and spoke at the rally.

The former president opened his rally with an ode to his hometown, talking about its humble beginnings as a small Dutch trading post before becoming a glamorous capital of culture that "inspired the entire world." While Trump established residency in Florida in 2019, he reminisced on Thursday about his efforts to revitalize Central Park's Wollman Rink and people he knew in the real estate business.

"Everyone wanted to be here," he told the enthusiastic audience. "But sadly this is now a city in decline."

"If a New Yorker can't save this country," he went on to say, "no one can."

Hours before Trump's rally was set to begin, a long line of supporters decked out in red "Make America Great Again" hats and other Trump gear snaked around the park, waiting for security screening to begin. People were still entering the park well into Trump's speech, with some eager supporters sprinting up a hill toward the rally site after getting through security.

The Bronx Democratic Party protested Trump's appearance with its own event at the park.

Members of multiple unions were present, holding signs that said "The Bronx says no to Trump" in both English and Spanish.

"We are used to elected officials, to government officials, to opportunists of all kinds who come to our community and use our painful history," said Democratic State Rep. Amanda Septimo, who represents the South Bronx. "They talk about the Bronx and everything that's wrong with it, but they never get to the part that talks about what they're going to do for the Bronx and we know that Trump is never going to get to that part in his speech."

But some locals in the crowd Thursday disagreed.

Margarita Rosario, a 69-year-old who has lived in the borough for more than 60 years, said she saw Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York on television the night before suggesting that the Bronx wouldn't support Trump. It spurred her to show up, holding a Trump flag and a poster that said, "Make America Great Again."

"I got so annoyed with that. I said, 'How dare she speak for the whole Bronx?'" Rosario said.

Muhammad Ali, a 50-year-old who lives in the Bronx and said he planned to vote for Trump in November, said he once used to think the former president was a racist but his views have changed.

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"We need a patriotic president at the moment and I find Donald Trump more patriotic for the moment than Joe Biden," said Ali, an immigrant from Bangladesh and worker for New York's transportation agency.

At least one New Yorker in the crowd said he knew Trump from his days as a local billionaire real estate developer.

Alfredo Rosado, 62, said he'd been a Trump supporter since 1998 when he worked for several months as a fill-in summer doorman at Trump's Trump Tower building.

Rosado recounted how Trump had asked his name and stopped to chat. "He's the same person you see," he said of the former president.

Trump's campaign believes he can chip away at Biden's support among Black and Hispanic voters, particularly younger men who may not follow politics closely, but are frustrated by their economic situations and drawn to Trump's tough-guy persona.

He's also argued the indictments he faces in New York and elsewhere make him relatable to Black voters frustrated by the criminal justice system, a statement that was harshly criticized by Biden's allies.

Biden's campaign on Thursday released two ads aimed at undercutting Trump's attempts to make inroads with Black voters, highlighting his propagation of the "birther" conspiracy against former President Barack Obama and his calls for the death penalty for five men wrongly convicted of rape in the 1989 Central Park Five case. A radio ad fictionalizing a conversation between a Trump campaign volunteer and a Black voter will air on national Black radio stations while a shorter television spot will air in major cities, in swing states and on digital platforms, aiming to reach voters in the Bronx near Trump's rally.

The rally comes during a pause in Trump's criminal hush money trial. Court will resume following the Memorial Day weekend with closing arguments. The jury will then decide whether Trump will become the first former president in the nation's history to be criminally convicted and whether he will be the first major party presidential candidate to run as a convicted felon.

The Bronx was once the most Democratic borough in the city. Barack Obama won 91.2% of the borough's vote in 2012, the highest in the state. Biden won 83.5% of the borough in 2020. Trump garnered only 16% of the vote.

The area Trump visited is overwhelmingly non-white — a departure from most of his rally locations. About 65% of residents are Hispanic and 31% Black, according to the U.S. Census data. About 35% live below the poverty line.

As he wrapped up his speech, Trump said he woke up Thursday uncertain of the reception he'd get in the Bronx.

"I said, 'I wonder, will it be hostile or will it be friendly?'" he said. "It was beyond friendly. It was a lovefest."

Native American tribes give unanimous approval to proposal securing Colorado River water

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

The Navajo Nation Council has signed off on a proposed settlement that would ensure water rights for its tribe and two others in the drought-stricken Southwest — a deal that could become the most expensive enacted by Congress.

The Navajo Nation has one of the largest single outstanding claims in the Colorado River basin. Delegates acknowledged the gravity of their vote Thursday and stood to applause after casting a unanimous vote. Many noted that the effort to secure water deliveries for tribal communities has spanned generations.

Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley and other officials stood outside the chamber in Window Rock, Arizona, under a clear blue sky as the wind whipped. She recalled learning about the fight over water rights in school when she was a girl.

Momentous is how she described the day, before she put her pen to the legislation and nearby vehicles honked their horns in celebration.

"This is an opportunity to think 100 years ahead for our children," said Curley, a mother and soon-to-be grandmother.

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"The time is now and we have to make our footing for the future," she continued.

The San Juan Southern Paiute Tribal Council also voted to approve the settlement Thursday, while the Hopi tribe approved it earlier this week. Congress will have the final say.

For Hopi, the settlement is a path to ensuring a reliable water supply and infrastructure for the health, well-being and economic prosperity of the tribe for generations to come, Hopi said in a statement late Thursday.

"Most importantly, this settlement provides a way for Hopi to fulfill its covenant with Maasaw (guardian) to live as stewards of Hopitutskwa (Hopi land)," the statement read.

Congress has enacted nearly three dozen tribal water rights settlements across the U.S. over the last four decades and federal negotiation teams are working on another 22 agreements involving dozens of tribes. In this case, the Navajo, Hopi and San Juan Southern Paiute tribes are seeking more than \$5 billion as part of their settlement.

About \$1.75 billion of that would fund a pipeline from Lake Powell, one of the two largest reservoirs in the Colorado River system, on the Arizona-Utah border. The settlement would require the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to complete the project by the end of 2040.

From there, water would be delivered to dozens of tribal communities in remote areas.

Nearly a third of homes in the Navajo Nation — spanning 27,000 square miles (70,000 square kilometers) of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah — don't have running water. Many homes on Hopi lands are similarly situated.

Navajo President Buu Nygren plans to sign the settlement legislation as soon as it hits his desk, likely Friday. He told The Associated Press it had been a long road to get everyone to the table and the next step will be knocking on the doors of Congress.

A century ago, tribes were left out of a landmark 1922 agreement that divided the Colorado River basin water among seven Western states. Now, the tribes are seeking water from a mix of sources: the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River, aquifers and washes on tribal lands in northeastern Arizona.

The latest settlement talks were driven in part by worsening impacts from climate change and demands on the river like those that have allowed Phoenix, Las Vegas and other desert cities to thrive. The Navajo, Hopi and San Juan Southern Paiute tribes are hoping to close the deal quickly under a Democratic administration in Arizona and with Joe Biden as president.

Without a settlement, the tribes would be at the mercy of courts. Already, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the federal government is not bound by treaties with the Navajo Nation to secure water for the tribe. Navajo has the largest land base of any of the 574 federally recognized tribes and is second in population with more than 400,000 citizens.

A separate case that has played out over decades in Arizona over the Little Colorado River basin likely will result in far less water than the Navajo Nation says it needs because the tribe has to prove it has historically used the water. That's hard to do when the tribe hasn't had access to much of it, Navajo Attorney General Ethel Branch has said.

Arizona — situated in the Colorado River's Lower Basin with California, Nevada and Mexico — is unique in that it also has an allocation in the Upper Basin. The state would get certainty in the amount of water available as it's forced to cut back as the overall supply diminishes.

Navajo and Hopi, like other Arizona tribes, could be part of that solution if they secure the right to lease water within the state that could be delivered through a canal system that already serves metropolitan Tucson and Phoenix.

Arizona water officials have said the leasing authority is a key component of the settlement.

NCAA, leagues back \$2.8 billion settlement, setting stage for current, former athletes to be paid

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

The NCAA and the nation's five biggest conferences announced Thursday night that they have agreed to pay nearly \$2.8 billion to settle a host of antitrust claims, a monumental decision that sets the stage for a groundbreaking revenue-sharing model that could start steering millions of dollars directly to athletes as soon as the 2025 fall semester.

NCAA President Charlie Baker along with the commissioners of the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and Southeastern Conference released a joint statement saying they had agreed to settlement terms. They called the move "an important step in the continuing reform of college sports that will provide benefits to student-athletes and provide clarity in college athletics across all divisions for years to come."

Terms were not disclosed, though some details have emerged in the past few weeks. They signal the end of the NCAA's bedrock amateurism model that dates to its founding in 1906. Indeed, the days of NCAA punishment for athletes driving booster-provided cars started vanishing three years ago when the organization lifted restrictions on endorsement deals backed by so-called name, image and likeness money.

The deal still must be approved by the federal judge overseeing the case and plaintiffs will have the opportunity to opt out or challenge terms of the agreement. If it stands, it will usher in the beginning of a new era in college sports where athletes are compensated more like professionals and schools can compete for talent using direct payments.

"There's no question about it. It's a huge quantum leap," said Tom McMillen, the former Maryland basketball player and congressman who has led an association of collegiate athletic directors the past eight years.

Now it is not far-fetched to look ahead to seasons where star quarterbacks or top prospects on college basketball teams are not only cashing in big-money NIL deals but have six-figure school payments in the bank to play.

"This landmark settlement will bring college sports into the 21st century, with college athletes finally able to receive a fair share of the billions of dollars of revenue that they generate for their schools," said Steve Berman, one of the lead attorneys for the plaintiffs. "Our clients are the bedrock of the NCAA's multibillion-dollar business and finally can be compensated in an equitable and just manner for their extraordinary athletic talents."

There are a host of details still to be determined, but the agreement calls for the NCAA and the conferences to pay \$2.77 billion over 10 years to more than 14,000 former and current college athletes who say now-defunct rules prevented them from earning money from endorsement and sponsorship deals dating to 2016.

"Even though it was only because of the overwhelming legal pressure, the NCAA, conferences and schools are agreeing that college athletes should be paid," said Ramogi Huma, a former UCLA football player and longtime advocate for college athletes. "And there's no going back from there. That's truly groundbreaking."

Some of the money will come from NCAA reserve funds and insurance but even though the lawsuit specifically targeted five conferences that are comprised of 69 schools (including Notre Dame), dozens of other NCAA member schools will see smaller distributions from the NCAA to cover the mammoth payout.

Schools in the Big Ten, Big 12, ACC and SEC are likely to end up bearing the brunt of the settlement going forward at an estimated cost of about \$300 million each over 10 years, the majority of which would be paid to directly to athletes.

"The settlement, though undesirable in many respects and promising only temporary stability, is necessary to avoid what would be the bankruptcy of college athletics," said Notre Dame President Rev. John I. Jenkins.

PAYING ATHLETES

In the new compensation model, each school will be permitted but not required to set aside up to \$21 million in revenue to share with athletes per year, though as revenues rise so could the cap.

Athletes in all sports would be eligible for payments and schools would be given the freedom to decide

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how that money is divvied up among sports programs. Scholarship limits by sport will be replaced by roster restrictions.

Whether the new compensation model is subject to the Title IX gender equity law is unknown along with whether schools will be able to bring NIL activities in-house as they hope and squeeze out the booster-run collectives that have sprouted up in the last few years to pay athletes. Both topics could lead to more lawsuits.

THE CASE

The class-action federal lawsuit at the center of the settlement, *House v. the NCAA*, was set to go to trial in January. The complaint, brought by former Arizona State swimmer Grant House and Sedona Prince, a former Oregon and current TCU basketball player, said the NCAA, along with the five wealthiest conferences, improperly barred athletes from earning endorsement money.

The suit also argued that athletes were entitled to a piece of the billions of dollars the NCAA and those conferences earn from media rights agreements with television networks.

Amid political and public pressure, and facing the prospect of another court loss that some in college sports claimed could reach \$20 billion in damages, NCAA and conference officials conceded on what has long been a core principal of the enterprise: that schools don't directly pay the athletes to play beyond a scholarship.

That principle has been dented numerous times over the last decade. Notably, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled against the NCAA in 2021 in a case related to education-related benefits.

The narrow focus of the *Alston* case didn't collapse the collegiate sports system, but the strong rebuke of the NCAA's model of amateurism flung the door open to more lawsuits. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a former Yale athlete, put it bluntly: "The bottom line is that the NCAA and its member colleges are suppressing the pay of student athletes who collectively generate billions of dollars in revenues for colleges every year."

THE OTHER CASES

The settlement is expected to cover two other antitrust cases facing the NCAA and major conferences that challenge athlete compensation rules. *Hubbard vs. the NCAA* and *Carter vs. the NCAA* are also currently in front of judges in the Northern District of California.

A fourth case, *Fontenot vs. NCAA*, creates a potential complication as it remains in a Colorado court after a judge denied a request to combine it with *Carter*. Whether *Fontenot* becomes part of the settlement is unknown and it matters because the NCAA and its conferences don't want to be on the hook for more damages should they lose in court.

"We're going to continue to litigate our case in Colorado and look forward to hearing about the terms of a settlement proposal once they're actually released and put in front of a court," said George Zelcs, a plaintiffs' attorney in *Fontenot*.

COLLEGE ATHLETICS OVERHAUL

The solution agreed to in the settlement is landmark, but not surprising. College sports has been trending in this direction for years, with athletes receiving more and more monetary benefits and rights they say were long overdue.

In December, Baker, the former Massachusetts governor who has been on the job for 14 months, proposed creating a new tier of Division I athletics where the schools with the most resources would be required to pay at least half their athletes \$30,000 per year. That suggestion, along with many other possibilities, remain under discussion.

The settlement does not make every issue facing college sports go away. There is still a question of whether athletes should be deemed employees of their schools, something Baker and other college sports leaders are fighting against.

Some type of federal legislation or antitrust exemption is likely still needed to codify the terms of the settlement, protect the NCAA from future litigation and pre-empt state laws that attempt to neuter the organization's authority. As it is, the NCAA is still facing lawsuits that challenge its ability to govern itself, including setting rules limiting multiple-time transfers.

"This settlement is also a road map for college sports leaders and Congress to ensure this uniquely American institution can continue to provide unmatched opportunity for millions of students," the joint statement said. "All of Division I made today's progress possible, and we all have work to do to implement the terms of the agreement as the legal process continues. We look forward to working with our various student-athlete leadership groups to write the next chapter of college sports."

Federal lawmakers have indicated they would like to get something done, but while several bills have been introduced, none has gone anywhere.

Despite the unanswered questions, one thing is clear: Major college athletics is about to become more like professional sports than ever before.

General Sherman passes health check but world's largest trees face growing climate threats

By TERRY CHEA Associated Press

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, California (AP) — High in the evergreen canopy of General Sherman, the world's largest tree, researchers searched for evidence of an emerging threat to giant sequoias: bark beetles.

The climbers descended the towering 2,200-year-old tree with good news on Tuesday.

"The General Sherman tree is doing fine right now," said Anthony Ambrose, executive director of the Ancient Forest Society, who led the expedition. "It seems to be a very healthy tree that's able to fend off any beetle attack."

It was the first time climbers had scaled the iconic 275-foot (85-meter) sequoia tree, which draws tourists from around the world to Sequoia National Park.

Giant sequoias, the Earth's largest living things, have survived for thousands of years in California's western Sierra Nevada range, the only place where the species is native.

But as the climate grows hotter and drier, giant sequoias previously thought to be almost indestructible are increasingly threatened by extreme heat, drought and wildfires.

In 2020 and 2021, record-setting wildfires killed as much as 20 percent of the world's 75,000 mature sequoias, according to park officials.

"The most significant threat to giant sequoias is climate-driven wildfires," said Ben Blom, director of stewardship and restoration at Save the Redwoods League. "But we certainly don't want to be caught by surprise by a new threat, which is why we're studying these beetles now."

But researchers are growing more worried about bark beetles, which didn't pose a serious threat in the past.

The beetles are native to California and have co-existed with sequoias for thousands of years. But only recently have they been able to kill the trees. Scientists say they recently discovered about 40 sequoia trees that have died from beetle infestations, mostly within the national parks.

"We're documenting some trees that are actually dying from kind of a combination of drought and fire that have weakened them to a point where they're not able to defend themselves from the beetle attack," Ambrose said.

The beetles attack the trees from the canopy, boring into branches and working their way down the trunk. If left unchecked, the tiny beetles can kill a tree within six months.

That's why park officials allowed Ambrose and his colleagues to climb General Sherman. They conducted the tree health inspection as journalists and visitors watched them pull themselves up ropes dangling from the canopy. They examined the branches and trunk, looking for the tiny holes that indicate beetle activity.

But it's not possible to climb every sequoia tree to directly inspect the canopy in person. That's why they're also testing whether drones equipped with sensors and aided by satellite imagery can be used to monitor and detect beetle infestations on a larger scale within the forests.

Tuesday's health inspection of General Sherman was organized by the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition, a group of government agencies, Native tribes and environmental groups. They hope to establish a health monitoring program for the towering trees.

If they discover beetle infestations, officials say, they could try to combat the attacks by spraying water, removing branches or using chemical treatments.

Bark beetles have ravaged pine and fir forests throughout the Western United States in recent years, but they previously didn't pose a threat to giant sequoias, which can live 3,000 years.

"They have really withstood insect attacks for a lot of years. So why now? Why are we seeing this change?" said Clay Jordan, superintendent for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. "There's a lot that we need to learn in order to ensure good stewardship of these trees for a long time."

Taiwan scrambles jets and puts missile, naval and land units on alert over China's military drills

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan scrambled jets and put missile, naval and land units on alert Thursday over Chinese military exercises being conducted around the self-governing island democracy where a new president took office this week.

China's military said its two-day exercises around Taiwan were punishment for separatist forces seeking independence. Beijing claims the island is part of China's national territory and the People's Liberation Army sends navy ships and warplanes into the Taiwan Strait and other areas around the island almost daily to wear down Taiwan's defenses and seek to intimidate its people, who firmly back their de facto independence.

China's "irrational provocation has jeopardized regional peace and stability," the island's Defense Ministry said. It said Taiwan will seek no conflicts but "will not shy away from one."

"This pretext for conducting military exercises not only does not contribute to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, but also shows its hegemonic nature at heart," the ministry's statement said.

In his inauguration address on Monday, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te called for Beijing to stop its military intimidation and pledged to "neither yield nor provoke" the mainland Communist Party leadership.

"Facing external challenges and threats, we will continue to maintain the values of freedom and democracy," Lai told sailors and top security officials Thursday as he visited a marine base in Taoyuan, just south of the capital Taipei.

While not directly referring to China's moves, he said international society was concerned about Taiwan's security, a likely reflection of its key role in supply chains for the most advanced computer chips as well as a democratic bulwark against Chinese moves to assert its control over the Asia-Pacific.

Lai has said he seeks dialogue with Beijing while maintaining Taiwan's current status and avoiding conflicts that could draw in the island's chief ally the U.S. and other regional partners such as Japan and Australia.

The Nationalist Party, which is generally seen as pro-China, also condemned Beijing's actions.

The Nationalists, also known as the KMT, called on "the opposite side of the (Taiwan Strait) to exercise restraint, cease unnecessary maneuvers, avoid a conflict in the Taiwan Strait and maintain ... the results of peace and development between the sides."

Thursday's tensions came amid protests outside Taiwan's legislature against moves by the Nationalists and allies to use their slim majority to force through legislation that could affect military budgets and key judicial and other appointments.

The People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command said the land, navy and air exercises around Taiwan are meant to test the navy and air capabilities of the PLA units, as well as their joint strike abilities to hit targets and win control of the battlefield, the command said on its official Weibo account.

"This is also a powerful punishment for the separatist forces seeking 'independence' and a serious warning to external forces for interference and provocation," the statement said.

The PLA also released a map of the intended exercise area, which surrounds Taiwan's main island at five different points, as well as places like Matsu and Kinmen, outlying islands that are closer to the Chinese mainland than Taiwan.

China's coast guard also said in a statement that it organized a fleet to carry out law enforcement drills

near two islands close to the Taiwanese-controlled island groups of Kinmen and Matsu just off the Chinese coast.

While China has called the exercises punishment for Taiwan's election result, the Democratic Progressive Party has now run the island's government for more than a decade, although the Nationalist Party took a one-seat majority in parliament.

Speaking in Australia, Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Stephen Sklenka, the deputy commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, called on Asia-Pacific nations to condemn the Chinese military exercises.

"There's no surprise whenever there's an action that highlights Taiwan in the international sphere the Chinese feel compelled to make some kind of form of statement," Sklenka told the National Press Club of Australia in the capital Canberra, in a reference to Monday's presidential inauguration.

"Just because we expect that behavior doesn't mean that we shouldn't condemn it, and we need to condemn it publicly. And it needs to come from us, but it also needs to come, I believe, from nations in the region. It's one thing when the United States condemns the Chinese, but it has a far more powerful effect, I believe, when it comes from nations within this region," Sklenka added.

Japan's top envoy weighed in while visiting the U.S., saying Japan and Taiwan share values and principles, including freedom, democracy, basic rights and rule of law.

"(Taiwan) is our extremely important partner that we have close economic relations and exchanges of people, and is our precious friend," Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa told reporters in Washington, where she held talks with Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

She said the two ministers discussed Taiwan and the importance of the Taiwan Strait, one of the world's most important waterways for shipping, remaining peaceful.

Farmers in India are weary of politicians' lackluster response to their climate-driven water crisis

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BEED, India (AP) — On a stifling hot day this May, farm worker Shobha Londhe is reminded of the desperate conditions that led her husband to take his own life. It's the hottest and driest summer in years, she said, and for farm workers that often means little to no income, rising debts and intolerable heat.

Londhe, a resident of Talegaon village in western India, knows well the toll these climate change-induced droughts can take on farmers. Three years ago, she said the family's financial situation was untenable as crops failed from too much heat and not enough water. Her husband Tatyia went out to the fields one October day, and never returned.

"He was struggling because we were always in debt," said Londhe, a framed picture of her husband beside her. She partly blames his death on the increasingly hot and dry weather in their home region of Marathwada in Maharashtra state. "We are completely dependent on rainwater for agriculture," she said.

Londhe is one of India's 120 million farmers who share fast-shrinking water resources as groundwater is pumped out faster than rain can replenish it. Drought-prone areas like Marathwada are at the sharp end of the shortage, making life unbearable for many. As the country continues to vote in its marathon six-week election, farmers are looking for longer-term solutions to the water problem, like building canal networks from distant rivers. But politicians have promised and done little to secure water for them, with activists saying that big businesses and large farms are being prioritized instead.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help in India, contact AASRA at 982-046-6726. In the U.S., the national suicide and crisis lifeline is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org

In western Maharashtra state, successive droughts caused in part by human-caused climate change have compounded the problems for farmers, forcing them to take out loans to buy crops. Community members say that when those crops also fail, it drives some farmers to take their own lives. According to

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government estimates, 1,088 farmers died by suicide in Marathwada last year, and federal government records show the number of farmers and farm workers dying by suicide across India has been increasing in recent years.

Debt, crop failure, alcohol addiction and lack of jobs are some reasons for the high rate of suicides among farmers, says local politician and head of Dhondrai village, Shital Sakhare. "We are trying to help young people get more jobs outside of farming so they don't take such drastic measures," she said.

Londhe said the heat, failing crops and money problems are only getting worse since her husband's death. "This summer, we can't even find work as laborers, it is becoming difficult for us to survive," she said. Scientists say that the frequency and intensity of the droughts are being driven by human-caused climate change, with overextraction of groundwater and a lack of conservation adding to the crisis.

In most villages in the region The Associated Press visited, local government-funded water tankers were stationed around main squares to provide drinking water for residents. But villagers still had no water for their dying crops: the Sindhphana tributary that runs through the region was dry, as were most of the reservoirs. Election campaigning in the region on the issue was virtually non-existent.

That's despite the fact that farmers in the area are politically active, and "do vote every time there's elections," said 76-year-old Sarjerao Gholap, a resident and retired head of Talegaon village. But when politicians don't act on their promises, many lose faith in the process, he said.

Gholap said politicians from various parties in the past promised to set up a canal to supply water to their village, ensure better prices for their produce and supply running water through hand pumps. Gholap said none of these have been implemented, and no water comes from the hand pump that was installed a year ago in the village.

Manisha Tokle, an activist based in Beed, said most politicians in the region favor those who already have economic power, like the upper caste, large land-holding farmers, sugarcane factory owners and pesticide manufacturers. "They are never thinking about small farmers, women workers and farm laborers," she said.

The average wage for farm workers has remained at about \$3 to \$4 per day for at least 15 years according to Indian government data, despite repeated calls by farmers groups from across the country to increase it on par with rising costs. Vegetable prices rose by 27% this year compared to the previous year with tomatoes and onions seeing an increase of 38% and 29% in their costs.

Atul Jadhav, 26, a smallholder farmer in Kambi village in the region, said returns on farming are so dire that he "won't allow" his children to take it up when they're older.

He spends 5,000 rupees (\$60) every day to water his five acre field of sweet lime and sugarcane, but the soil is still bone-dry, and most plants are dead or wilted. "I don't know if anything will remain if this heat continues, but I have to try," said Jadhav.

Village head Sakhare said farmers frustrated with the water shortage need to vote in big numbers to get the issue on the table, admitting that it's not high on politicians minds.

But she warned that while politicians can do more to help on finding alternative water sources, promoting less water-intensive crops or giving financial support to farmers, "they can't reverse the effect of climate change."

Supreme Court finds no bias against Black voters in a South Carolina congressional district

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court's conservative majority on Thursday preserved a Republican-held South Carolina congressional district, rejecting a lower-court ruling that said the district discriminated against Black voters.

In dissent, liberal justices warned that the court was insulating states from claims of unconstitutional racial gerrymandering.

In a 6-3 decision, the court held that South Carolina's Republican-controlled legislature did nothing wrong during redistricting when it strengthened Rep. Nancy Mace's hold on the coastal district by moving 30,000

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Democratic-leaning Black residents of Charleston out of the district.

"I'm very disturbed about the outcome. It's as if we don't matter. But we do matter and our voices deserve to be heard," said Taiwan Scott, a Black voter who sued over the redistricting.

President Joe Biden, whose administration backed Scott and the other plaintiffs at the Supreme Court, also criticized the ruling. "The Supreme Court's decision today undermines the basic principle that voting practices should not discriminate on account of race and that is wrong," Biden said in a statement.

Mace, reacting to the decision, said, "It reaffirms everything everyone in South Carolina already knows, which is that the line wasn't based on race."

The case presented the court with the tricky issue of how to distinguish race from politics. The state argued that partisan politics, not race, and a population boom in coastal areas explain the congressional map. Moving voters based on their politics is OK, the Supreme Court has held.

A lower court had ordered South Carolina to redraw the district after it found that the state used race as a proxy for partisan affiliation in violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

Thursday's decision won't have a direct effect on the 2024 election. The lower court had previously ordered the state to use the challenged map in the November vote, which could help Republicans as they try to hold on to their narrow majority in the House of Representatives.

Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the majority, criticized lower-court judges for their "misguided approach" that refused to presume that lawmakers acted in good faith and gave too much credit to the challengers.

Alito wrote that one weakness of the Black voters' case was that they did not produce an alternative map, which he called an "implicit concession" that they couldn't have drawn one. "The District Court's conclusions are clearly erroneous because it did not follow this basic logic," he wrote.

Justice Elena Kagan, writing for the three liberals, said her conservative colleagues ignored the work of the lower court that found the district had been gerrymandered by race.

"Perhaps most dispiriting," Kagan wrote, the court adopted "special rules to specially disadvantage suits to remedy race-based redistricting."

Richard Hasen, an election expert at the University of California at Los Angeles law school, agreed with Kagan, writing in a blog post that the decision "makes it easier for Republican states to engage in redistricting to help white Republicans maximize their political power."

Janai Nelson, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said in a statement, "The highest court in our land greenlit racial discrimination in South Carolina's redistricting process, denied Black voters the right to be free from the race-based sorting and sent a message that facts, process, and precedent will not protect the Black vote."

However, Sen. Thomas Alexander, the president of the South Carolina Senate, praised the ruling. "As I have said throughout this process, our plan was meticulously crafted to comply with statutory and constitutional requirements, and I was completely confident we would prevail," Alexander said.

The Supreme Court in 2019 ruled that partisan gerrymandering cases could not be brought in federal courts. Justice Clarence Thomas, who was part of the conservative majority five years ago, wrote separately Thursday to say federal courts should similarly get out of the business of refereeing racial gerrymandering disputes.

"It is well past time for the Court to return these political issues where they belong—the political branches," Thomas wrote. No other justice signed on.

When Mace first won election in 2020, she edged Democratic incumbent Rep. Joe Cunningham by 1%, under 5,400 votes. In 2022, following redistricting driven by the 2020 census results, Mace won reelection by 14%. She is among eight Republicans who voted in October to oust Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as House speaker.

The case differed from one in Alabama in which the court ruled last year that Republican lawmakers diluted Black voters' political power under the landmark Voting Rights Act by drawing just one district with a majority Black population. The court's decision led to new maps in Alabama and Louisiana with a second

district where Democratic-leaning Black voters comprise a substantial portion of the electorate.

In South Carolina, Black voters wouldn't have been as numerous in a redrawn district. But combined with a substantial set of Democratic-leaning white voters, Democrats might have been competitive in the reconfigured district.

The high court left open one part of the case about whether the map intentionally sought to dilute the votes of Black residents.

Rutgers, Northwestern defend deals with student protesters: 'We had to get the encampment down'

By ANNIE MA and COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The presidents of Northwestern and Rutgers universities defended their decisions to end pro-Palestinian encampments through negotiations rather than police force, telling a House committee on Thursday that they defused the danger without ceding ground to protesters.

"We had to get the encampment down," Northwestern's Michael Schill said. "The police solution was not going to be available to us to keep people safe, and also may not be the wisest solution as we've seen at other campuses across the country."

Schill and Jonathan Holloway of Rutgers were called before the House Education and the Workforce Committee as part of a series of hearings examining how colleges have responded to allegations of antisemitism.

Also testifying was Gene Block, chancellor of the University of California, Los Angeles, which has come under scrutiny for a delayed police response to violence between pro-Palestinian protesters and counter-protesters.

The committee's inquiry expanded to large, public universities, UCLA and Rutgers, after earlier hearings largely focused on private, Ivy League colleges. Meantime, at Harvard's commencement Thursday, hundreds of students in graduation robes chanted "Free, Free Palestine" as they walked out of the ceremony. The school had announced on Wednesday that 13 students who participated in a protest encampment would not be able to receive diplomas alongside their classmates.

On Capitol Hill, committee Republicans accused the university leaders at the hearing of tolerating antisemitism, with particular scorn for Northwestern and Rutgers, where schools struck deals to end or limit protests.

Neither Northwestern nor Rutgers agreed to sever business ties with Israel — one of the protesters' chief demands. Rutgers agreed to discuss the topic; Northwestern revived a committee on "investment responsibility."

Other terms focused on expanding institutional support for Muslim and Arab students and scholars on campus, and Rutgers promised not to retaliate against those who participated in protests.

"Each of you should be ashamed of your decisions that allowed antisemitic encampments to endanger Jewish students," said Republican Rep. Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, the committee chair. "Mr. Schill and Dr. Holloway, you should be doubly ashamed for capitulating to the antisemitic rule breakers."

The presidents considered police action but said it was not necessary.

"We made a choice — that choice was to engage our students through dialogue as a first option instead of police action," Holloway said. "We had seen what transpired at other universities and sought a different way."

Schill said students were willing to negotiate and reach a compromise that did not include divestment, their main demand. He said agreeing to a space for Muslim students where they could eat and pray, like other faith communities had on campus, was something he supported.

"We had students who were willing to negotiate and gave up their demands," Schill said. "We said no, nothing that singles out Israel. Let's think about what will make the university stronger."

Protesters hailed the agreements as victories. But on Capitol Hill, the presidents said they did not lose any ground.

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"I would never recommend to the Board of Trustees divestment of anything or any academic boycott of Israel," Schill said.

Even so, Foxx countered that Schill "created the perception" he would support divestment, "which encouraged other universities to cave on this."

Each president denounced the rise of antisemitism amid the Israel-Hamas war. Schill and Block, who are Jewish, expressed their own disgust at some of the rhetoric and imagery used by protesters.

Block said public universities are in an especially tough bind as they work to shield students from discrimination while also upholding free speech. Unlike private universities, public universities are bound by the First Amendment. Even hateful speech must be protected, Block said, but UCLA draws the line when it crosses into threats and harassment.

He expressed remorse over the handling of a UCLA encampment that was attacked in early May. Counterprotesters threw traffic cones and released pepper spray in fighting that went on for hours before police stepped in, drawing criticism from Muslim students and political leaders.

"Tragically, it took several hours for law enforcement to quell the violence," Block said "With the benefit of hindsight, we should have been prepared to immediately remove the encampment if and when the safety of our community was put at risk."

On Wednesday, the police chief at UCLA was reassigned "pending an examination of our security processes," according to a statement from the school.

A new pro-Palestinian encampment appeared on the UCLA campus as Block testified. "Our safety personnel are on-site and actively monitoring the situation," Mary Osako, vice chancellor for UCLA Strategic Communications, said in a statement.

The encampment was abandoned when law enforcement arrived midday and declared it an unlawful assembly. Lines of officers pushed back a crowd of supporters that had gathered outside the encampment, but there were no clashes like those that occurred when a large camp was cleared three weeks earlier. A small group of demonstrators later staged a sit-in inside a nearby building before officers cleared them out.

As in previous hearings, Republicans pressed the leaders on discipline. They asked how many students had been expelled and how many faculty had been fired over antisemitic incidents since Oct. 7, when Hamas attacked Israel.

None of the presidents said students had been expelled, though they said there are dozens of ongoing investigations. Four students were suspended at Rutgers, Holloway said.

Schill said the numbers aren't a reflection of inaction.

"The fact that we didn't have not yet suspended or expelled students does not mean that students have not received discipline," he said. "There's a wide range of discipline, and discipline has been meted out to many of those students."

Tensions over the Israel-Hamas war have been high on campuses since the fall and spiked in recent weeks with a wave of pro-Palestinian tent encampments that led to over 3,000 arrests nationwide.

After the first congressional hearings in December, an outcry of criticism from donors, students and politicians led to the resignations of the presidents of Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, who gave cautious, halting answers to questions about whether calls for the genocide of Jews would violate their schools' conduct policies.

In April, the committee turned its attention to Columbia President Minouche Shafik, who took a more conciliatory approach to Republican-led questioning. Shafik's concessions around faculty academic freedom upset students and professors at Columbia. Her testimony, and subsequent decision to call in police, escalated protests on campus that inspired students at other colleges to launch similar demonstrations.

Originally, the presidents of Yale University and the University of Michigan were called to testify on Thursday. But the committee shifted its attention to Northwestern and Rutgers after those colleges struck deals with pro-Palestinian protesters to limit or disband encampments.

Government sues Ticketmaster owner and asks court to break up company's monopoly on live events

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department sued Ticketmaster and its parent company Thursday, accusing them of running an illegal monopoly over live events in America and asking a court to break up the system that squelches competition and drives up prices for fans.

Filed in federal court in Manhattan, the sweeping antitrust lawsuit was brought with 30 state and district attorneys general and seeks to dismantle the monopoly they say is squeezing out smaller promoters, hurting artists and drowning ticket buyers in fees. Ticketmaster and its owner, Live Nation Entertainment, have a long history of clashes with major artists and their fans, including Taylor Swift and Bruce Springsteen.

"It's time for fans and artists to stop paying the price for Live Nation's monopoly," Attorney General Merrick Garland said. "It is time to restore competition and innovation in the entertainment industry. It is time to break up Live Nation-Ticketmaster."

The government accused Live Nation of tactics — including threats and retaliation — that Garland said have allowed the entertainment giant to "suffocate the competition" by controlling virtually every aspect of the industry, from concert promotion to ticketing. The impact is seen in an "endless list of fees on fans," the attorney general said.

"Live music should not be available only to those who can afford to pay the Ticketmaster tax," said Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Kanter of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division.

Ricky Palitti and Jacob DeLong of Detroit said they recently spent about \$1,200 for three tickets to a Shania Twain concert using Ticketmaster and about \$370 to see RuPaul's Drag Race Live.

"I think tickets have definitely gone up in price, but I also think that all the different fees that Ticketmaster places on an order definitely hikes the price up, for sure," Palitti said.

DeLong said that while he respects an artist's work, the added fees make the costs to see a show "ridiculous."

"Where can we get a break?" he said.

Live Nation, which has for years denied that it is violating antitrust laws, said the lawsuit "won't solve the issues fans care about relating to ticket prices, service fees and access to in-demand shows."

"Calling Ticketmaster a monopoly may be a PR win for the DOJ in the short term, but it will lose in court because it ignores the basic economics of live entertainment," Live Nation added. It said most service fees go to venues and that outside competition has "steadily eroded" Ticketmaster's market share. The company said it would defend itself against the "baseless allegations."

The Justice Department said Live Nation's anti-competitive practices include using long-term contracts to keep venues from choosing rivals, blocking venues from using multiple ticket sellers and threatening venues that they could lose money if they don't choose Ticketmaster.

In 2021, the concert giant threatened to financially retaliate against a firm if one of its portfolio companies didn't stop competing with Live Nation for artist promotion contracts, the Justice Department alleged. Live Nation has also scooped up smaller promoters it viewed as a threats, officials said.

Michael Carrier, a professor at Rutgers Law School who specializes in antitrust litigation, said the Justice Department has a strong case. He expects Live Nation to "try to cast blame elsewhere," such as arguing that prices are set by artists or venues, but he said those explanations are weak.

"The DOJ showed how Live Nation really has its tentacles in each element of the supply chain, which means that it has a lot more control than it is letting on," he said. "And, in terms of justifications, there is really very little that (Live Nation) can offer in terms of how they're helping the consumer."

The complaint said a breakup between Live Nation and Ticketmaster is on the table. That, combined with other remedies such as preventing some exclusive deals that shackle competition, could potentially help fans see lower ticket prices, give artists more agency in choosing venues and boost smaller promoters' success in the long run, Carrier said.

Ticketmaster, which merged with Live Nation in 2010, is the world's largest ticket seller across live music,

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sports, theater and more. During its annual report last month, the company said Ticketmaster distributed more than 620 million tickets through its systems in 2023.

Around 70% of tickets for major concert venues in the U.S. are sold through Ticketmaster, according to data in a federal lawsuit filed by consumers in 2022. The company owns or controls more than 265 of North America's concert venues and dozens of top amphitheatres, according to the Justice Department.

Live Nation's footprint has grown substantially over the past 10 years, according to the company's annual financial reports. Between the end of 2014 and the end of 2023, Live Nation reported a worldwide increase of more than 136% in terms of venues the company "owned, leased, operated, had exclusive booking rights for or had an equity interest over which we had a significant influence."

The ticket seller sparked outrage in November 2022 when its site crashed during a presale event for a Taylor Swift stadium tour. The company said the site was overwhelmed by both fans and attacks from bots, which were posing as consumers to scoop up tickets and sell them on secondary sites. The debacle prompted congressional hearings and bills in state legislatures aimed at better protecting consumers.

The Justice Department allowed Live Nation and Ticketmaster to merge as long as Live Nation agreed not to retaliate against concert venues for using other ticket companies for 10 years. In 2019, the department investigated and found that Live Nation had repeatedly violated that agreement. The government then extended the prohibition on retaliating against concert venues to 2025.

"It's a failure of past antitrust. And it's something that rips customers off every day," said John Kwoka, a professor of economics at Northeastern University who was also a consultant for the states that ran a 2009 investigation in parallel with the Justice Department into Live Nation and Ticketmaster's original merger.

Kwoka, who is among those who have long advocated for a breakup, notes that Live Nation and Ticketmaster have remained "largely unchecked" over the last 15 years.

Ticketmaster's clashes with artists and fans date back three decades. Pearl Jam took aim at the company in 1994, years before the Live Nation merger, although the Justice Department ultimately declined to bring a case. More recently, Bruce Springsteen fans were enraged over high ticket costs because of the platform's dynamic pricing system.

Live Nation has maintained that artists and teams set prices and decide how tickets are sold. The company's executive vice president of corporate and regulatory affairs, Dan Wall, said in a statement Thursday that factors such as increasing production costs, artist popularity and online ticket scalping are "actually responsible for higher ticket prices."

The Justice Department lawsuit filed Thursday is the latest example of the Biden administration's aggressive antitrust enforcement. The effort has targeted companies accused of engaging in illegal monopolies that box out competitors and drive up prices. In March, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Apple alleging that the tech giant has monopoly power in the smartphone market. The Democratic administration has also taken on Google, Amazon and other tech giants.

NBA great Dwyane Wade launches Translatable, an online community supporting transgender youth

By GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writer

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (AP) — NBA great Dwyane Wade was back in South Florida on Thursday to do battle again.

The Hall of Famer spent more than 14 seasons as a guard for the Miami Heat, winning three championships, having Miami-Dade County nicknamed "Wade County," and he still leads the franchise in everything from points and rebounds to personal fouls. But the fight he outlined Thursday at The Elevate Prize Foundation's Make Good Famous Summit, after receiving the nonprofit's Elevate Prize Catalyst Award, may be the most personal of all.

"We've done so many great things here so it wasn't easy to leave," Wade told The Associated Press in an interview before the award ceremony. "But the community wasn't here for Zaya, so the community wasn't here for us."

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Wade's daughter, Zaya, who turns 17 next week, came out as transgender in 2020 in the midst of anti-trans legislation in Florida and other states that prompted many trans adults to flee the state. The Wade family sold their Florida home last year and moved to California.

In accepting the award, Wade shared it with Zaya and credited her with inspiring the creation of Translatable, a new online community designed to support transgender children and their families.

"The question was presented to her as, 'If you have one thing that you want to see change in this community, what would it be?'" Wade recalled. "And, for her, it goes right to parents. It goes right to the adults. It goes right to us. It's not the kids. It's us. And so she wanted to create a space that felt safe for parents and their kids. That's what Translatable is, and it's her baby."

Wade hopes Translatable, which is funded by the Wade Family Foundation, will provide a community to "support growth, mental health, and well-being, and that this space ignites more conversations leading to greater understanding and acceptance." He said he will use the \$250,000 in unrestricted funding that comes with The Elevate Prize Catalyst Award for Translatable.

Elevate Prize Foundation CEO Carolina Garcia Jayaram said that after hearing Wade's plans, her nonprofit made a separate additional donation to Translatable, which was built with support from the Human Rights Campaign and The Trevor Project.

"Dwyane Wade and what he represents speaks to the ethos of the whole foundation," Jayaram told the AP. "He is such a hero in the sports universe and even beyond basketball. He's been in the social justice space almost since the very beginning of his NBA career and most people don't know that."

Jayaram said that Wade felt empowered when Zaya came out as transgender in 2020 and it was "so deeply inspirational to us that we were just dying to be a part of what he's building."

The Elevate Prize Catalyst Award helps its winners, who have included actors Matt Damon and Michael J. Fox and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Malala Yousafzai, to amplify their philanthropic work by using the foundation's resources and connections to inspire more donors and supporters.

Wade said his support of trans rights is a natural extension of being a parent and talked about how much he enjoys learning from Zaya in hourslong discussions at home. Jayaram said she was struck by Wade's devotion as a parent, but also commended his decision to launch Translatable in Florida, "a place where many might feel a sense of exclusion."

"We understand that in this state that not everyone thinks the way some others think," Wade said. "Like most things in life, once you get to know them, you have more ability to be understanding. And so if you don't want to know them, then you stay ignorant in a sense."

Comedian and "Everything's Trash" actress Phoebe Robinson, who interviewed Wade as part of the summit, said that she admired Wade for being outspoken on numerous issues.

"In a time when people are so worried about saying anything because they are only thinking about their bottom line, I think the fact that he's thinking about humanity first is amazing, really stressing the importance of connection and community to help protect people and help them grow and just blossom," Robinson said.

Alexander Roque, executive director of the Ali Forney Center, which helps homeless LGBTQ+ youth, said Translatable comes at a critical time for transgender youth, with more than 500 pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation introduced this year.

"Not all bills turn into law, but they're all acts of hate that affect our kids in very devastating ways," he said. "We know statistically that every time there's an anti-LGBTQ bill in the media, there's a 400% increase in calls to suicide hotlines by young people. We also know that we're seeing a significant increase in unhoused LGBTQ youth because of family rejection. So to have someone of this celebrity so invested in the community, it's helping to change the tide of what's happening to our kids and perhaps one of the most hopeful moments in what I hope is a changing tide."

Dr. Michelle Forcier, a clinician at FOLX Health, which provides health services for LGBTQIA+ people nationally, said creating an online community for trans youth is a specific program that would be helpful.

"Youth are all about electronic and online communication, socialization, and communities," she said. "So

if you are trying to support youth it only makes sense to be a part of how youth feel most comfortable communicating.”

That this community comes from a celebrity ally makes it more impactful, Forcier said.

“The transgender and gender-diverse community does not have the deep pockets — including financial, political, and media resources — that the anti-transgender and anti-diversity political and advocacy community has,” she said. “To have a champion who shows up for some of our most vulnerable — transgender and gender-diverse youth and the families that care for them — that would be a truly heroic act and possibly change the game entirely.”

The ‘Appeal to Heaven’ flag evolves from Revolutionary War symbol to banner of the far right

BY GARY FIELDS, LISA MASCARO and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito is embroiled in a second flag controversy in as many weeks, this time over a banner that in recent years has come to symbolize sympathies with the Christian nationalist movement and the false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen.

An “Appeal to Heaven” flag was flown last summer outside Alito’s beach vacation home in New Jersey, according to The New York Times, which obtained several images showing it on different dates in July and September 2023. The Times previously reported that an upside down American flag — a sign of distress — had flown outside Alito’s Alexandria, Virginia, home less than two weeks after the violent Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump.

Some of the rioters carried the inverted American flag or the “Appeal to Heaven” flag, which shows a green pine tree on a white field. The revelations have escalated concerns over Alito’s impartiality and his ability to objectively decide cases currently before the court that relate to the Jan. 6 attackers and Trump’s attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Alito has not commented on the flag at his summer home.

Here is the history and current symbolism of the “Appeal to Heaven” flag.

WHAT ARE ITS ORIGINS?

Ted Kaye, secretary for the North American Vexillological Association, which studies flags and their meaning, said the “Appeal to Heaven” banner dates to the Revolutionary War.

Six schooners outfitted by George Washington to intercept British vessels at sea flew the flag in 1775 as they sailed under his command. It became the maritime flag of Massachusetts in 1776 and remained so until 1971, he said.

According to Americanflags.com the pine tree on the flag symbolized strength and resilience in the New England colonies while the words “Appeal to Heaven” stemmed from the belief that God would deliver the colonists from tyranny.

HOW HAS ITS SYMBOLISM CHANGED?

There are a few different reasons people fly “Appeal to Heaven” flags today, said Jared Holt, a senior analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a London-based think tank that tracks online hate, disinformation and extremism.

Some fans of it identify with a “patriot” movement that obsesses over the Founding Fathers and the American Revolution, he said. Others adhere to a Christian nationalist worldview that seeks to elevate Christianity in public life.

“It’s not abundantly clear which of those reasons would be accurate” in this situation, Holt said. But he called the display outside Alito’s home “alarming,” saying those who do fly the flag are often advocating for “more intolerant and restrictive forms of government aligned with a specific religious philosophy.”

The “Appeal to Heaven” flag was among several banners carried by the Jan. 6 rioters, who also favored religious banners symbolizing the white Christian nationalist movement., the Confederate flag and the yellow Gadsden flag, with its rattlesnake and “Don’t Tread on Me” message, said Bradley Onishi, author

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of "Preparing for War: The Extremist History of White Christian Nationalism."

"That's the family," he said.

WHAT ABOUT MIKE JOHNSON?

House Speaker Mike Johnson displays the flag in the hallway outside his office next to the flag of his home state, Louisiana. He said he has flown it "for as long as I can remember."

Johnson, a Republican, told The Associated Press he did not know the flag had come to represent the "Stop the Steal" movement.

"Never heard that before," he said.

The speaker, who led one of Trump's legal challenges to the 2020 election, defended the flag and its continued use despite the modern-day symbolism around it.

"I have always used that flag for as long as I can remember, because I was so enamored with the fact that Washington used it," Johnson said. "The Appeal to Heaven flag is a critical, important part of American history. It's something that I've always revered since I've been a young man."

He added: "People misuse our symbols all the time. It doesn't mean we don't use the symbols anymore."

Johnson said he had never flown the U.S. flag upside in distress, as Alito did, and he declined to assess the justice's situation and whether raising the flags at his home was appropriate.

But he called the criticism of the "Appeal to Heaven" flag "contrived."

"It's nonsense," he said. "It's part of our history. We don't remove statues and we don't cover up things that are so essential to who we are as a country."

SHOULD ALITO RECUSE?

House Democratic Whip, Katherine Clark of Massachusetts said in a statement that the display of the "Appeal to Heaven" flag at an Alito home was "not just another example of extremism that has overtaken conservatism. This is a threat to the rule of law and a serious breach of ethics, integrity and Justice Alito's oath of office."

She called for Alito to recuse himself from any cases related to Jan. 6 and the former president.

There's a clear difference between the House speaker displaying the flag outside his office and a Supreme Court justice flying it and the upside down American flag outside his homes as the court is deciding cases involving issues those flags have come to symbolize, said Alicia Bannon director of the Judiciary Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

Alito's actions don't "just cross the line," she said. "They take you out of the stadium and out of the parking lot."

Alito and the court declined to respond to requests for comment on how the "Appeal to Heaven" flag came to be flying and what it was intended to express.

Alito has said the upside down American flag was briefly flown by his wife during a dispute with neighbors and that he had no part in it.

ANOTHER BLOW TO THE COURT'S REPUTATION

The Supreme Court already was under fire as it considers unprecedented cases against Trump and some of those charged for the attack on the Capitol.

An issue at the center of the controversy is that the high court does not have to adhere to the same ethics codes that guide other federal judges. The Supreme Court had long gone without its own code of ethics, but it adopted one in November 2023 in the face of sustained criticism over undisclosed trips and gifts from wealthy benefactors to some justices, including Alito. The code lacks a means of enforcement, however.

The federal code of judicial ethics does not universally prohibit judges from involvement in nonpartisan or religious activity off the bench. But it does say that a judge "should not participate in extrajudicial activities that detract from the dignity of the judge's office, interfere with the performance of the judge's official duties" or "reflect adversely on the judge's impartiality."

Jeremy Fogel, executive director of the Berkeley Judicial Institute at the University of California, Berkeley Law School, said the flag revelations lead to questions about whether Alito can be impartial in any case related to Jan. 6 or Trump.

"Displaying those particular flags creates the appearance at least that the justice is signifying agreement with those viewpoints at a time when there are cases before the court where those viewpoints are relevant," he said.

A March AP/NORC poll found that only about one-quarter of Americans think the Supreme Court is doing a somewhat or very good job upholding democratic values. About 45% think it's doing a somewhat or very bad job.

Tony Carrk, executive director of Accountable.US, a progressive watchdog organization, said the controversy shows that further steps are needed to put teeth into the court's ethics code.

"There's a reason why the confidence in credibility among the American people for the Supreme Court has plummeted to an all-time low," he said.

Louisiana Legislature approves bill classifying abortion pills as controlled dangerous substances

By SARA CLINE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Two abortion-inducing drugs could soon be reclassified as controlled and dangerous substances in Louisiana under a first-of-its-kind bill that received final legislative passage Thursday and is expected to be signed into law by the governor.

Supporters of the reclassification of mifepristone and misoprostol, commonly known as "abortion pills," say it would protect expectant mothers from coerced abortions, though they cited only one example of that happening, in the state of Texas. Numerous doctors, meanwhile, have said it will make it harder for them to prescribe the medicines, which they also use for other important reproductive health care needs.

Passage of the bill comes as both abortion rights advocates and abortion opponents await a final decision from the U.S. Supreme Court on an effort to restrict access to mifepristone. The justices did not appear ready to limit access to the drug on the day they heard arguments.

The GOP-dominated Legislature's push to reclassify mifepristone and misoprostol could possibly open the door for other Republican states with abortion bans that are seeking tighter restrictions on the drugs. Louisiana currently has a near-total abortion ban in place, applying both to surgical and medical abortions.

Current Louisiana law already requires a prescription for both drugs and makes it a crime to use them to induce an abortion, in most cases. The bill would make it harder to obtain the pills by placing them on the list of Schedule IV drugs under the state's Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Law.

The classification would require doctors to have a specific license to prescribe the drugs, and the drugs would have to be stored in certain facilities that in some cases could end up being located far from rural clinics. Knowingly possessing the drugs without a valid prescription would carry a punishment including hefty fines and jail time. Language in the bill appears to carve out protections for pregnant women who obtain the drug without a prescription for their own consumption.

More than 200 doctors in the state signed a letter to lawmakers warning that the measure could produce a "barrier to physicians' ease of prescribing appropriate treatment" and cause unnecessary fear and confusion among both patients and doctors. The physicians warn that any delay to obtaining the drugs could lead to worsening outcomes in a state that has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country.

"This goes too far. We have not properly vetted this with the health care community and I believe it's going to lead to further harm down the road," said Democratic Sen. Royce Duplessis, who voted against the measure. "There's a reason we rank at the bottom in terms of maternal health outcomes, and this is why."

The reclassification of the two drugs is contained in an amendment to a bill originating in the Senate that would create the crime of "coerced criminal abortion by means of fraud." Lawmakers in the Senate unanimously supported the original legislation a month ago. Later, bill sponsor Sen. Thomas Pressly pushed for the amendment to reclassify the drugs.

Pressly said both the bill and the amendment were motivated by what happened to his sister Catherine Herring of Texas. In 2022, Herring's husband slipped her seven misoprostol pills in an effort to induce an

abortion without her knowledge or consent.

There have been several cases similar to Herring's reported by news outlets over the past 15 years, though none of those cited were in Louisiana.

"The purpose of bringing this legislation is certainly not to prevent these drugs from being used for legitimate health care purposes," Pressly said. "I am simply trying to put safeguards and guardrails in place to keep bad actors from getting these medications."

The Senate voted 29-7, mainly along party lines, to pass the legislation. In the 39-person Senate there are only five women, all of whom voted in favor of the bill.

In addition to inducing abortions, mifepristone and misoprostol have other common uses, such as treating miscarriages, inducing labor and stopping hemorrhaging.

Mifepristone was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2000 after federal regulators deemed it safe and effective for ending early pregnancies. It's used in combination with misoprostol, which the FDA has separately approved to treat stomach ulcers.

The drugs are not classified as controlled substances by the federal government because regulators do not view them as carrying a significant risk of misuse. The federal Controlled Substances Act restricts the use and distribution of prescription medications such as opioids, amphetamines, sleeping aids and other drugs that carry the risk of addiction and overdose.

Abortion opponents and conservative Republicans both inside and outside the state have applauded the Louisiana bill. Conversely, the move has been strongly criticized by Democrats, including Vice President Kamala Harris, who in a social media post described it as "absolutely unconscionable."

The Louisiana legislation now heads to the desk of conservative Republican Gov. Jeff Landry. The governor, who was backed by former President Donald Trump during last year's gubernatorial election, has indicated his support for the measure, remarking in a recent post on X, "You know you're doing something right when @KamalaHarris criticizes you."

Landry's office did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

A recent survey found that thousands of women in states with abortion bans or restrictions are receiving abortion pills in the mail from states that have laws protecting prescribers. The survey did not specify how many of those cases were in Louisiana.

Louisiana has a near-total abortion ban in place, which applies both to medical and surgical abortions. The only exceptions to the ban are if there is substantial risk of death or impairment to the mother if she continues the pregnancy or in the case of "medically futile" pregnancies, when the fetus has a fatal abnormality.

Currently, 14 states are enforcing bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with limited exceptions.

Families of Israeli hostages release video of female soldiers being captured by Hamas

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A group representing the families of hostages held in Gaza has released new video footage showing Hamas' capture of five female Israeli soldiers near the Gaza border on Oct. 7.

The video shows several of the young soldiers bloody and wounded. In one scene, a militant tells one of the terrified women she is beautiful.

The footage was taken by Hamas militants who stormed the Nahal Oz military base, part of the militant group's wider assault on southern Israel that killed roughly 1,200 people and took about 250 others hostage.

Seven female soldiers who worked as lookouts on the border with Gaza were taken captive from Nahal Oz, said the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which released the footage. All were 19 or 20.

The army rescued one of the women early in the war in a ground operation and said a second was killed in Hamas captivity. The five women in the video are believed to still be held by Hamas.

The Israeli army recently declassified the video and turned it over to the women's families. The forum said the families made the footage public in an attempt to pressure the government into reaching a cease-

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fire deal with Hamas that would free their loved ones.

"Every new testimony about what happened to the hostages echoes the same tragic truth — we must bring them all back home, now," the forum said in a statement. "The Israeli government must not waste another moment."

Israel has released similar photos and videos from the Oct. 7 rampage in a campaign aimed at shoring up support for the ongoing war in Gaza.

The footage released Wednesday is roughly three minutes and edited, with some images blurred to censor what the forum said is especially sensitive material.

It shows a group of more than a dozen armed militants binding the soldiers, two of whom had visible bloodstains on their faces.

In the video, the women try to converse with the militants. One says in English, "I have friends in Palestine."

One militant yells back in English for them to be quiet. In other scenes, militants kneel to pray in front of at least four of the female soldiers, who are handcuffed and seated on the ground. One bears visible cuts on her legs, and her blood pools onto the ground beneath her as a militant binds her hands behind her back.

At least one of the soldiers appears to be in her pajamas, with blood visible on her face. One of the militants points at her and, in English, says, "You are beautiful."

In a statement, Hamas called the video "a manipulated excerpt" whose authenticity "cannot be verified." The militant group said the minor injuries and blood on the soldiers "is to be expected in such operations," but denied physically assaulting the women.

Israel's offensive on Gaza, launched in response to the Hamas attack, has killed about 35,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Ashley Waxman Bakshi, a cousin of Agam Berger, one of the women in the video, said that she cried the first time she saw it.

"Toward the end, I felt like I was going to throw up. I think any person who watches this video will understand that feeling, especially as a woman," she said.

Other footage shows the militants dragging two of the female soldiers toward a jeep as gunfire rattles. One is led to the vehicle barefoot, hopping on one foot because of an apparent leg injury.

In another scene, a group of militants holds a hostage by their hands and feet. It is not clear whether the hostage is alive or dead. Another scene shows three of the female soldiers in the back of a moving vehicle, faces bloodied as militants yell around them. Berger, who is wearing a brown shirt, is one of them.

"We know she's alive. We can feel it. She has a twin sister, she feels her," Bakshi said of her cousin. "She was taken hostage not severely injured. You can see from the video."

Border bill fails Senate test vote as Democrats seek to underscore Republican resistance

By STEPHEN GROVES, MARY CLARE JALONICK and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans again blocked a bill meant to clamp down on the number of migrants allowed to claim asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer sought Thursday to underscore GOP resistance to the proposal.

The legislation, negotiated by a bipartisan group of senators, was already rejected by most Republicans in February when it was linked to a foreign aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies. But with immigration and border security becoming one of the top issues of this year's election, Democrats are looking for an answer to the barrage of GOP attacks, led by presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

"We gave Republicans a second chance to show where they stand," Schumer, a New York Democrat, said after the vote. "Do they want to fix this so-called emergency or do they want to show blind allegiance to the former president even when they know he's wrong?"

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Schumer is trying to defend a narrow Senate majority in this year's election and sees the Republican's rejection of the deal they negotiated as a political "gift" for Democrats. Seeking to highlight Republican resistance to popular measures, Schumer is also planning to push forward a bill in June that would protect access to contraception.

The Democratic leader said it would "show the public who's on what side and in June we're going to spend a significant amount of time talking about reproductive rights."

On Thursday, most Senate Democrats again supported the procedural vote to begin debate on the border bill, but it failed to advance 43-50 after all but one Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, voted against it. When the proposal was brought up in February, the test vote failed 49-50 — well shy of the 60 votes needed to advance.

This time, not even some of the bill's primary authors, Sens. James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican, and Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona independent, voted for Schumer's move.

"Today is not a bill, today is a prop," Lankford said on the floor ahead of the vote. "Everyone sees it for what it is."

Sinema called the vote "political theater" that will do nothing to solve problems at the border.

"To use this failure as a political punching bag only punishes those who were courageous enough to do the hard work in the first place," she said.

Republican leaders spent much of the week decrying the vote as a bald-faced political maneuver and amplifying a well-worn criticism of President Joe Biden: That he bears responsibility for the historic number of migrants who have made their way to the U.S. in recent years.

"We're nearing the end of President Biden's term, and the American people's patience for his failing to secure the southern border is running thin," Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday.

Earlier in the week, McConnell told reporters, "The president needs to step up to it — do everything he can do on his own because legislation is obviously not going to clear this year."

Since the collapse of the Senate's legislation in February, the Biden administration has been considering executive orders on border policy and immigration. It has already made some changes to the asylum system meant to speed up processing and potential removal of migrants. Yet the Senate's test vote this week was widely seen as part of a lead-up to Biden issuing more sweeping border measures, potentially as early as June.

Following the failed vote, Biden in a statement said that he was "committed to taking action to address our broken immigration system."

He also slammed Republicans for blocking the bill, saying, it showed they "do not care about securing the border or fixing America's broken immigration system."

The Democratic president has considered using a provision in federal immigration law that gives leeway to block entry of certain immigrants into the U.S. if it would be "detrimental" to the national interest of the United States. The authority was repeatedly tapped by Trump when he was in the White House, but some of those actions faced legal challenges.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters Monday that legislation to address problems at the border — as opposed to executive actions by the president — would be more effective. The Senate legislation would provide more money for Customs and Border Protection officials, asylum officers, immigration judges and scanning technology at the border — all things that officials have said the underfunded immigration and border protection system needs.

"The legislation provides tools that executive action cannot," Mayorkas said.

The Senate bill is aimed at gaining control of an asylum system that has sometimes been overwhelmed in the last year. It would provide faster and tougher enforcement of the asylum process, as well as give presidents new powers to immediately expel migrants if the numbers encountered by border officials exceed an average of 4,000 per day over a week.

Even before the bill was fully released earlier this year, Trump effectively killed the proposal by labeling it "meaningless" and a "gift" for Biden's reelection chances. Top Republicans soon followed his lead and even McConnell, who had initially demanded the negotiation over the border measures, voted against

moving forward.

A significant number of Democrats have also criticized the proposal, mostly because it does not include any broad relief for immigrants who have already established lives in the United States. On the left, four Democrats, as well as Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent of Maine, voted against advancing the bill.

"It fails to address the root causes of migration or to establish more lawful pathways," said Sen. Alex Padilla, a California Democrat.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus said in a statement this week that the Senate's bill "fails to meet the moment by putting forth enforcement-only policies and failing to include provisions that will keep families together." They have urged executive actions that would provide protections from deportation for immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for years or who have family ties to U.S. citizens.

Amid the tension, Biden's reelection campaign met with CHC leadership Wednesday to discuss outreach to Latino communities, and Biden spoke on the phone with Rep. Nanette Barragán, the chair of the group. She discussed the reasons for the group's opposition, according to a person familiar with the call who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversation.

Schumer said that if Democrats win majorities in the Senate and House next year, he wants to advance "comprehensive immigration reform."

Still, for Democratic senators facing tough reelection battles this year, the vote Thursday provided another opportunity to show they were supportive of stronger border measures as well as distance themselves from Biden's handling of the border.

As Sen. Jon Tester attempts to hold a Democratic seat in the red-leaning state of Montana, he said in a statement, "This common sense bill would push back on the Biden administration's failed border policies by forcing the president to shut down the border, strengthen our asylum laws, and end catch and release."

White House pushes tech industry to shut down market for sexually abusive AI deepfakes

By MATT O'BRIEN and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

President Joe Biden's administration is pushing the tech industry and financial institutions to shut down a growing market of abusive sexual images made with artificial intelligence technology.

New generative AI tools have made it easy to transform someone's likeness into a sexually explicit AI deepfake and share those realistic images across chatrooms or social media. The victims — be they celebrities or children — have little recourse to stop it.

The White House is putting out a call Thursday looking for voluntary cooperation from companies in the absence of federal legislation. By committing to a set of specific measures, officials hope the private sector can curb the creation, spread and monetization of such nonconsensual AI images, including explicit images of children.

"As generative AI broke on the scene, everyone was speculating about where the first real harms would come. And I think we have the answer," said Biden's chief science adviser Arati Prabhakar, director of the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy.

She described to The Associated Press a "phenomenal acceleration" of nonconsensual imagery fueled by AI tools and largely targeting women and girls in a way that can upend their lives.

"If you're a teenage girl, if you're a gay kid, these are problems that people are experiencing right now," she said. "We've seen an acceleration because of generative AI that's moving really fast. And the fastest thing that can happen is for companies to step up and take responsibility."

A document shared with AP ahead of its Thursday release calls for action from not just AI developers but payment processors, financial institutions, cloud computing providers, search engines and the gatekeepers — namely Apple and Google — that control what makes it onto mobile app stores.

The private sector should step up to "disrupt the monetization" of image-based sexual abuse, restricting payment access particularly to sites that advertise explicit images of minors, the administration said.

Prabhakar said many payment platforms and financial institutions already say that they won't support

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the kinds of businesses promoting abusive imagery.

"But sometimes it's not enforced; sometimes they don't have those terms of service," she said. "And so that's an example of something that could be done much more rigorously."

Cloud service providers and mobile app stores could also "curb web services and mobile applications that are marketed for the purpose of creating or altering sexual images without individuals' consent," the document says.

And whether it is AI-generated or a real nude photo put on the internet, survivors should more easily be able to get online platforms to remove them.

The most widely known victim of pornographic deepfake images is Taylor Swift, whose ardent fanbase fought back in January when abusive AI-generated images of the singer-songwriter began circulating on social media. Microsoft promised to strengthen its safeguards after some of the Swift images were traced to its AI visual design tool.

A growing number of schools in the U.S. and elsewhere are also grappling with AI-generated deepfake nudes depicting their students. In some cases, fellow teenagers were found to be creating AI-manipulated images and sharing them with classmates.

Last summer, the Biden administration brokered voluntary commitments by Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft and other major technology companies to place a range of safeguards on new AI systems before releasing them publicly.

That was followed by Biden signing an ambitious executive order in October designed to steer how AI is developed so that companies can profit without putting public safety in jeopardy. While focused on broader AI concerns, including national security, it nodded to the emerging problem of AI-generated child abuse imagery and finding better ways to detect it.

But Biden also said the administration's AI safeguards would need to be supported by legislation. A bipartisan group of U.S. senators is now pushing Congress to spend at least \$32 billion over the next three years to develop artificial intelligence and fund measures to safely guide it, though has largely put off calls to enact those safeguards into law.

Encouraging companies to step up and make voluntary commitments "doesn't change the underlying need for Congress to take action here," said Jennifer Klein, director of the White House Gender Policy Council.

Longstanding laws already criminalize making and possessing sexual images of children, even if they're fake. Federal prosecutors brought charges earlier this month against a Wisconsin man they said used a popular AI image-generator, Stable Diffusion, to make thousands of AI-generated realistic images of minors engaged in sexual conduct. An attorney for the man declined to comment after his arraignment hearing Wednesday.

But there's almost no oversight over the tech tools and services that make it possible to create such images. Some are on fly-by-night commercial websites that reveal little information about who runs them or the technology they're based on.

The Stanford Internet Observatory in December said it found thousands of images of suspected child sexual abuse in the giant AI database LAION, an index of online images and captions that's been used to train leading AI image-makers such as Stable Diffusion.

London-based Stability AI, which owns the latest versions of Stable Diffusion, said this week that it "did not approve the release" of the earlier model reportedly used by the Wisconsin man. Such open-sourced models, because their technical components are released publicly on the internet, are hard to put back in the bottle.

Prabhakar said it's not just open-source AI technology that's causing harm.

"It's a broader problem," she said. "Unfortunately, this is a category that a lot of people seem to be using image generators for. And it's a place where we've just seen such an explosion. But I think it's not neatly broken down into open source and proprietary systems."

Iran interred its late president at holiest Shiite site in nation after fatal helicopter crash

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran interred President Ebrahim Raisi at the nation's holiest Shiite shrine Thursday, days after he was killed in a helicopter crash that added to the woes of a country already beset by international sanctions, internal unrest and tensions abroad.

Raisi, who died alongside the country's foreign minister and six others, was lowered by mourners into a tomb at the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, where Shiite Islam's eighth imam is buried and millions of pilgrims visit each year. Hundreds of thousands of people dressed in black crowded around the shrine under its iconic golden dome, wailing and beating their chests in sorrow in a sign of mourning common in Shiite ceremonies.

A hadith, or saying, attributed to the Prophet Mohammad states that anyone with sorrow or sin will be relieved by visiting there. But Thursday's mass processional offered little salve for Iran and its many challenges.

The days of services for Raisi have not drawn the same crowds in this nation of over 80 million people as the 2020 gatherings for Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was slain by a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad.

In Tehran alone, an estimated 1 million people turned out in the streets for Soleimani — something onlookers said they didn't see at the men's commemorations Wednesday. Yet the ceremonies have repeatedly invoked the general and included his image, which is likely to spark an association between the men.

It's a potential sign of the public's feelings about Raisi's presidency, which included a harsh government crackdown on dissent during protests over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, who was detained for allegedly not wearing her mandatory headscarf to authorities' liking.

That crackdown, as well as Iran's struggling economy, have gone unmentioned in the hours of coverage provided by state television and in newspapers. Never discussed was Raisi's involvement in the mass execution of an estimated 5,000 dissidents at the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

Little information has emerged about the cause of the crash of the aging Bell helicopter that went down in a foggy, mountainous region. The country's security forces were expected to investigate in the coming days.

Prosecutors have warned against any public signs of celebration around Raisi's death, and a heavy security presence has been seen in Tehran since the crash.

Raisi, 63, had been discussed as a possible successor to Iran's supreme leader, the 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The next presidential election is set for June 28. For now, there's no clear favorite for the position among Iran's political elite — particularly no one who is a Shiite cleric, like Raisi.

Acting President Mohammad Mokhber, a relatively unknown first vice president until Sunday's crash, has stepped into his role and even attended a meeting between Khamenei and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Wednesday.

Mashhad served as a longtime base for Raisi. In 2016, Khamenei appointed Raisi to run the Imam Reza charity foundation, which manages a vast conglomerate of businesses and endowments in Iran, as well as oversees the shrine. It is one of many bonyads, or charitable foundations, fueled by donations or assets seized after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

These foundations offer no public accounting of their spending and answer only to Iran's supreme leader. The Imam Reza charity, known as "Astan-e Quds-e Razavi" in Farsi, is believed to be one of the biggest in the country. Analysts estimate its worth at tens of billions of dollars as it owns almost half the land in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city, about 750 kilometers (470 miles) east of Iran's capital, Tehran.

Raisi is the first top politician in the country to be buried at the shrine, which represents a major honor for the cleric. His father-in-law serves as the city's Friday prayer leader.

The deaths of Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian come as Iran continues to back militia groups in the wider Mideast to pressure its enemies, namely Israel and the United States. Mourners have chanted against both nations in the ceremonies.

State media circulated photos Thursday showing a meeting between Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard chief and the head of its expeditionary Quds Force and representatives from Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

On Thursday morning, thousands of people dressed in black gathered along a main boulevard in the city of Birjand, where Raisi once served as its member on the Assembly of Experts in Iran's South Khorasan province along the Afghan border. There and in Mashhad, mourners on the streets reached out to a truck carrying his casket, with some tossing scarves and other items against it for a blessing.

Meanwhile, former Foreign Ministers Mohammed Javad Zarif and Ali Akbar Salehi and other dignitaries paid respects to Amirabdollahian at Iran's Foreign Ministry, where his casket was put on display. His body later was interred in Shahr-e Rey just outside of Tehran at the Abdol Azim shrine, another final resting place for those famed in Persian history.

"Give Soleimani our greetings," a religious singer said as Amirabdollahian's body was put into its final resting place, referring to the slain general.

Toronto awarded WNBA's first franchise outside US, with expansion team to begin play in 2026

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Toronto has been awarded the WNBA's first franchise outside the United States, with the expansion team set to begin play in 2026.

Larry Tanenbaum-led Kilmer Sports Ventures is paying \$115 million for the team. Tanenbaum also is the chairman and a minority owner of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, the Toronto sports giant that also owns the NHL's Maple Leafs and NBA's Raptors, along with Toronto's MLS and Canadian Football League franchises.

"Growing internationally, I've been trying to think through next steps on a global platform," WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert told The Associated Press ahead of the official announcement Thursday. "It helps us reach new audiences and bring in new partners. The thing I love about going to another country is that the young girls and boys get to see professional basketball for women is important, too."

Toronto will be the WNBA's 14th franchise, with the expansion Golden State Valkyries to start play next year.

"Our Toronto sports franchises are thriving but, we have been missing one critical piece — women's professional sports," Tanenbaum told the AP. "The world is finally taking notice of something that's been there all along — the immense talent, passion and competition in women's sports. So, once again, I saw an opportunity and knew we were in the right place at the right time to bring Canada's first WNBA team to Toronto. And now we have, making sports history."

Toronto will play in the 8,700-seat Coca-Cola Coliseum at Exhibition Place, home of the American Hockey League's Toronto Marlies, and occasionally move to Scotiabank Arena, which seats nearly 20,000. Tanenbaum said the team will play some games in Vancouver and Montreal.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attended the press conference in Toronto, along with Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow.

"This landmark deal will give opportunities to our remarkable athletes across the country, and on the biggest stage," Trudeau said. "I can't wait to see our Canadian women win on the court."

Kilmer Sports Ventures, created as a stand-alone company to operate the team, has committed to building a practice facility. But until that is ready, it will train at University of Toronto's Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport. Tanenbaum said they'll solicit public input for the name of the team.

"Women's sports is good business," Tanenbaum said. "Just look around — it's not a moment, but a movement and it's just the beginning. The investment that we'll put into the franchise will also be no different than the other franchises."

Engelbert said WNBA exhibition games in Canada the last two seasons showed the passion of the fans in the country for women's basketball.

"When I was up for the preseason game, Kia (Nurse) and I did a youth clinic. The reaction from young girls to Kia and what she stands for, they so admire her," Engelbert said.

Nurse is one of a handful of Canadian players playing in the WNBA, with more on the way.

"No doubt it's helpful to have household names," Engelbert said.

The commissioner expects the league to reach 16 teams by 2028.

"We've already had a lot of interest, and it got more tangible and serious from a fair amount of cities after the draft," Engelbert said. "We are in a good position to get to 16 by certainly '27-28."

Dangerous brew: Ocean heat and La Nina combo likely mean more Atlantic hurricanes this summer

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Get ready for what nearly all the experts think will be one of the busiest Atlantic hurricane seasons on record, thanks to unprecedented ocean heat and a brewing La Nina.

There's an 85% chance that the Atlantic hurricane season that starts in June will be above average in storm activity, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday in its annual outlook. The weather agency predicted between 17 and 25 named storms will brew up this summer and fall, with 8 to 13 achieving hurricane status (at least 75 mph sustained winds) and four to seven of them becoming major hurricanes, with at least 111 mph winds.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 14 named storms, seven of them hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

"This season is looking to be an extraordinary one in a number of ways," NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad said. He said this forecast is the busiest in the 25 years that NOAA has been issuing in May. The agency updates its forecasts each August.

About 20 other groups — universities, other governments, private weather companies — also have made seasonal forecasts. All but two expect a busier, nastier summer and fall for hurricanes. The average of those other forecasts is about 11 hurricanes, or about 50% more than in a normal year.

"All the ingredients are definitely in place to have an active season," National Weather Service Director Ken Graham said. "It's a reason to be concerned, of course, but not alarmed."

What people should be most concerned about is water because 90% of hurricane deaths are in water and they are preventable, Graham said.

When meteorologists look at how busy a hurricane season is, two factors matter most: ocean temperatures in the Atlantic where storms spin up and need warm water for fuel, and whether there is a La Nina or El Nino, the natural and periodic cooling or warming of Pacific Ocean waters that changes weather patterns worldwide. A La Nina tends to turbocharge Atlantic storm activity while depressing storminess in the Pacific and an El Nino does the opposite.

La Nina usually reduces high-altitude winds that can decapitate hurricanes, and generally during a La Nina there's more instability or storminess in the atmosphere, which can seed hurricane development. Storms get their energy from hot water. Ocean waters have been record warm for 13 months in a row and a La Nina is forecast to arrive by mid to late summer. The current El Nino is dwindling and is expected to be gone within a month or so.

"We've never had a La Nina combined with ocean temperatures this warm in recorded history so that's a little ominous," said University of Miami tropical meteorology researcher Brian McNoldy.

This May, ocean heat in the main area where hurricanes develop has been as high as it usually is in mid-August. "That's crazy," McNoldy said. It's both record warm on the ocean surface and at depths, which "is looking a little scary."

He said he wouldn't be surprised to see storms earlier than normal this year as a result. Peak hurricane season usually is mid-August to mid-October with the official season starting June 1 and ending Nov. 30.

A year ago, the two factors were opposing each other. Instead of a La Nina, there was a strong El Nino, which usually inhibits storminess a bit. Experts said at the time they weren't sure which of those factors

would win out.

Warm water won. Last year had 20 named storms, the fourth-highest since 1950 and far more than the average of 14. An overall measurement of strength, duration and frequency of storms had last season at 17% bigger than normal.

Record hot water seems to be key, McNoldy said.

"Things really went off the rails last spring (2023) and they haven't gotten back to the rails since then," McNoldy said.

"Hurricanes live off of warm ocean water," said Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach. "That tends to basically be fuel for the hurricane. But also when you have the warm Atlantic what that tends to do is also force more air up over the Atlantic, more rising motion, which helps support strong thunderstorms."

A record hot ocean is bad news across the board, not just because of hurricanes but it harms shipping, important ocean currents, coral reefs and fisheries, Spinrad said.

There's the background of human-caused climate change that's making water warmer in general, but not this much warmer, McNoldy said. He said other contributors may include an undersea volcano eruption in the South Pacific in 2022, which sent millions of tons of water vapor into the air to trap heat, and a reduction in sulfur in ship fuels. The latter meant fewer particles in the air that reflect sunlight and cool the atmosphere a bit.

Seven of the last 10 Atlantic hurricane seasons have been more active than the long-term normal.

Climate change generally is making the strongest hurricanes even more intense, making storms rain more and making them rapidly intensify more, McNoldy said.

Graham, a former National Hurricane Center director, said because warmer oceans are making storms intensify more rapidly, people need to be prepared early for everything. All the worst Category 5 hurricanes with winds greater than 156 miles per hour that have hit the United States weren't even strong enough to be hurricanes three days prior to landfall.

Klotzbach and his team at Colorado State University — which pioneered hurricane season forecasting — gave a 62% probability that the United States will be hit with a major hurricane with winds of at least 111 mph. Normally the chance is 43%. The Caribbean has a two-out-of-three chance of getting hit by a major hurricane and the U.S. Gulf Coast has a 42% likelihood of getting smacked by such a storm, the CSU forecast said. For the U.S. East Coast the chance of being hit by a major hurricane is 34%.

Klotzbach said he doesn't see how something could shift soon enough to prevent a busy season this year.

"The die is somewhat cast," Klotzbach said.

Stage collapse at a campaign rally in northern Mexico kills at least 9 people and injures 121

By ALBERTO MENDOZA Associated Press

SAN PEDRO GARZA GARCIA, Mexico (AP) — The collapse of a stage in heavy winds at a campaign rally in northern Mexico has killed at least nine people, including a child, and injured 121, the governor of Nuevo Leon state said Thursday.

The collapse occurred during an event Wednesday evening attended by presidential long-shot candidate Jorge Álvarez Máynez, who ran to escape. Videos of the collapse on social media showed people screaming, running away and climbing out from under metal polls.

The victims "will not be alone in this tragedy," Máynez told reporters Wednesday night, adding that he had suspended upcoming campaign events.

Afterward, soldiers, police and other officials roamed the grounds of the park where the event took place while many nearby sat stunned and haunted by the tragedy.

In a video message, Nuevo Leon Gov. Samuel Garcia, a leading member of Máynez's Citizens Movement party, said 94 of the injured were treated and released, but that 27 remained hospitalized. State health authorities said a lot of the injuries involved skull fractures. Garcia said several victims were undergoing

surgery and some appeared to be in critical condition.

Garcia said the accident occurred "in a matter of seconds."

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said most of the injured were women. He absolved Máynez's Citizens Movement party — widely viewed as an implicit ally of López Obrador's Morena party — of blame even before investigations were carried out.

"We know that they are not to blame," the president said Thursday. Condolences poured in from across Mexico, including from the other two presidential candidates.

Máynez wrote in his social media accounts that he went to a hospital after the accident in the wealthy suburb of San Pedro Garza Garcia, near the city of Monterrey. He said he was in good condition.

"The only important thing at this point is to care for the victims of the accident," he wrote.

Videos of the accident showed Máynez waving his arm as the crowd chanted his name. But then he looked up to see a giant screen and metal structure toppling toward him. He ran rapidly toward the back of the stage to avoid the falling structure, which appeared to consist of relatively light framework pieces as well as what appeared to be a screen with the party's logo and theater-style lights.

In a Facebook post, Alejandra Gamez Escalera wrote that her father and a stepbrother, 11, died in the collapse. She said they had gone to the event to hear a band that was scheduled to play at the campaign rally.

"If only you had stayed home and not gone to the event, none of this would have happened," Gamez Escalera wrote.

Máynez has been running third in polls in the presidential race, trailing both front-runner Claudia Sheinbaum of the ruling Morena Party and opposition coalition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez. Both sent their condolences, and Sheinbaum canceled a campaign event in nearby Monterrey the next day "in solidarity" with victims and their loved ones.

"My condolences and prayers with the families of the dead, and my wishes for a speedy recovery to all those injured," wrote Gálvez in a social media post.

The accident happened at the height of campaign season, with many events held this week and next in anticipation of the June 2 presidential, state and municipal elections.

The campaign had so far been plagued by the killings of about two dozen candidates for local offices.

5 things to know about Memorial Day, including its evolution and controversies

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — Memorial Day is supposed to be about mourning the nation's fallen service members, but it's come to anchor the unofficial start of summer and a long weekend of discounts on anything from mattresses to lawn mowers.

But for people such as Manuel Castañeda Jr., the day is very personal. He lost his father, a U.S. Marine who served in Vietnam, in an accident in 1966 in California while his father was training other Marines.

"It isn't just the specials. It isn't just the barbecue," Castañeda told The Associated Press in a discussion about Memorial Day last year.

Castañeda also served in the Marines and Army National Guard, from which he knew men who died in combat. But he tries not to judge others who spend the holiday differently: "How can I expect them to understand the depth of what I feel when they haven't experienced anything like that?"

1. WHY IS MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATED?

It's a day of reflection and remembrance of those who died while serving in the U.S. military, according to the Congressional Research Service. The holiday is observed in part by the National Moment of Remembrance, which encourages all Americans to pause at 3 p.m. for a moment of silence.

2. WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OR MEMORIAL DAY?

The holiday stems from the American Civil War, which killed more than 600,000 service members — both

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Union and Confederate — between 1861 and 1865.

There's little controversy over the first national observance of what was then called Decoration Day. It occurred May 30, 1868, after an organization of Union veterans called for decorating war graves with flowers, which were in bloom.

The practice was already widespread on a local level. Waterloo, New York, began a formal observance on May 5, 1866, and was later proclaimed to be the holiday's birthplace.

Yet Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, traced its first observance to October 1864, according to the Library of Congress. And women in some Confederate states were decorating graves before the war's end.

David Blight, a Yale history professor, points to May 1, 1865, when as many as 10,000 people, many of them Black, held a parade, heard speeches and dedicated the graves of Union dead in Charleston, South Carolina.

A total of 267 Union troops had died at a Confederate prison and were buried in a mass grave. After the war, members of Black churches buried them in individual graves.

"What happened in Charleston does have the right to claim to be first, if that matters," Blight told The Associated Press in 2011.

In 2021, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel cited the story in a Memorial Day speech in Hudson, Ohio. The ceremony's organizers turned off his microphone because they said it wasn't relevant to honoring the city's veterans. The event's organizers later resigned.

3. HAS MEMORIAL DAY ALWAYS BEEN A SOURCE OF CONTENTION?

Someone has always lamented the holiday's drift from its original meaning.

As early as 1869, The New York Times wrote that the holiday could become "sacrilegious" and no longer "sacred" if it focuses more on pomp, dinners and oratory.

In 1871, abolitionist Frederick Douglass feared Americans were forgetting the Civil War's impetus — enslavement — when he gave a Decoration Day speech at Arlington National Cemetery.

"We must never forget that the loyal soldiers who rest beneath this sod flung themselves between the nation and the nation's destroyers," Douglass said.

His concerns were well-founded, said Ben Railton, a professor of English and American studies at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts. Even though roughly 180,000 Black men served in the Union Army, the holiday in many communities would essentially become "white Memorial Day," especially after the rise of the Jim Crow South, Railton told the AP in 2023.

Meanwhile, how the day was spent — at least by the nation's elected officials — could draw scrutiny for years after the Civil War. In the 1880s, then-President Grover Cleveland was said to have gone fishing — and "people were appalled," Matthew Dennis, an emeritus history professor at the University of Oregon, told the AP last year.

By 1911, the Indianapolis 500 held its inaugural race on May 30, drawing 85,000 spectators. A report from The Associated Press made no mention of the holiday — or any controversy.

4. HOW HAS MEMORIAL DAY CHANGED?

Dennis said Memorial Day's potency diminished somewhat with the addition of Armistice Day, which marked World War I's end on Nov. 11, 1918. Armistice Day became a national holiday by 1938 and was renamed Veterans Day in 1954.

An act of Congress changed Memorial Day from every May 30th to the last Monday in May in 1971. Dennis said the creation of the three-day weekend recognized that Memorial Day had long been transformed into a more generic remembrance of the dead, as well as a day of leisure.

In 1972, Time Magazine said the holiday had become "a three-day nationwide hootenanny that seems to have lost much of its original purpose."

5. WHY IS MEMORIAL DAY TIED TO SALES AND TRAVEL?

Even in the 19th century, grave ceremonies were followed by leisure activities such as picnicking and foot races, Dennis said.

The holiday also evolved alongside baseball and the automobile, the five-day work week and summer

vacation, according to the 2002 book "A History of Memorial Day: Unity, Discord and the Pursuit of Happiness."

In the mid-20th century, a small number of businesses began to open defiantly on the holiday.

Once the holiday moved to Monday, "the traditional barriers against doing business began to crumble," authors Richard Harmond and Thomas Curran wrote.

These days, Memorial Day sales and traveling are deeply woven into the nation's muscle memory.

Jason Redman, a retired Navy SEAL who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, told the AP last year that he honors the friends he's lost. Thirty names are tattooed on his arm "for every guy that I personally knew that died."

He wants Americans to remember the fallen — but also to enjoy themselves, knowing lives were sacrificed to forge the holiday.

UK politicians kick off a 6-week election campaign with incumbent Sunak playing the underdog

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's political party leaders crisscrossed the country on Thursday, kicking off a six-week election campaign in which Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party is trying to overturn a widespread sense that it will be ousted from power.

Voters will decide on July 4 whether to hand the opposition Labour Party the reins of government after 14 years of Conservative rule.

Sunak gambled by calling an earlier-than-expected election, arguing the Conservatives can give the country security in turbulent times. Labour says it will bring much-needed change after years of political and economic turmoil under the Tories.

"We will stop the chaos," said Labour leader Keir Starmer, the current favorite to be Britain's next prime minister. He said that if the Conservatives "get another five years, they will feel entitled to carry on exactly as they are. Nothing will change."

"You now have the power, the chance to end the chaos, to turn the page and rebuild Britain," he told voters at a campaign stop in southeast England.

Sunak took many of his own lawmakers by surprise when he called the election Wednesday, in an ill-starred televised announcement outside 10 Downing Street that saw him drenched with rain and drowned out by protesters blasting a Labour campaign song.

Most had expected a fall election after Sunak said repeatedly that the vote would be in the second half of the year — July 4 just barely fits that bill.

Sunak, who is visiting England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the campaign's first 48 hours, said the election call showed "I'm prepared to take bold action." He has insisted the outcome is not a foregone conclusion and vowed to "fight for every vote."

"Uncertain times demand bold action in order to deliver security," he told the BBC. "That's what I will bring."

Others called the decision risky at best, foolish at worst.

Elections in the United Kingdom have to be held no more than five years apart, but the prime minister can choose the timing within that period. Sunak, 44, had until December to name the date.

He fired the starting pistol on the day official figures showed U.K. inflation falling to 2.3%, allowing Sunak to say he had met a key pledge of getting rising prices under control. Inflation peaked at more than 11% in late 2022.

Sunak's center-right party has been in power since 2010, and last won an election in December 2019. Since then it has struggled to overcome a series of crises, including an economic slump, ethics scandals and a revolving door of leaders over the past two years.

Sunak took office in October 2022, following the disastrous tenure of Liz Truss, who lasted only 49 days

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after her economic policies rocked financial markets. Truss had been chosen by party members after Boris Johnson was ousted over a series of ethics scandals.

The election will be held against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis and deep divisions over how to deal with migrants and asylum seekers making risky English Channel crossings from Europe.

Opponents said Sunak's choice of a summer election amounted to an admission that his flagship plan on migration — a contentious deal to send people who arrive in small boats on a one-way trip to Rwanda — is likely to fail. Sunak said last month that the deportation flights would begin in July.

On Thursday, he told radio station LBC that "If I'm elected, we will get the flights off," specifying that he meant "after the election."

The early election also means some legislation backed by the government will not become law before Parliament is formally suspended on Friday ahead of the election. A plan championed by Sunak to create a "smoke-free generation" by banning the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after 2008 is among the bills that may be abandoned.

Voters across the U.K. will choose all 650 members of the House of Commons for a term of up to five years. The party that commands a majority in the Commons, either alone or in coalition, will form the next government and its leader will be prime minister.

Starmer, a former chief prosecutor for England and Wales, has dragged his social-democratic party towards the political center ground since 2020, when he replaced Jeremy Corbyn, a staunch socialist who led Labour to two election defeats.

Opinion polls taken before the election date was announced gave Labour a double-digit lead. An Ipsos poll taken last week put the opposition party on 41% compared to 20% for the Conservatives. The pollster interviewed 1,008 British adults between May 8 and 14, and the margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points.

Many unknowns stand between either main party and a majority of seats in Parliament, including the different political landscape in Scotland, where the pro-independence Scottish National Party has dominated for years. The SNP is undergoing its own woes, and Labour hopes for a resurgence.

The centrist Liberal Democrats also sometimes challenge Labour but mostly pose a threat to the Conservatives in south and southwest England.

The hard-right Reform U.K. party — formerly the Brexit Party of Nigel Farage — could pose a threat to the Conservatives in parts of England's former industrial heartland that the Conservatives won, often for the first time, in 2019.

Farage, who has never been elected to Parliament despite multiple attempts, said Thursday that he would not run in the election, but would "do my bit to help," likely in his role as TV talk show host and hard-line firebrand.

Farage, who is Reform's honorary president, indicated that his focus will be in the United States, where he is an ally of former President Donald Trump.

"Important though the general election is, the contest in the United States of America on November 5 has huge global significance," Farage said on social media. "A strong America as a close ally is vital for our peace and security. I intend to help with the grassroots campaign in the USA in any way that I can."

Baseball becomes a shelter for Venezuelan children in soccer-mad Peru

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — The crack of bat on ball and the sight of Venezuelan children running the bases on the soccer field turned baseball diamond on the outskirts of Peru's capital are watched with confusion by locals accustomed to soccer.

The questioning looks don't deter the young Venezuelans for whom baseball reinforces a strong bond with their embattled homeland. And there is no shortage of players with more than 1 million Venezuelans estimated to live in Lima, a city of about 10 million people.

Immigrants, mainly Venezuelans, have opened five baseball academies in Peru's capital. One of them is

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the Astros, located on the northern edge of Lima and coached by Venezuelan Franklin López.

López believes his team had to leave one field in San Juan de Luringancho, Peru's most populous district, because neighbors didn't want the Venezuelans using it. When they arrived every Tuesday and Thursday to practice they would find the field mired in mud.

López doesn't hide from his players that the road ahead of them will be bumpy if they want to play baseball in a soccer-mad country where the sport is virtually unknown.

"Here we improve by suffering," the coach told his players as they wiped the sweat off their faces during a training session.

Of the more than 7 million Venezuelans who have left their homeland during the complex crisis that has marked President Nicolás Maduro's 11-year presidency, more than 1.5 million went to neighboring Peru, most arriving after 2017 when then-President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said they were "welcome" and would be paid for their work.

The migrants brought with them a passion for baseball, a sport in which Venezuela is a world powerhouse sending many players to U.S. Major League Baseball.

As the Venezuelan kids practiced baseball in Lima, many locals had no idea what they were doing.

"What is this sport?" a girl asked as she saw the youngsters playing. Her mother answered: "It comes from another country."

Baseball is not the sport of choice in Peru, which has produced soccer players like Teofilo Cubillas, Claudio Pizarro and Paolo Guerrero, and it was a top contender in women's volleyball tournaments four decades ago.

But the passion for baseball burns among immigrants to Peru.

"There's something in my heart that likes baseball," said 8-year-old Dylams Yépez during a recent practice.

Born in the Caribbean city of Puerto La Cruz, he said his best memories of Venezuela are of sunny mornings with his father Raúl teaching him how to throw rocks into the sea like baseballs. The boy arrived in Lima two years ago and found the Astros shortly later.

His father, a taxi driver and leukemia survivor, bought him a baseball glove online because he couldn't find any in local stores.

Venezuelan Deremi Becerra, 10, is clear why he likes baseball.

"My father liked this sport," Deremi said in his living room, which features two baseballs, a baseball cap, a picture of his father and small flags of Venezuela and Peru. His father died of COVID-19 in Lima three years ago.

Deremi's grandmother Bertha González, 62, takes him to practice and watches him play from the stands, as she remembers watching Venezuelan baseball teams with her late son.

"We bought a couple of beers, fried bananas and started watching the matches," she said. "I cheer for Los Tiburones de la Guaira, my son supported the Leones del Caracas just like my grandson."

Different Venezuelan accents can be heard as family members of the young Venezuelan players watch the action. The children compete in a league created in April by the five baseball academies. Each child pays \$24 per month to be on the team, which are named after MLB teams or Venezuelan clubs.

In a recent game, the team coached by López, and named after the Houston Astros, faced off against the Cachorros, who were dressed in the Chicago Cubs red, blue and white uniform.

The diamond lines and bases had been marked on the soccer field earlier by Roberto Sánchez, a baseball umpire and a motorbike messenger, and Rigoberto Roso, a food app rider.

"The idea is for us to play at a good level, not just for fun," said Roso.

"Let's go my pitcher! Let's go my catcher! Don't let him see it, don't let him see it, don't let him see it!" sang a group of mothers in support of their children playing on the field.

One father adjusted his son's belt, while another gave instructions to his.

"Do you see these moms and dads?" Sánchez said as he put his sunglasses on. "Without them, without their memories, without their joy ... baseball would be finished" here.

Black Americans are underrepresented in residential care communities, AP/CNHI News analysis finds

By CARSON GERBER of CNHI News and NICKY FORSTER and DEVI SHASTRI of The Associated Press

Norma Upshaw was living alone south of Nashville when her doctor said she needed to start in-home dialysis.

Her closest family lived 40 miles away, and they'd already scrambled once when the independent senior living facility the 82-year-old had called home — a community of largely Black residents — had closed with 30 days' notice. Here they were searching, yet again, for an assisted living facility or maybe an affordable apartment that was closer.

They couldn't find either, so Upshaw's daughter built a small apartment onto her home.

"Most of her doctors, her church, everything was within Nashville," said Danielle Cotton, Upshaw's granddaughter, "... this was the best option for us."

Nearly half of Americans over 65 will pay for some version of long-term health care, the landscape of which is quickly transitioning away from nursing homes and toward community living situations.

Black Americans are less likely to use residential care communities, such as assisted-living facilities, and more likely to live in nursing homes, CNHI News and The Associated Press found as part of an examination into America's long-term care options. The opposite is true for white people.

Experts say the reasons why are complicated and varied: personal and cultural preferences, physical location of residential care communities and insurance coverage. But the result is older Black Americans may be left out of living situations that can create community, prevent isolation and provide help with daily tasks.

"The bottom line is white, richer people have a solution now — which is these incredible assisted-living communities — and minorities and low-income people don't," said Jonathan Gruber, an economist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "That is the fundamental challenge facing our country as our demographics are shifting."

The AP and CNHI News analyzed data from the most recent National Post-acute and Long-term Care Study in 2020, and found Black people are underrepresented in residential care communities nationally by nearly 50%.

Black Americans account for about 9% of people over 65 in the U.S. But they are underrepresented in residential care communities at 4.9% of the population, and overrepresented in nursing homes — about 16% of residents.

The situation is flipped for white Americans, who make up 75% of Americans over 65 but are 88% of the people in residential care communities. The AP-CNHI News analysis also found other ethnic and racial groups are underrepresented in assisted living facilities, but only Black Americans were also overrepresented in nursing homes.

Lacking a universal definition for assisted living, the federal study created the "residential community care" category to represent settings that serve people who cannot live independently, but also do not require the more comprehensive care provided in nursing homes.

Financial barriers affect low-income people of all races, experts said, but they're heightened for older Black Americans. Black workers make \$878 weekly compared to \$1,085 earned by white workers, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which shows this national gap has existed for decades.

That affects both the potential to spend on long-term care — and, earlier in life, homeownership rates. Many residents sell their homes to fund senior care, and more than 7 in 10 homeowners in the U.S. are white, according to 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data.

One month in an assisted living facility runs \$4,500 a month or \$54,000 a year, according to a national median cost from the National Center for Assisted Living, which represents assisted living providers.

Most people pay privately, often through personal funds or long-term care insurance; nursing homes can be covered by Medicaid. That puts assisted living out of reach for many Black Americans, explained Cot-

ton, who also founded and runs a Nashville nonprofit that helps financially strapped seniors find housing.

She said many can barely pay for government-subsidized housing, let alone expensive living communities: "It leaves them in a gap. Those are the seniors that are really not even considered or thought about."

The process of paying for long-term care is "as opaque as it can be," said Linda Couch, senior vice president of policy and advocacy at LeadingAge, which represents nonprofit long-term care providers and researches long-term care.

And researchers' major question as more assisted facilities open up across the U.S. — are they located near Black communities? — is hard to answer, too.

"The federal government doesn't even have a list of assisted living (facilities)," said Lindsey Smith, a health systems management and policy researcher in the Oregon Health and Science University-Portland State University School of Public Health. "There is not, like, a registration."

While affordability is a clear determining factor of who can and can't access assisted living, researchers say it doesn't completely explain why more Black people are not moving in.

Steven Nash's father could afford the most expensive assisted living facilities, but the former judge wanted to stay home. So while Nash ran one of the nation's last remaining Black-owned nursing homes in the Washington, D.C., area, he also helped care for his father until he died at the age of 87.

"Even though it was very difficult for the family, we still kept that promise," he said. "We try as hard as we can to honor the wishes of our elders."

But for others, assisted living is an option for independence even as their daily needs grow.

Older Black Americans are twice as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias compared to older white people, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

In Texarkana, Texas, former lawyer Jay Cossey moved into an assisted living facility after multiple strokes more than seven years ago that caused him to lose most of his short-term memory. He's one of a handful of Black residents at a facility that is blocks away from his old apartment.

His church community urged the 70-year-old to move in, though his family in Alabama has pushed for him to come live with them.

"My brother came and said he wanted to take me home," Cossey recalled. "I told him I am home. I'm home because I feel good here."

How does this end? With Hamas holding firm and fighting back in Gaza, Israel faces only bad options

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Diminished but not deterred, Hamas is still putting up a fight after seven brutal months of war with Israel, regrouping in some of the hardest-hit areas in northern Gaza and resuming rocket attacks into nearby Israeli communities.

Israel initially made tactical advances against Hamas after a devastating aerial bombardment paved the way for its ground troops. But those early gains have given way to a grinding struggle against an adaptable insurgency — and a growing feeling among many Israelis that their military faces only bad options, drawing comparisons with U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This was the subtext of a rebellion in recent days by two members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's three-man War Cabinet — Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Benny Gantz, Netanyahu's main political rival — who demanded that he come up with detailed postwar plans.

They supported Israel's retaliation for Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, including one of the heaviest bombing campaigns in recent history, ground operations that obliterated entire neighborhoods and border restrictions that the U.N.'s World Food Program says pushed parts of the territory into famine.

But now the two retired generals fear a prolonged, costly re-occupation of Gaza, from which Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers in 2005. They are also opposed to a withdrawal that would leave Hamas in control or lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

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Instead, they have put forth alternatives that many Israelis see as wildly unrealistic. Hamas, meanwhile, has proposed its own postwar plan.

Here's a look at four ways this war might end.

FULL-SCALE MILITARY OCCUPATION

Netanyahu has promised a "total victory" that would remove Hamas from power, dismantle its military capabilities and return the scores of hostages it still holds from the attack that triggered the war.

He has said victory could come within weeks if Israel launches a full-scale invasion of Rafah, which Israel portrays as the last Hamas stronghold.

Amir Avivi, a retired Israeli general and former deputy commander of the Gaza division, says that's only the beginning. He said Israel would need to remain in control to prevent Hamas from regrouping.

"If you don't drain the swamp, you cannot deal with the mosquitoes. And drain the swamp means a complete change in the education system, and dealing with local leadership and not with a terror organization," he said. "This is a generational process. It's not going to happen in a day."

Far-right members of Netanyahu's governing coalition, who hold the key to his remaining in power, have called for permanent occupation, "voluntary emigration" of large numbers of Palestinians to anywhere that will have them, and rebuilding of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Most Israelis are opposed, pointing to the immense costs of stationing thousands of troops in the territory that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians. As an occupying power, Israel would likely be held responsible for providing health, education and other services. It's unclear to what extent international donors would step in to fund reconstruction amid ongoing hostilities.

There's also no guarantee such an occupation would eliminate Hamas.

Israel was in full control of Gaza when Hamas was established in the late 1980s. Israel's 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon coincided with the rise of Hezbollah, and Israeli troops routinely battle militants in the West Bank, which it has controlled since 1967.

A LIGHTER OCCUPATION, AIDED BY 'UNICORNS'

Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain security control over Gaza but delegate civilian administration to local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the occupied West Bank. He has suggested that Arab and other countries assist with governance and rebuilding.

But so far, none have shown interest.

No Palestinians are known to have offered to cooperate with the Israeli military, perhaps because Hamas has said they would be treated as collaborators, a veiled death threat.

Efforts to reach out to Palestinian businessmen and powerful families "have ended in catastrophe," says Michael Milshtein, an Israeli analyst of Palestinian affairs at Tel Aviv University and a former military intelligence officer.

He says Israelis seeking such allies are searching for "unicorns" — something that does not exist.

Arab states have also roundly rejected this scenario — even the United Arab Emirates, which is one of the few to formally recognize Israel and has close ties with it.

"The UAE refuses to be involved in any plan aimed at providing cover for the Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip," Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said this month.

A GRAND BARGAIN

Instead, Arab states have coalesced around a U.S. proposal aimed at resolving the decades-old conflict and transforming the Middle East.

Under this plan, a reformed Palestinian Authority would govern Gaza with the assistance of Arab and Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia, which would normalize relations with Israel in return for a U.S. defense pact and help in building a civilian nuclear program.

But U.S. and Saudi officials say that hinges on Israel committing to a credible path to eventual Palestinian statehood.

Netanyahu has ruled out such a scenario — as have Gallant and Gantz — saying it would reward Hamas and result in a militant-run state on Israel's borders.

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Palestinians say ending Israel's decades-long occupation and creating a fully independent state in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem — territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — is the only way to end the cycle of bloodshed.

Hamas has said it would accept a two-state solution on at least an interim basis, but its political program still calls for the "full liberation of Palestine," including what is now Israel. Hamas has also said it must be part of any postwar settlement.

A DEAL WITH HAMAS

Hamas has proposed a very different grand bargain — one that, ironically enough, might be more palatable to Israelis than the U.S.-Saudi deal.

The militant group has proposed a phased agreement in which it would release all of the hostages in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners — including senior militants — as well as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, a lengthy cease-fire and reconstruction.

That would almost certainly leave Hamas in control of Gaza and potentially allow it to rebuild its military capabilities. Hamas might even claim victory, despite the extensive death and destruction suffered by Palestinian civilians since Oct. 7.

But thousands of Israeli protesters have taken to the streets in recent weeks calling on their leaders to take such a deal, because it's probably the only way to get the hostages back.

They accuse Netanyahu of standing in the way of such an agreement because it could lead his far-right allies to bring down his government, potentially ending his political career and exposing him to prosecution on corruption charges.

Supporters of such a deal say there would be other benefits for Israel, beyond freeing the hostages.

The low-intensity conflict with Lebanon's Hezbollah would likely die down as regional tensions ease, allowing tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border to return to their homes. Israel could finally reckon with the security failures that led to Oct. 7.

And it could prepare for another inevitable round of fighting.

Milshtein says Israel should adopt Hamas' concept of a "hudna" — a prolonged period of strategic calm. "Hudna doesn't mean a peace agreement," he said. "It's a cease-fire that you will exploit in order to make yourself stronger and then to attack and surprise your enemy." _____

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Today in History: May 24

First night game in Major League Baseball

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 24, the 145th day of 2024. There are 221 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 24, 1935, the first Major League Baseball game to be played at night took place at Cincinnati's Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

On this date:

In 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message "What hath God wrought" from Washington to Baltimore as he formally opened America's first telegraph line.

In 1937, in a set of rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Social Security Act of 1935.

In 1941, the German battleship Bismarck sank the British battle cruiser HMS Hood in the North Atlantic, killing all but three of the 1,418 men on board.

In 1961, a group of Freedom Riders was arrested after arriving at a bus terminal in Jackson, Mississippi, charged with breaching the peace for entering white-designated areas. (They ended up serving 60 days in jail.)

In 1962, astronaut Scott Carpenter became the second American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard

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Aurora 7.

In 1974, American jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, 75, died in New York.

In 1976, Britain and France opened trans-Atlantic Concorde supersonic transport service to Washington.

In 1980, Iran rejected a call by the World Court in The Hague to release the American hostages.

In 1994, four Islamic fundamentalists convicted of bombing New York's World Trade Center in 1993 were each sentenced to 240 years in prison.

In 1995, former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson died in London at age 79.

In 2006, "An Inconvenient Truth," a documentary about former Vice President Al Gore's campaign against global warming, went into limited release.

In 2011, Oprah Winfrey taped the final episode of her long-running talk show.

In 2017, Ariana Grande suspended her Dangerous Woman world tour and canceled several European shows due to the deadly bombing at her concert in Manchester, England, two days earlier.

In 2018, Jerry Maren, the last surviving Munchkin from the 1939 film "The Wizard of Oz," died at a San Diego nursing home; he was 99.

In 2022, an 18-year-old gunman opened fire at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, killing 19 children and two teachers. The gunman, Salvador Ramos, a former student at the school, was also killed. It was the deadliest shooting at a U.S. grade school since the attack in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, almost a decade earlier.

In 2023, Tina Turner died at age 83. She teamed with husband Ike Turner for a dynamic run of hit records and live shows and survived her horrifying marriage to triumph in middle age with the chart-topping "What's Love Got to Do With It."

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian-impressionist Stanley Baxter is 98. Jazz musician Archie Shepp is 87. Comedian Tommy Chong is 86. Singer Bob Dylan is 83. Actor Gary Burghoff is 81. Singer Patti LaBelle is 80. Actor Priscilla Presley is 79. Country singer Mike Reid is 77. Actor Jim Broadbent is 75. Actor Alfred Molina is 71. Singer Rosanne Cash is 69. Actor Cliff Parisi is 64. Actor Kristin Scott Thomas is 64. Actor John C. Reilly is 59. Actor Dana Ashbrook is 57. Actor Eric Close is 57. Actor Carl Payne is 55. Rock musician Rich Robinson is 55. Former MLB pitcher Bartolo Colon is 51. Actor Dash Mihok is 50. Actor Bryan Greenberg is 46. Actor Owen Benjamin is 44. Actor Billy L. Sullivan is 44. Actor-rapper Jerod Mixon (aka Big Tyme) is 43. Rock musician Cody Hanson (Hinder) is 42. Dancer-choreographer-singer Mark Ballas is 38. Country singer Billy Gilman is 36. Rapper/producer G-Eazy is 35. Actor Brianne Howey is 35. Actor Cayden Boyd is 30.