

# Groton Daily Independent

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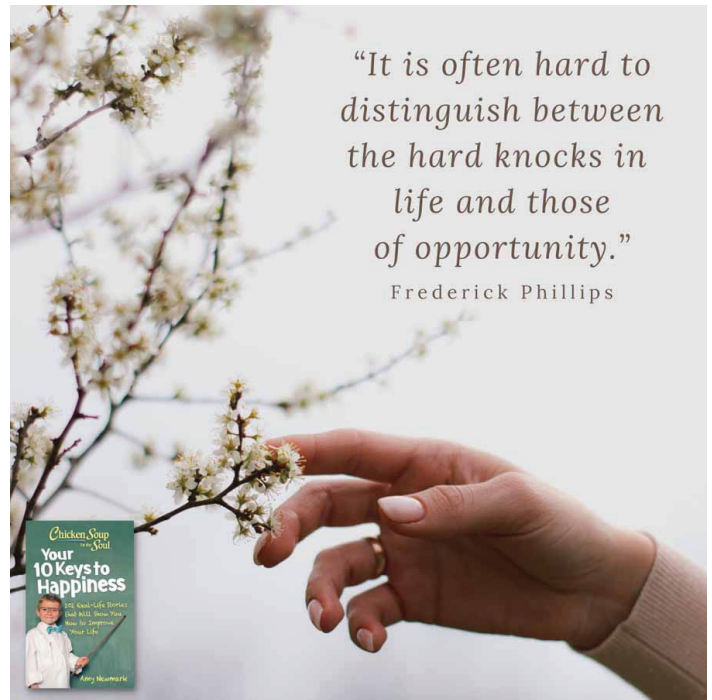
## Saturday, May 25

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.

## 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.;

**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

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

## Tuesday, May 28

Senior Menu: Baked turkey crunch with dressing, Italian blend vegetables, carrot bars, corn muffin, fruit.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry at the Groton Community Center, hours 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Junior Teeners host Miller, 5:30 p.m., doubleheader  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## **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

In partnership with **smartasset**<sup>™</sup>

## UN Calls for Rafah Halt

The United Nations' International Court of Justice ordered Israel yesterday to halt military action and any other operations that may lead to the loss of civilian life in the Gazan city of Rafah. The decision is the latest in a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip, a charge Israel has strongly rejected.

While the decision is meant to be binding for UN member nations, the high court has no means to enforce the order and Israel has signaled it will continue current operations near the city. An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people remain in Rafah, which sits at Gaza's southern border with Egypt and is home to the primary gate facilitating aid flow. Israel has for months appeared ready to carry out a full-scale operation in Rafah but has only carried out limited incursions to date.

Separately, the Israeli military said bodies of three more hostages taken during Hamas' initial Oct. 7 attack were recovered. Around 100 hostages and the bodies of nearly 40 others are believed to still be held in Gaza.

## Documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock dies.

Spurlock, best known for his Oscar-nominated film "Super Size Me," in which he subsisted solely on a McDonald's diet for a month, died yesterday from cancer-related complications. The effort grossed a modest \$22M at the box office but sparked a wide-ranging public conversation over healthy eating. Spurlock was 53 years old.

## Ozempic may help treat kidney disease.

The new weight-loss drug cut the risk of kidney failure and death in patients with diabetes by 20% to 30% in preliminary trials. The results follow a string of improved health outcomes behind weight loss for semaglutide, the key compound in the drug, including lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and more.

## Rivals meet at Wembley Field.

Manchester City will face Manchester United in the finals of England's FA Cup today (10 am ET, ESPN+), the world's oldest national soccer competition. The pair are the first two clubs to meet in consecutive years in the championship since 1884-85.

## Neanderthals and ancient humans only briefly comingled.

A new genetic analysis suggests a wave of Homo sapiens arrived in western Eurasia around 47,000 years ago, intermixing with Neanderthals for around 7,000 years—a relatively short window in evolutionary timescales.

## Exchange-traded crypto funds move forward.

US financial regulators approved applications from Nasdaq, Chicago Board Options Exchange, and the New York Stock Exchange to list exchange-traded funds that track the price of the cryptocurrency ether. Ether is the second-largest cryptocurrency behind bitcoin, with a circulating supply worth \$440B.

## "God's influencer" on track for sainthood.

Carlo Acutis, an Italian computer prodigy who died of leukemia in 2006 at the age of 15, will be considered for canonization by the Catholic Church after Pope Francis formally declared a second miracle linked to his tomb. He would be the first millennial to be granted sainthood.

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## Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Bobby L. in Pensacola, Florida.

"I subscribe to a local car wash monthly, which provides me with as many car washes as I wish. Recently, I took my car in—was a very hot day and I commented to the attendant how busy they were, and while scanning my car's sticker, he mentioned he hadn't had time to eat or drink any liquids all day. I drove through then after another fellow had finished drying my car. I parked it to the side and reached into my trunk for a bottle of Powerade, then walked back and gave it to the young man who checked me in.

About a month later, I saw the same young man who remembered me and when he printed my ticket, he added a wax service free of charge saying how much he had appreciated my gift that day. I was refreshed in my belief that when you do something nice for another person, it comes back to you."



## The Community Coach Guest Column

### Unlocking Community Potential: The Catalyst Approach for Change



**Paula Jensen**  
Senior Vice President



The big framing question, "Who do we envision ourselves becoming?" was written in wide black marker on a large flip chart and placed at the front of the room for easy viewing. I introduced the question and gave some context. The ten local leaders stared blankly at it. The organization these leaders represented had been in existence since 2006. That's not a long time in community and economic development years. Yet long enough to experience considerable success, then slump into a slow decline. This group of local leaders had come to a fork in the road around their purpose as an organization. Now they were faced with uncovering who they would need to become. They needed to regain success for the future of their organization and the community.

In the past 18 years, this organization has raised \$8 million locally for projects. It also leveraged an extra \$50 million in outside investments. These local leaders have been a catalyst for both big and small changes in their community. But shifts in organizational leadership and the pandemic halted much of that success. Some people told them, "Regroup and keep doing what you're doing because it worked great in the past!" However, this group chose to have a deep-dive conversation. They focused on uncovering who they see themselves becoming as they considered their role as a catalyst for creating a thriving community.

I use the word "catalyst" to define this organization because collectively, as a group of volunteer local leaders, they are accelerating change in their community by strategically overcoming barriers and reinvesting local funds into projects. This has led to a regeneration of the region.

Happily, by the end of our deep-dive conversation two hours later, this organization's leadership had come to a consensus. They would become the local catalyst that invests today for a prosperous tomorrow. And they would achieve this through thoughtful investment strategies, high-leverage collaborations, and game-changing economic impacts for the whole region.

So, if you feel stuck in your community, keep reading. You'll learn how a group of leaders from your community can use this catalyst approach to drive change. You can create a stronger, more connected, and resilient community.

**Action 1:** Broaden the vision by shifting your perspective to see the community's big picture. Before you take any action, talk to various parts of the community. This will help you understand the local challenges and priorities.

**Action 2:** Build stronger connections by networking widely. Meet with local and regional leaders. Also, connect with organizations, residents, and other stakeholders. Engage in partnerships that can drive collaborative action.

**Action 3:** Develop skills in facilitating group discussions and meetings. Focus on creating inclusive environments where everyone feels heard and valued. Empower others to take an active role in community initiatives. Create opportunities for community members to share their ideas and take ownership of their ideas.

**Action 4:** Advocate and educate by using your newly found understanding, relationships, and influence. Take the community's needs and interests to local governments, businesses, and others. Then, seek support, investments, and in-kind resources for community projects.

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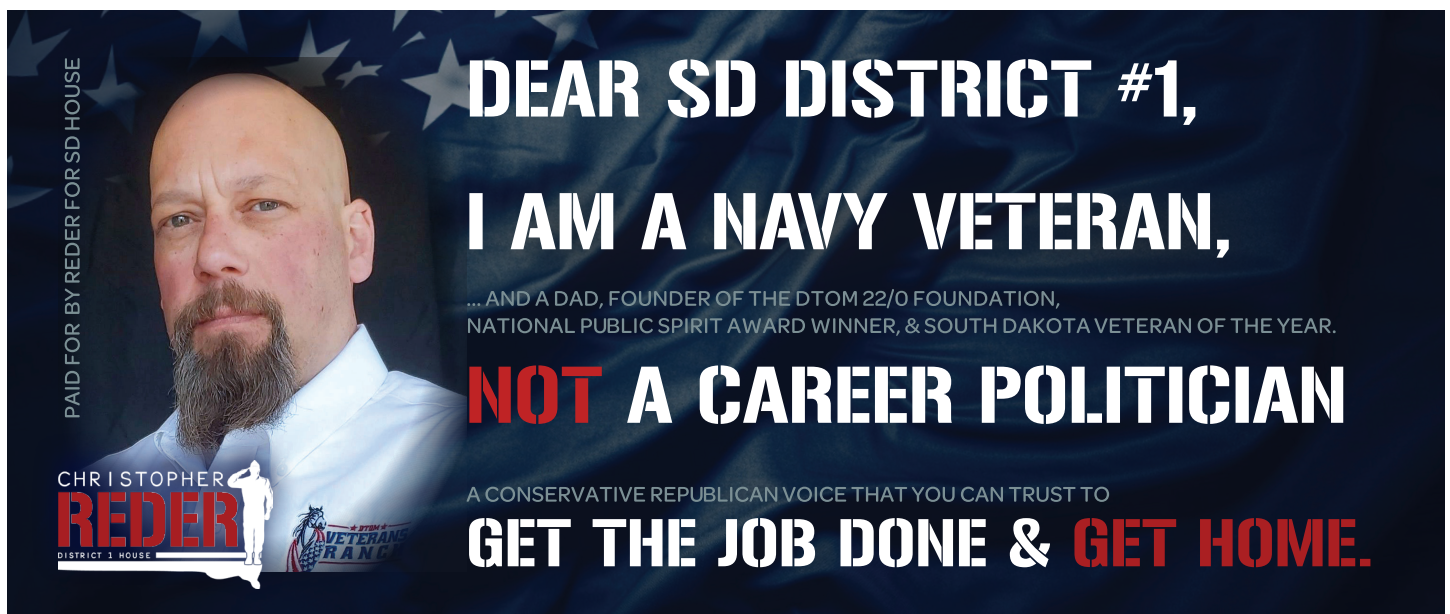
Action 5: Foster community innovation by supporting and investing in new approaches that address issues in creative ways. Celebrate the achievements and contributions of community members. Highlight successful initiatives to inspire more action.

Action 6: Listen and adapt based on the community's feedback. Build resilient strategies to ensure your efforts are still relevant and effective. Community dynamics will shift. Staying flexible lets you respond well to new challenges and opportunities.

Action 7: Model great leadership by upholding high ethical standards, building trust, and showing genuine passion for the community's well-being. Your integrity and enthusiasm can inspire others to join your efforts.

Over and over, I hear catalyst stories from big towns and small towns across South Dakota. They achieve localized success by implementing these collective actions. Join the ranks of community catalysts by gathering local doers to accelerate change in your community.

*The Community Coach. Having a passion for rural community leadership and development is what drives Paula Jensen's personal and professional life. Paula lives in her hometown of Langford, South Dakota, population 318+. She serves as a Strategic Doing practitioner, grant writer and community coach with Dakota Resources based in Renner, South Dakota. Dakota Resources is a mission-driven 501c3 Community Development Financial Institution working to connect capital and capacity to empower rural communities. Contact her at paula@dakotaresources.org. Read more at <https://paulajensenblog.wordpress.com/>*



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**DEAR SD DISTRICT #1,**

**I AM A NAVY VETERAN,**


... AND A DAD, FOUNDER OF THE DTOM 22/0 FOUNDATION,  
NATIONAL PUBLIC SPIRIT AWARD WINNER, & SOUTH DAKOTA VETERAN OF THE YEAR.

**NOT A CAREER POLITICIAN**

A CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN VOICE THAT YOU CAN TRUST TO

**GET THE JOB DONE & GET HOME.**

CHRISTOPHER  
**REDER**  
DISTRICT 1 HOUSE





**McKenna Tietz in the State 300m Intermediate Hurdles Prelims.** (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

## State Track Meet First and Second 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.

**200 Meters Class A - Prelims:** 10. Keegen Tracy, 23.27.

**400 Meters Class A - Prelims:** 11. Keegen Tracy, 53.39.

**Javelin - 800g Class A - Finals:** 3. Colby Dunker 155-00.

### Girl's Division

**400 Meters Class A - Prelims:** 18. Taryn Traphagen, 1:03.49.

**300m Hurdles - 30" Class A - Prelims:** 20. McKenna Tietz 50.87.

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

**4x200 Relay Class A - Prelims:** 17. Laila Roberts, Jerica Locke, Kella Tracy, Rylee Dunker 1:53.09.

**4x400 Relay Class A - Prelims:** 12. Laila Roberts, Jerica Locke, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, 4:20.54.

**4x800 Relay Class A - Finals:** 8. Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, Ryelle 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.

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**Family and friends congratulating Colby Dunker after placing third in the State Boys Javelin.** (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Marty Weismantel presents Groton Area senior Colby Dunker third place in the State Boys Javelin.** (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Colby Dunker throwing the Javelin at the State Track meet.** (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)

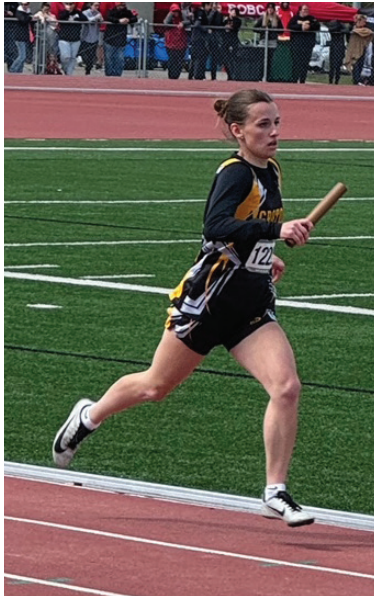
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**Laila Roberts**

(Photo courtesy  
Bruce Babcock)



**Jerica Locke**

(Photo courtesy  
Bruce Babcock)



**Kella Tracy hands off to Taryn Traphagen**

(Photo courtesy  
Bruce Babcock)



**Taryn Traphagen**

(Photo courtesy  
Bruce Babcock)

## Girls 1600m relay runners



**Groton throwing coach  
Aaron Helvig poses with  
third place State Javelin Senior  
Colby Dunker.** (Photo courtesy

Bruce Babcock)



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BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

May 28, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Second Reading/Possible Adoption
  - a. Ord. #268 – Rezone
  - b. Ord. #269 – Rezone
  - c. Ord. #270 - Rezone
5. Kelsi Vinger, State's Attorney Grant Program
  - a. Court Resource Home Grant Application
  - b. Racial & Ethnic Grant Application
6. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
  - a. R-O-W applications for Web Water
  - b. Department Update
7. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of May 21, 2024
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Fireworks Display Permit – Lew's Fireworks @ Brown County Fair
  - e. Travel Requests
  - f. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
  - g. Plats
    - i. Preliminary Plat
    - ii. Final Plats
  - h. Lottery Permit for Richmond Lake Association
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

**Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.**

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at**

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

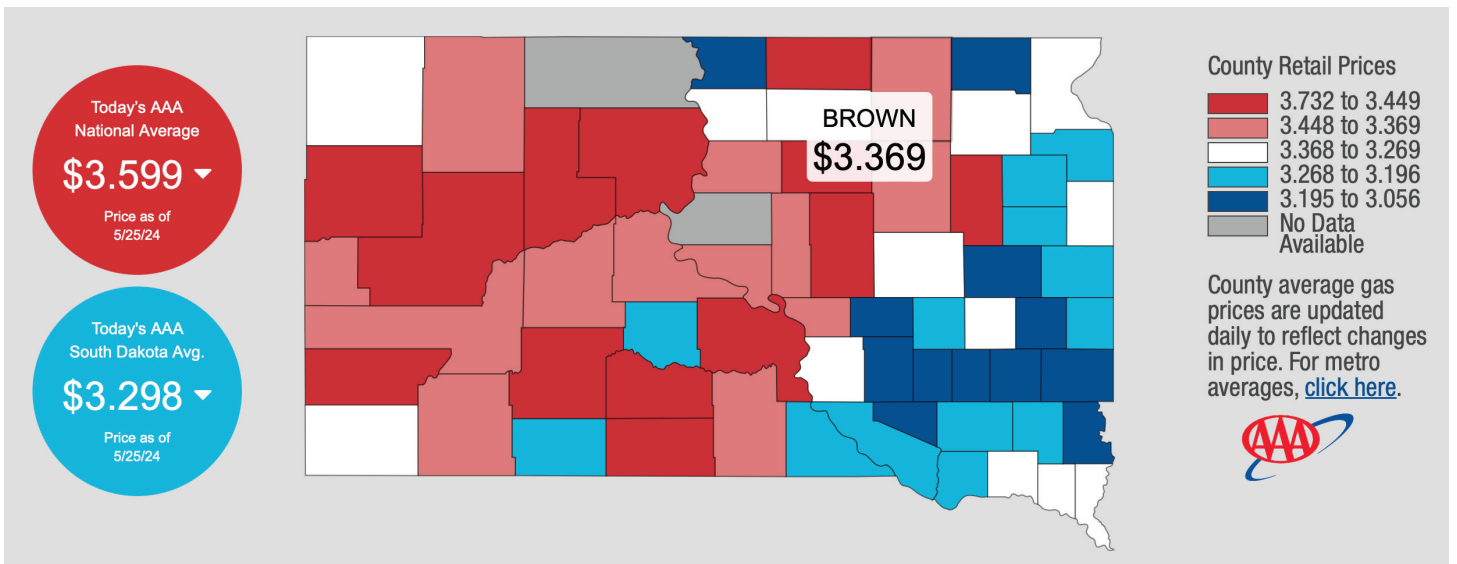
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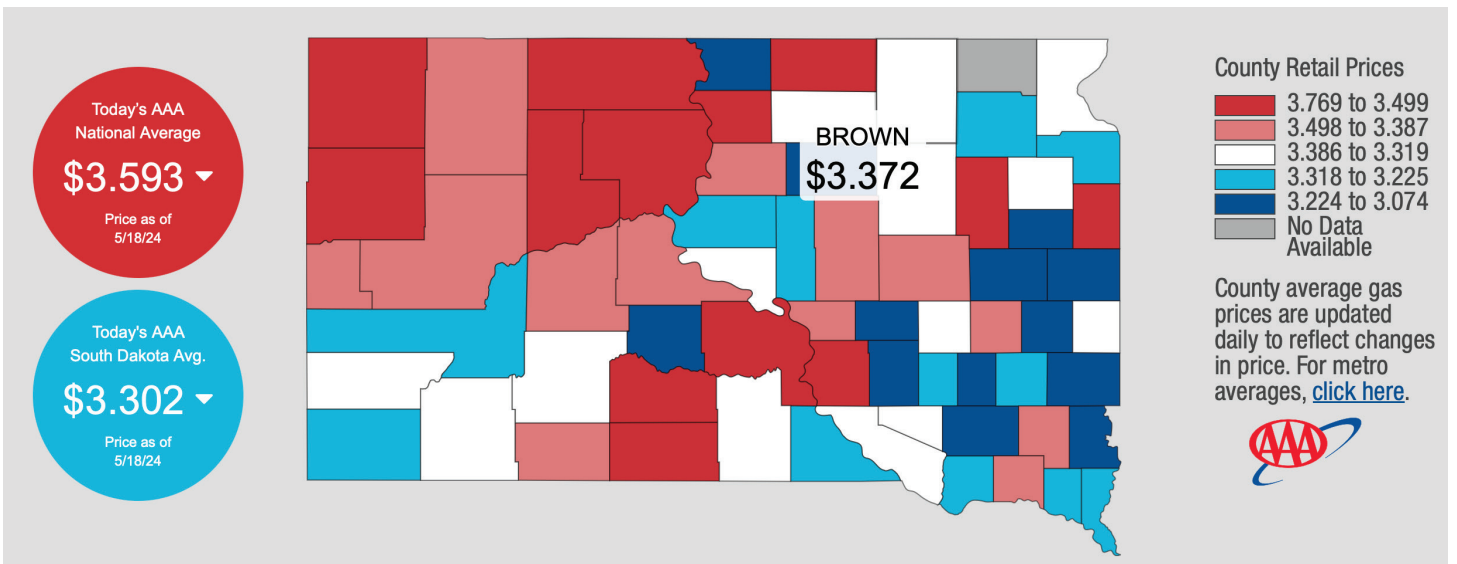
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.298	\$3.473	\$3.902	\$3.501
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.304	\$3.467	\$3.907	\$3.509
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.302	\$3.443	\$3.876	\$3.547
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.394	\$3.547	\$3.963	\$3.696
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.450	\$3.579	\$4.048	\$3.779

### This Week



### Last Week



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**Cub Cadet**

**ULTIMA™ ZTS™**

**STEER IT  
TO BELIEVE IT.**

Engineered for precision and confident control on challenging hills — all backed by the strength, comfort and quality of a Cub Cadet® zero-turn.



Your independent Cub Cadet Dealer - Expert Service. Locally Owned.  
The Advice, Service, Selection and Support you need to find the right fit for

**Harry Implement**

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\*Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Dealer may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. If as rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1995. If as certified by Kawasaki, horsepower listed in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J1773 and certified by SAE International. Please consult manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Kohler is a registered trademark of Kohler Co. Kawasaki is a registered trademark of KAWASAKI JUKOGYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA. © 2024 Cub Cadet.

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**Ultima™ ZTS1 42**  
ZERO-TURN



- 22 HP\*\* Kohler® KT 7000 Series V-Twin OHV engine
- 42" AeroForce™ fabricated twin-blade deck
- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles

**\$4,399\***

**Ultima™ ZTS1 46**  
ZERO-TURN



- 22 HP\*\* Kohler® 7000 Series V-Twin OHV engine
- 46" AeroForce™ fabricated twin-blade deck
- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles

**\$4,499\***

**Ultima™ ZT1 50**  
ZERO-TURN



- 23 HP\*\* Kawasaki® FR691V V-twin OHV engine
- 50" AeroForce™ fabricated triple-blade deck
- Dual Hydro-Gear® EZT-2200™ transmission

**\$3,299\***

# MANHART

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

**DISTRICT 1**

**Working to Protect & Promote  
Traditional American Values**



- Pro Law Enforcement
- Pro Constitution
- Pro Family
- Property Rights



Visit the Campaign Site  
[ManhartForHouse.com](http://ManhartForHouse.com) or  
[facebook.com/ManhartLogan](https://facebook.com/ManhartLogan)

Paid for by Manhart for State House

**Primary Election: Vote Now Through June 4th**



## 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.**

**Groton Post #39 is sponsoring  
the FREE viewing of the broadcast  
at**

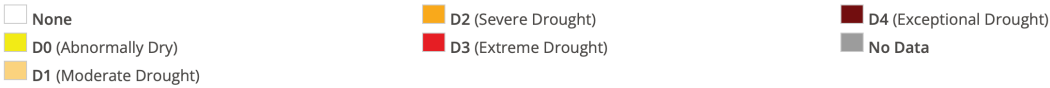
**GDILIVE.COM**

**People in their vehicles can listen  
on the radio at 89.3 FM.**

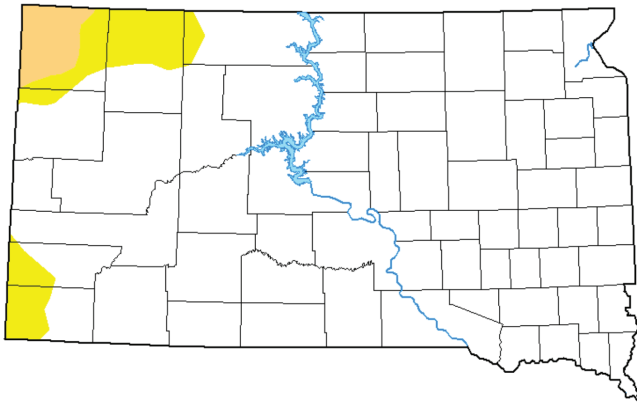
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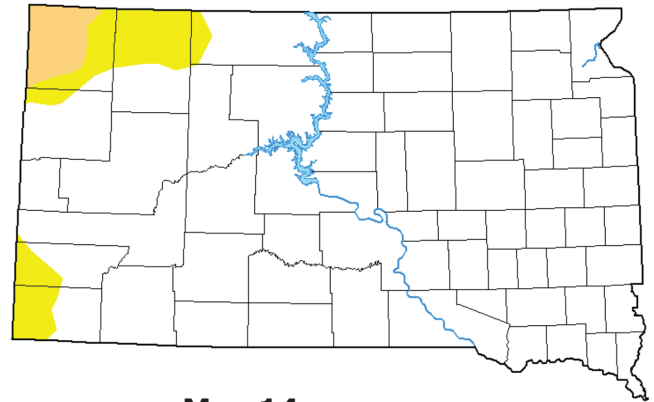
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



May 21



May 14

On this week's map, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and the eastern Plains of Montana saw improvements in drought-affected areas. In Kansas and Nebraska, moderate to heavy rainfall accumulations (2 to 7+ inches) led to a reduction in areas of drought and provided a boost in soil moisture and streamflow levels. In North Dakota, areas of Moderate Drought (D1) were reduced in response to above-normal precipitation during the past 30-to-90-day period as well as numerous recent field reports coming into the National Drought Mitigation Center's Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) system. According to the USDA (May 19), statewide pasture and range conditions rated good to excellent are as follows: North Dakota 68%, South Dakota 83%, Nebraska 56%, and Kansas 42%. According to the latest USDA Kansas Crop Progress and Condition Report (May 19), winter wheat condition was rated 11% very poor, 20% poor, 36% fair, 30% good, and 3% excellent. In terms of NOAA NCEI's regional climatological rankings, the Great Plains Region observed its 44th wettest (near normal) and 12th warmest (+3.9 degrees F anomaly) January-April period on record.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **South Dakotans grow frustrated waiting for state to apply for \$69 million in energy rebate funding**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 24, 2024 4:30 PM**

Kelly Moore, of Piedmont, planned to leverage a federal rebate program to cover 30% of the cost of his new \$10,000 energy-efficient heat pump.

But he said Statewide Energy Manager Chris Gukeisen told him he has to wait.

"What Chris told me is they're going to wait until January, after the elections," Moore said. "I mean, come on. Really?"

The Home Energy Rebates program is funded with \$9 billion from the federal Inflation Reduction Act. The program provides rebates for energy-efficient home retrofits and high-efficiency electric home appliances. South Dakota's allocation is \$68.56 million. There's also \$225 million in the program for Native American tribes.

The deadline for states to apply for their funding from the U.S. Department of Energy is Jan. 31, 2025. Sixteen states have already applied or been approved. The application must include how states plan to implement and oversee the program, targeted outcomes and objectives, eligibility criteria, and outreach and compliance reporting plans.

Meanwhile, a May 31 deadline is approaching for state energy offices to apply for early administrative funding. Up to 2.5% of a state's allocated funding is available to help them plan their rebate programs. Twenty-five states or territories have received \$74.2 million of early funding.

Moore recently sought an update on the state's plans from Gukeisen, who works in the Energy Management Office with the state Bureau of Administration. In an email reply to Moore, Gukeisen wrote, "We are not applying for the early administrative funds, and we are still working on a plan for the program."

Moore and some other South Dakotans are aggravated. South Dakota Searchlight has received multiple emails from people wondering about the status of the rebates.

"I was in a little bit of disbelief, but also, that sounds like our state government," Moore said.

He was referring to Republican Governor Kristi Noem's penchant for avoiding some federal funding opportunities, including solar energy and climate change grant programs and a summer food program for children.

Rick Bell, of Rapid City and president of Sustainable Environmental Energy Engineering LLC, shares Moore's sentiment.

"This is just a continuation of the same behavior we've seen out of the Governor's Office," he said. "They're not focused on South Dakota."

Neither Gukeisen nor the Governor's Office responded to South Dakota Searchlight inquiries Friday, after Searchlight spoke to Gukeisen in March.

"The Governor's Office staff, it's kind of in their hands," he said at that time, while advising Searchlight to inquire again during the summer.

If fully implemented, the Department of Energy estimates the rebates would save U.S. households up to \$1 billion annually.

*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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## Farm bill advances from U.S. House panel but faces a tough row to hoe

**Four Democratic votes surprise chairman: 'I did not see that one coming'**

**BY: ALLISON WINTER - MAY 24, 2024 1:33 PM**

WASHINGTON — Republicans moved their long-awaited new farm bill through the U.S. House Agriculture Committee this week, despite opposition from most Democrats that could stall further advancement of the bill.

The massive \$1.5 trillion legislation would set policy and funding levels for key food, agriculture and conservation programs for the next five years. After a marathon markup Thursday, the GOP-authored bill cleared the committee after midnight Friday, 33-21, with four Democratic votes.

The committee's 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 found online.

Democrats Don Davis of North Carolina, Sanford Bishop of Georgia, Yadira Caraveo of Colorado and Eric Sorenson of Illinois joined all committee Republicans to vote to advance the bill.

After hours of heated debate and criticism from Democrats, support from the four lawmakers across the aisle seemed to surprise House Agriculture Chair Glenn "GT" Thompson, a Pennsylvania Republican who was the bill's primary sponsor.

His microphone picked up his aside as the vote concluded: "That was bipartisan. I did not see that one coming."

### Changes ahead

But the tepid Democratic support is likely not enough to see this version of the bill through to final passage in the House.

A handful of Republicans typically oppose farm bills over fiscal concerns. And even Democrats who voted for the bill in the House committee said it needs major changes before it could make it into law.

The measure does not have support of Democrats in the Senate or the White House.

"Everyone knows that this bill would never become law. The Senate won't accept it and the administration won't accept it," Rep. David Scott of Georgia, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said at the markup. "And while this bill is a giant misstep, it nevertheless begins our journey toward passing a farm bill."

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 House proposal 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.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said earlier this week that the farm bill draft would damage the coalition that traditionally has united behind farm bills and "raises the real possibility of being unable to get a farm bill through the process."

The committee vote – which came eight months after the previous farm bill expired – was the first step in what is expected to continue to be a protracted dispute over food and farm policy.

Many farm commodity groups have come out in support of the bill, but it faces opposition from hunger advocacy groups as well as fiscal conservatives.

Heritage Foundation, National Taxpayers Union and Taxpayers for Common Sense, along with Environmental Working Group, united this week to oppose the legislation, which they characterized as a government giveaway to favored special interests.

The groups, which span the ideological spectrum, contend the proposed legislation would spend tens of billions of dollars in subsidies that would overwhelmingly go to a relatively small number of farmers who grow certain commodity crops.

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## Funding dispute

Historically, farm bills have brought together lawmakers across party lines, uniting on regional interests. The massive bill stitches together support for agriculture producers, energy and conservation programs on farmland and food and nutrition programs for families in need.

But committee members are deeply divided over limits on nutrition and climate programs that are the funding mechanisms for the Republican bill.

"This, on the policy side, is a very good bill," Rep. Angie Craig, a Minnesota Democrat, said. "But on the payment side, how do you get to your math?"

The key dispute for Democrats is 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.

"One of the reasons it is so hard to negotiate the little items on this bill is because the big items and the funding mechanism are so fundamentally flawed," Maine Democrat Chellie Pingree said.

The 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.

"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," Caraveo said.

Caraveo, who faces a tough re-election in a toss-up district, ultimately voted in favor of the bill.

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

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

The House Republican bill would offset increases in payments for farmers by placing limits on SNAP and a discretionary account at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The committee-passed bill would put limits on USDA's discretionary Commodity Credit Corporation account and would remove climate-smart policy requirements for about \$13 billion in conservation projects funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

"Farmers agree that this is good money that has come to all of our states, and is critically important," Pingree said. "So taking away this authority from one Agriculture secretary maybe because you don't like one program is completely misguided. It's not thinking into the future."

## Slow Senate progress

On the Senate side, Stabenow released an outline of her own proposal for the farm bill in early May but said she is waiting for language from Republicans before they can move forward.

Among other things, Stabenow's bill would boost eligibility for nutrition programs for low-income people like SNAP. Stabenow made public a summary of the bill, but not legislative text.

Arkansas Republican John Boozman, the Senate Agriculture Committee's top Republican, said Thursday he supports the direction on the farm bill from the House Agriculture Committee but was not optimistic about swift movement in his chamber.

"We've got a lot of headwinds," Boozman said in an interview with States Newsroom Thursday.

Boozman said he plans to release language in the coming weeks but indicated lawmakers might be headed toward another extension if they cannot make progress swiftly.

"When I visit with the farm groups, I think their attitude is that rather than just doing something, if it's not meaningful, we're better off waiting," Boozman told States Newsroom. "This is a five-year commitment. And, again, if we're not going to do meaningful changes, to improve the safety of the farmers, it's probably not worth doing."



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## Election issue

The farm bill is generally considered “must-pass” legislation. Lawmakers must rewrite the sweeping legislation every five years to set mandatory funding levels and policy. The current farm bill expired at the end of September 2023 but most programs have continued through extensions.

The current extension lasts until the end of September, but it is not clear if lawmakers will make that deadline – especially as attention turns to election campaigns over the summer and fall.

The farm bill votes could be fuel in upcoming elections.

As the House committee debated the measure Thursday, the GOP candidate in the Michigan U.S. Senate race to replace Stabenow criticized Democratic candidate and committee member Elissa Slotkin for her stance on the bill. Republican Mike Rogers took to X (formerly Twitter) to say Slotkin had not focused enough on the bill.

## More negotiations ahead

While the House committee engaged in 13 hours of debate on the farm bill markup, both Democrats and Republicans acknowledged that there would need to be more negotiations on the bill before it could become law.

Rep. Frank Lucas, an Oklahoma Republican and longtime committee member who chaired the panel from 2011 to 2015, characterized the committee vote as “the first step of a long journey.”

“Now, ultimately, ultimately, we must work with each other to advance a comprehensive committee product,” Lucas said.

“As we begin this process, I want to remind all my colleagues, the real struggle is not here in the Ag Committee, but on the floor of the United States House and in the conference committee. We will sort out our differences with the United States Senate.”

*Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.*

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

## COMMENTARY

### Hold the phone: Anti-abortion calls are anti-democracy

DANA HESS

MAY 24, 2024 12:00 PM

The first use of a new law that allows petition signers to withdraw their signatures turned ugly recently. The law was designed specifically to allow people who signed an abortion rights petition to withdraw their signatures. Put into use, the practical application of the law has ranged from annoying to insulting.

The plot thickened when callers for the South Dakota Petition Integrity political action committee started phoning more than 700 citizens who signed a petition to allow an abortion rights measure on the ballot. Those citizens were randomly selected by the Secretary of State’s Office as part of the petition validation process.

Callers asked if citizens were misled when they signed the abortion rights petition. Rep. Jon Hansen, a Dell Rapids Republican and the sponsor of legislation that created the new law, alleges that some signers were duped into thinking they were signing a petition to repeal the state sales tax on groceries rather than the abortion rights petition.

Some people who received those calls complained to the Secretary of State’s Office. They said that the callers were representing themselves as working for the Secretary of State. A quick investigation by Attorney General Marty Jackley found that the callers had broken no laws.

Rick Weiland, who led the effort to put the abortion measure on the ballot, said in a South Dakota Searchlight story that the phone tactic “smells of voter intimidation and harassment.”

Hansen was quick to point out that the phone effort doesn’t fall under South Dakota’s legal definition of

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harassment. Maybe it doesn't qualify as harassment. It does qualify as an insult to democracy.

Who among us, after signing a petition, wants to be cold called by a stranger questioning our actions, asking if we really knew what we were signing and implying that we were duped because we don't know any better? While the Hansen-sponsored law says citizens have a right to take their name off a petition, calling and asking someone to remove their name is an insult to a voter's intelligence.

All along, the goal of the Life Defense Fund and South Dakota Petition Integrity has been to keep the abortion rights measure off the ballot. That hardly seems sporting after Weiland and Dakotans for Health collected about 55,000 petition signatures, far more than the 35,017 that they needed to get on the ballot.

Now, using information it gleaned from its calls to petition signers, the Life Defense Fund is threatening legal action to disqualify the measure from appearing on the ballot. It's imperative to Hansen to keep the measure away from voters because abortion rights measures have done so well on the ballot. In 2022, amendments that would restrict abortion rights were defeated in Kentucky and Montana. Ballot measures that protected abortion rights were approved in California, Michigan and Vermont.

Instead of making an effort to get signatures off the petition or making their case to a judge and jury, the Life Defense Fund should go about this the old-fashioned way — taking their plea directly to voters. Maybe they're trying to keep abortion rights off the ballot because they know what kind of voters they're dealing with.

South Dakota was among the last states to implement a seat belt law because opponents said they didn't want a government rule strapping them into their cars. The mention of a motorcycle helmet law still raises a howl in this state where people are loath to have the government tell them what to put on their heads, even if it's proven to be for their own good. Hansen and his telephone minions can probably predict how South Dakota voters will react when the state's strict abortion law is presented in political ads as state government bullying its way into the bedroom and the doctor's office.

As a Catholic, I find myself a reluctant ally of Hansen and the Life Defense Fund. If South Dakota can buck the national trend and defeat an abortion rights measure at the ballot box, I'll take pleasure in that outcome. I will, however, take no pleasure in the fact that the anti-abortion forces in this state used tactics that were an insult to the petition process and a threat to democracy.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

## People affected by radiation exposure push Congress to extend benefits

**SD Rep. Dusty Johnson signs letter urging a House vote**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 24, 2024 4:28 PM**

WASHINGTON — A fund to compensate Americans sickened by exposure to atomic bomb tests, uranium mining and radioactive waste expires in just under 20 days, and activists and lawmakers are scrambling to keep the fund active and open to additional victims.

A bill to reauthorize and expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, often shortened to RECA, sailed through the U.S. Senate in early March on a bipartisan 69-30 vote, but the House has yet to take it up for a vote.

Critics cite high costs, but bipartisan lawmakers and activists rallying in favor of the bill say the victims have already paid the price through medical bills and lost loved ones, and that it's ultimately the government's wrong to make right.

The U.S. Senate-passed legislation, championed by Republican Sen. Josh Hawley, aims to extend the program by six years and expand eligibility to several new locations, including his state of Missouri where, over decades, residents witnessed numerous rare similar cancers among neighbors in and around St. Louis.

Chemical plants in downtown St. Louis and Weldon Spring, Missouri, processed uranium during the nation's WWII effort to build the first atomic bomb. Radioactive waste from the plants were stored and dumped around the area.

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States Newsroom's Missouri Independent, in collaboration with the Associated Press and MuckRock, obtained and combed through thousands of government records that revealed the government downplayed and ignored the dangers of the radioactive waste.

## **SD Rep. Johnson signs letter urging vote**

South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson was one of eight signers of a letter to House leadership Friday urging a vote on the Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act.

"Congress must not forget those innocent people who were irradiated and permanently impacted — simply because of where they lived or how they tried to earn a living for their families," the letter says.

People who worked in South Dakota's uranium mining, milling and transport industry decades ago in Edgemont are among those eligible for Radiation Exposure Compensation Act funding.

As of 2023, people living in South Dakota had submitted 114 claims to the fund since its inception, resulting in 37 denials, 76 awards and one claim that was pending. Total payouts to South Dakotans stood at \$6.56 million.

When the reauthorization act passed the Senate in early March in a bipartisan 69-30 vote, South Dakota's Republican senators split their votes, with Sen. Mike Rounds voting for it and Sen. John Thune against it. Neither of their offices provided rationale for their votes in response to messages from South Dakota Searchlight.

## **'The government has done this'**

Tammy Tesson Puhlmann, 63, who lived for decades in Florissant, Missouri, sat in the Russell Senate Office Building Wednesday showing photos of her son Drew — first, as a baby who was born with a rare blood disease, and then as a thin 30-year-old man just a week before he died of cancer.

"If I can prevent one mom from having to go through something like this, I would do anything," she said through tears. "It's the most unbearable feeling in the world to know that there is nothing you can do for your child, and to know that the government has done this."

Puhlmann was among 10 eastern Missouri residents and state representatives who met with 10 lawmakers on Wednesday, including House Majority Leader Steve Scalise; U.S. Reps. Ann Wagner and Blaine Luetkemeyer, both Republicans of Missouri; and the state's GOP Sens. Eric Schmitt and Hawley.

Missouri state Reps. Tricia Byrnes and Richard West, both Republicans, who represent districts just outside St. Louis, flipped through maps and photos documenting the contaminated sites, including where a uranium processing plant and byproduct dumping ground were located next to Francis Howell High School, which Byrnes attended.

"Look how close it was to all of the contamination. That high school is still there," Byrnes said, pointing to a map.

To Byrnes' left sat Kristin Denbow, a 1988 Francis Howell graduate who has been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, an incurable blood cancer in the bone marrow.

"We have memories of men in full containment suits walking around the grounds of our high school while we were there," Denbow said.

## **'This has been our lives'**

Three generations of Susie Gaffney's family made their homes in the suburbs of St. Louis near Coldwater Creek, unaware that radioactive waste relocated from the downtown uranium plant was leaking into the water.

Susie's husband, Jim, grew up in a house beside the creek and not far from Jana Elementary School, which closed in 2023 because of radioactive contamination.

"Jim grew up playing in the creek, everybody did. Everybody who tells the creek stories played (there). It was awesome, it wasn't deep. Kids fished, they made mudslides. It was a great place to live," Gaffney said.

Jim, whose mother died of colon cancer after being diagnosed in her 40s, developed lymphoma at the

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age of 24.

When Susie and Jim's son Joey was an infant, they moved to a nearby subdivision named Wedgewood, a few miles down the creek. Joey also played in the water as a child.

Joey was diagnosed at 18 with thyroid cancer and eventually underwent a thyroidectomy. Gaffney, now 66, recalls the doctors telling her, "This kid is Chernobyl."

"This is what happened in Chernobyl. He has metastasized thyroid cancer. This is what happened there. He had to be exposed to radiation' and naively I said, 'Well, where?' And so this has been our lives," she said.

Joey is now 45. Jim, 68, was also diagnosed with bladder cancer and is now living with myelodysplastic syndrome, Gaffney said.

"He's living on blood transfusions," she said, pointing to a photo of him on a packet of papers she was handing out to lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Below the photo of Jim was a map of the region with red dots for each cancer case.

"I just want people to tunnel in," Gaffney said. "Pretend you're on Google Earth, zoom all the way down and get on those front doors and picture our lifespan with health care, with depression, with anxiety, fear. Our quality of life has definitely been affected, all of us."

## Debate on Capitol Hill

The government's nearly expired compensation program pays one-time sums of \$75,000 to those who developed certain diseases after working on U.S. nuclear tests before 1963. It pays \$50,000 to those who lived in select counties downwind from test explosion sites between January 1951 and October 1958, and the month of July in 1962, in Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

Uranium industry workers who were employed in 11 states from 1942 to 1971 and subsequently developed eligible illnesses qualify for \$100,000.

Hawley's bill, co-sponsored by Democratic Sen. Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico, would also expand to include the entirety of Arizona, Nevada and Utah, and include downwind and affected areas in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and Guam. Additionally, the one-time compensation sums to victims or surviving family members would increase to \$100,000.

If enacted, the legislation would reach areas including ZIP codes in Alaska, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee, where communities were impacted by radioactive waste dumping, uranium processing and other related activities surrounding the testing.

The bill's estimated cost of \$50 billion to \$60 billion has drawn criticism. Hawley's office confirmed the estimate. There is not an official budget score.

On Thursday, Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, asked for unanimous consent on the Senate floor for his proposed "clean extension" of the program as it exists for another two years — only covering those affected in areas of Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

Lee cited the risk of "inflating the deficit by at least \$60 billion" and questioned whether enough data backs contamination in the additional areas in Hawley's bill.

"You see, the House of Representatives has thus far declined to take up and pass Sen. Hawley's previous bill, with some signaling concern and raising some of the concerns that I just restated," the Utah Republican said.

Hawley objected, and Luján spoke in support of the objection.

"Study after study has shown the expanse of the nuclear radiation. Here is a study from 1997, from 2005, another from 2005, from 2023, all showing that the nuclear radiation is far beyond the contours of the original RECA bill passed in 1990," Hawley said. "Yet my friend from Utah wants to keep doing the same old thing, leaving out in the cold hundreds of thousands of Americans. I will not consent to it."

Lee responded, saying he understood the "impassioned pleas" from Hawley and Luján. He offered an updated version that includes Missouri and New Mexico, but leaves out other states and Guam. His office cites an unofficial budget score of \$30 billion.

"There are other states in (Hawley's) legislation pending in the House that deal with law in the Marshall Islands, Idaho, Kentucky, Ohio, Alaska, and perhaps one or two other jurisdictions. The claims of those states are not on equal footing," Lee said.

"That is where a lot of the — not all, but a lot of the expense is accrued and a lot of concerns expressed in the House impeding its quick passage over there that might lead to it not being able to be passed at all," he continued.

Hawley again objected, saying he "will not be party to any attempt at some halfway measure, some short stopgap bill, or some effort to sweep this under the rug."

A spokesperson for House Speaker Mike Johnson, of Louisiana, told States Newsroom on May 15 that "The Speaker understands and appreciates Senator Hawley's position and is working closely with interested members and stakeholders to chart a path forward for the House."

RECA was established in 1990.

The U.S. conducted more than 1,000 atomic weapons tests from 1945 to 1992 — the first at the Trinity Test site near Alamogordo, New Mexico, where scientists detonated the Manhattan Project's first atomic bomb prior to the U.S. dropping the weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, at the end of World War II.

As of June 2022, the government has approved more than 36,000 RECA claims for more than \$2.3 billion in benefits.

Unless the fund is extended, claims have to be postmarked by June 10, 2024, according to the Department of Justice, which administers the payouts.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## **New rules protect pregnant workers, but red states sue over abortion provisions**

**South Dakota among plaintiffs challenging Biden administration rule**

**BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS - MAY 24, 2024 6:00 AM**

Natasha Jackson was four months pregnant when she told her supervisor she was expecting. It was 2008, and Jackson was an account executive at a rental furniture store in Charleston, South Carolina — the only female employee there.

"I actually hid my pregnancy as long as I could because I was scared about what could happen," she said.

When her doctor recommended that she not lift more than 25 pounds, her employer wouldn't let her move temporarily to a role where she didn't need to lift furniture, even though those roles were available, she said. She was forced to go on leave and then lost her job. Her marriage unraveled and she spent time after the birth in emergency housing.

"That hardship affected me years on, and it took away the joy of being pregnant," said Jackson. "They made me feel guilty and ashamed for having a baby."

Jackson, now 41 and a mother of four who owns her own cleaning company, has spent years working with advocacy groups to fight for better laws to protect pregnant workers. Last year, she was invited to speak at a White House event celebrating the passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, a new workplace anti-discrimination law for which she had advocated.

But now this law, passed with wide bipartisan support, has become fodder in the bitter battle over abortion rights between Republican-led states and the federal government.

The act fills gaps in state and federal protections by requiring employers with 15 or more employees to provide "reasonable accommodations" for pregnant workers and those who have recently given birth or have related medical conditions — unless the employer can prove it would cause "undue hardship" on the business.

Accommodations can include allowing an employee to take additional bathroom breaks, carry a water

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bottle, or sit instead of stand while on the job. After years of lobbying by nonprofit organizations and business groups, the federal law passed in December 2022. It went into effect last June.

In its rulemaking process, the Biden administration included abortion as a "related medical condition" covered by the law. That means employees seeking abortion care can ask for accommodations from their employers, such as time off work for an appointment or recovery.

This year, 19 Republican attorneys general — including from Jackson's home state of South Carolina — have sued the administration over that interpretation.

The AGs argue the Biden administration is forcing abortion accommodations even in states where abortions are illegal.

"Under this radical interpretation of the PWFA, business owners will face federal lawsuits if they don't accommodate employees' abortions, even if those abortions are illegal under state law," Arkansas Republican Attorney General Tim Griffin said in a statement last month announcing the lawsuit filed by Arkansas and 16 other Republican-led states.

But some advocates say the lawsuit threatens protections for all pregnant workers covered under the new law — not just the small subset who need abortion care.

"These states are cutting off their noses to spite their faces," said Elizabeth Gedmark, an attorney and vice president of A Better Balance, a national nonprofit advocacy organization that provides legal services and has long pushed for a national Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

"These attacks have very real consequences for peoples' lives and for their economic security and health," she said.

Jackson fears the lawsuit could lead to fewer workers accessing the care they need to be healthy.

"[Workers] should have the right to proper medical care during pregnancy, after childbirth, after having a miscarriage, or having an abortion," she said. "It seems quite ridiculous to me that some employers want so much control over employees to the point that they feel like they have the right to threaten their job security because of pregnancy or anything associated with it."

## Into the fray

After Congress passed the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a federal agency known as the EEOC, had to hammer out a set of rules that clarify what employers can and can't do under the law.

So last summer, the EEOC sought public comment on its proposed rules for how the new law would work. More than 100,000 comments were submitted over a two-month period.

The flood of comments stemmed from opinions about whether the EEOC should include abortion in its definition of "pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions" that are covered under the new law.

The vast majority were nearly identical form comments, according to the EEOC. About 54,000 of the comments urged the EEOC to exclude abortion, while about 40,000 supported its inclusion.

In a 3-2 vote, the EEOC ultimately adopted new rules that included abortion care in its definition of conditions covered under the law. The rules are set to go into effect June 18.

But in April, a week after the EEOC announced its final rules, the 17-state coalition of GOP attorneys general argued in its lawsuit that the agency's "erroneous interpretation" of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act creates an "abortion accommodation mandate."

"When the law was passed by Congress, it was explicitly understood not to address abortion at all, and the text of the statute does not address abortion," said Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti, who is co-leading the lawsuit with Arkansas' Griffin.

Skrmetti and the other Republican attorneys general point to comments made by lawmakers during debate on the measure that appear to signal Congress' intent was not to impose abortion-related requirements in states where those abortions would be illegal.

Pennsylvania Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, who sponsored the pregnant workers bill, said during debate that the EEOC "could not issue any regulation that requires abortion leave, nor does the act permit

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the EEOC to require employers to provide abortions in violation of state law.”

The 15 other states joining the lawsuit are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia.

More states have jumped into the fray. In mid-May, Louisiana’s and Mississippi’s attorneys general, both Republicans, filed their own lawsuit challenging the same provision.

And in February, a federal judge in Texas blocked the EEOC from accepting complaints filed by Texas state employees under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. It was a win for Texas Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton, who had sued the Biden administration last year.

## Protections at risk

Skrmetti, the Tennessee attorney general, believes the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a good law.

“It was passed with a degree of bipartisanship that you rarely see,” he told Stateline, “and it undermines the efforts of Congress and the popular will when agencies take laws and change them without the authority of the people’s representatives.”

But Gedmark, of A Better Balance, said decades of legal precedent support including abortion as a related medical condition for pregnant workers. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, a federal law passed in 1978, prohibits sex discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions — a definition that the EEOC has long interpreted to include abortion.

Proponents of the new Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and the EEOC’s rules worry the lawsuits will sow confusion among employers and employees. There’s concern, Gedmark said, that a court could render more of the regulations invalid, beyond those that mention abortion.

Skrmetti doesn’t think the 17-state lawsuit will hurt the law’s protections for pregnant, postpartum and lactating workers.

“The optimal outcome would be for the abortion-related pieces of the rule that aren’t supported by the statute to be vacated,” he said. “But the law remains the law regardless of what the [EEOC’s] rules are.”

While states and the feds clash in court, Jackson said she’s focused on making sure as many women as possible know about their new rights.

Whenever she’s out shopping and spots a pregnant store employee, she asks how they’re doing. She asks if they know about their workplace rights, and how to ask their employers for the accommodations they need.

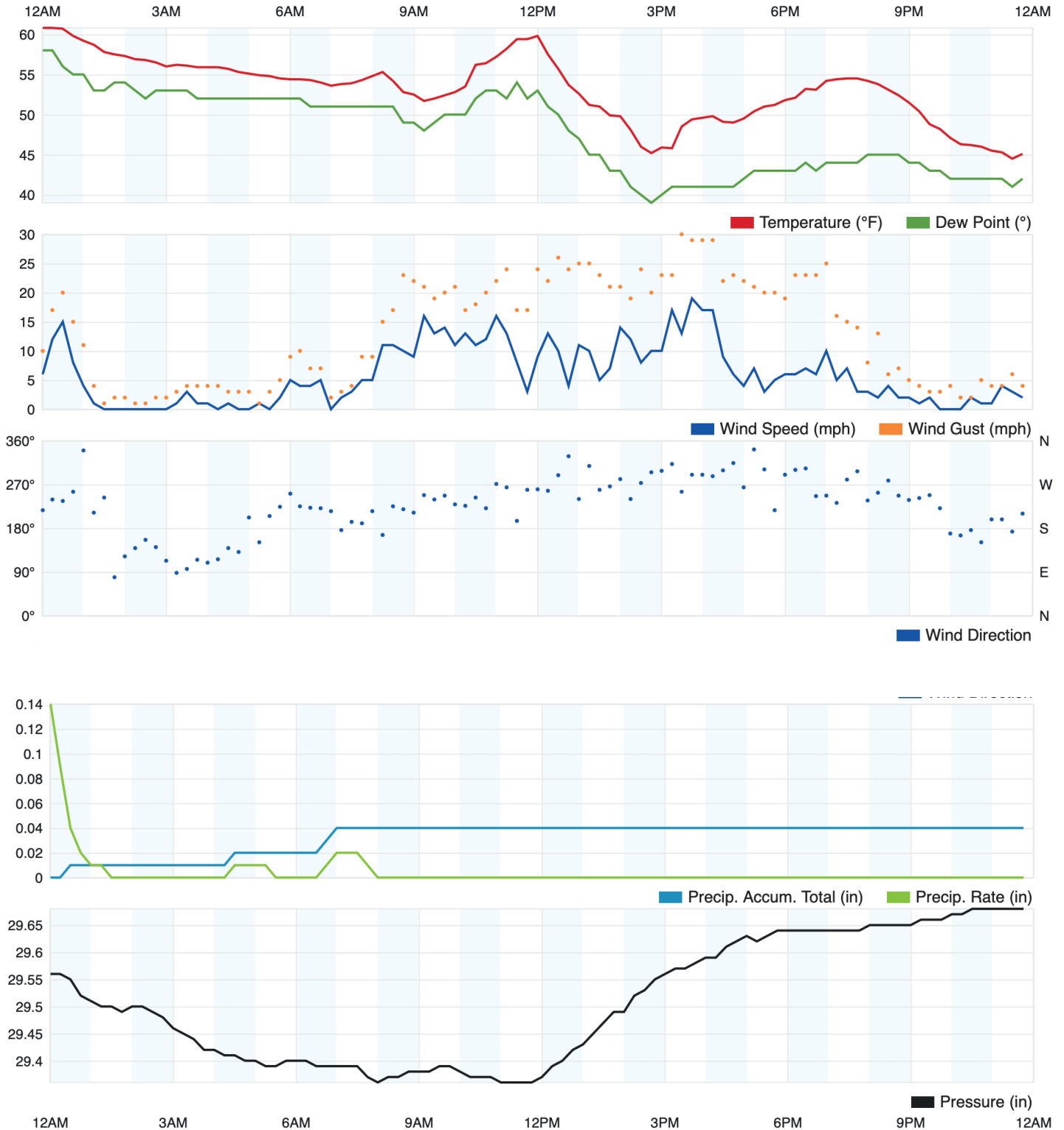
“Whether a mother decides to have an abortion or not, she still needs medical care after the procedure, the same as she would need medical care if she had a miscarriage or regular childbirth,” Jackson said. “I believe that employers need to know the difference between personal [ideology] and business.”

*Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 72 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 45 °F

Partly Cloudy

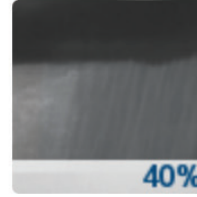
Sunday



High: 73 °F

Mostly Sunny

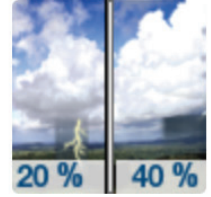
Sunday Night



Low: 49 °F

Chance Showers

Memorial Day



High: 69 °F

Slight Chance T-storms then Chance Showers

## Through the Holiday Weekend

Today



Highs: 67-75°F

Sct. T-Storms  
Late Afternoon  
& Early Evening

Tonight



Lows: 44-50°F

Sct. T-Storms  
Ending

Sunday



Highs: 67-74°F

Sct. T-Storms  
Afternoon &  
Evening

Monday



Highs: 63-72°F

Sct. T-Storms  
Afternoon &  
Evening



Aberdeen, SD

A cool and dry start to the weekend will eventually give way to thickening clouds and a chance for showers and thunderstorms developing by late afternoon. Best chances will be across south central SD northeastward toward portions of northeast SD and west central MN. A break in the rainfall will be possible overnight with additional chances for more showers and storms both Sunday afternoon and evening and Monday.

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## Strong To Severe Storms Possible Later Today

May 25, 2024  
5:49 AM

Late afternoon into the evening

### Timing/Location

- Marginal Risk (1/5) for strong to severe storms (20-45%) southeast of a line from Murdo to Fort Thompson
- Between 5:00-9:00 PM CDT



### Tornado Potential

<b>Very Low</b>	Low	Medium	High
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### Max Hail Size

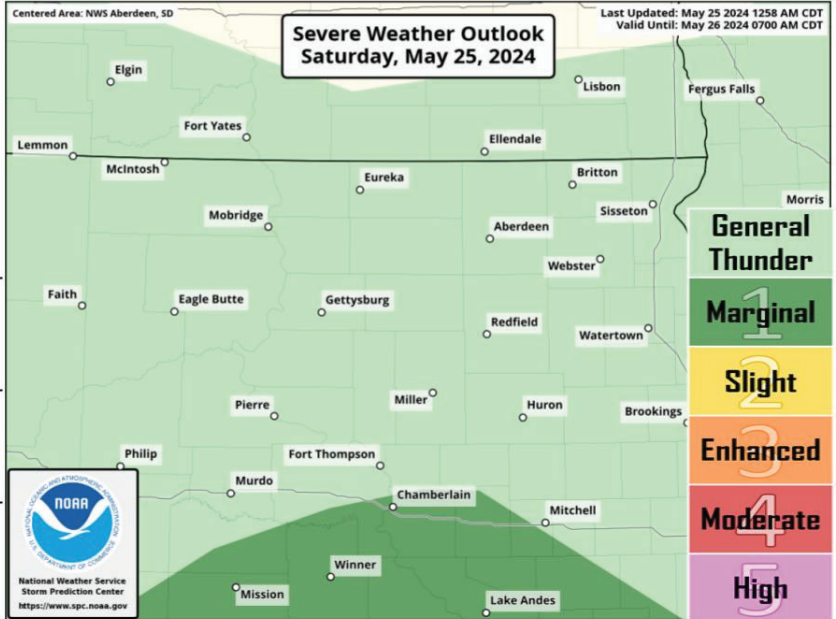
Dimes	<b>Quarters</b>	Golfball	Baseball
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### Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph	<b>60-70 mph</b>	70-80 mph	> 80mph
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### Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

<b>Very Low</b>	Low	Medium	High
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National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The Storm Prediction Center has highlighted portions of south central South Dakota for a risk for strong to severe thunderstorms late this afternoon into this evening. Large hail will be the primary threats along with localized strong winds.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 61 °F at 12:19 AM

Low Temp: 45 °F at 11:28 PM

Wind: 30 mph at 3:31 PM

Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 15 hours, 17 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 2018

Record Low: 29 in 1924

Average High: 74

Average Low: 48

Average Precip in May.: 2.70

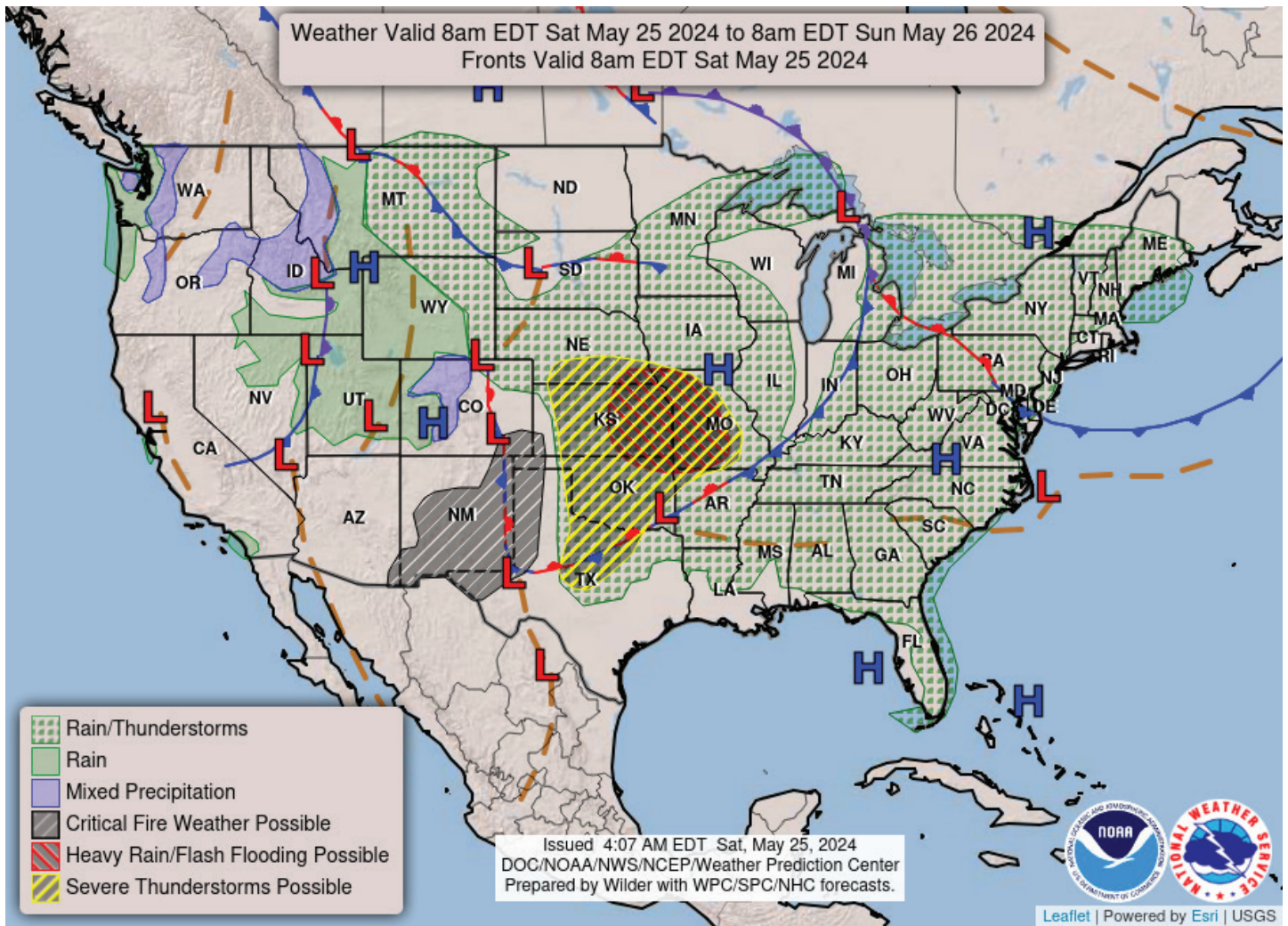
Precip to date in May: 2.07

Average Precip to date: 6.67

Precip Year to Date: 6.61

Sunset Tonight: 9:08:13 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49:36 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 25, 1880: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the town of Mitchell. Two men were killed when they ran out the back door of a saloon to reach the cellar entrance. The caulk stone saloon was destroyed along with two homes and several businesses. This tornado was one of the first significant tornadoes on record for the state of South Dakota.

May 25, 1985: During the afternoon hours, thunderstorms developed along the east side of the Black Hills. The storms produced quite a bit of lightning and over the course of 2 hours started 18 small fires in the Black Hills. Fortunately, most of the fires were small and quickly contained. One unfortunate firefighter was struck by lightning as he was helping to extinguish a blaze that burned some 50 acres of grassland and forest. Thankfully, the man lived, but he did suffer several broken bones, burns, and major damage to his ears. The strike was so powerful that a man standing over 150 feet away was dropped to his knees.

1896: An estimated F5 tornado hit Oakwood, Ortonville, and Thomas, Michigan. Forty-seven people were killed, and 100 were injured. Trees were debarked "even to the twigs, as though done by the careful hand of an experienced artisan." Parts of houses were found up to 12 miles away.

1917 - A tornado ripped through southeast Kansas, traveling 65 mph. The average speed was a record for any tornado. (The Weather Channel)

1955: An estimated F5 tornado moved north and NNW through the heart of Blackwell, Oklahoma. About 400 homes were destroyed, and many were leveled and swept away. About 500 other homes were damaged. The tornado dissipated just over the Kansas border, as the Udall, Kansas tornado was forming to the east. The Blackwell tornado was accompanied by unusual electrical activity, with up to 25 discharges per second recorded on sferics equipment. The funnel was said to glow and have "arcs" of glowing light. The Udall, Kansas tornado was estimated to be an F5 as well. Over half of the population of Udall was killed or injured as the tornado completely devastated a large portion of town. Seventy-five people were killed, and many of the 270 injuries were serious.

1975: On Raccoon Lake, Indiana, lightning struck the motor of a speedboat and traveled up the control wires, killing the driver. The 38-year-old man was knocked into the water by the bolt. His wife and two children, also in the boat, were not injured.

1987 - Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes in West Texas. One thunderstorm spawned a powerful tornado near Gruver, TX, along with golf ball size hail and 75 mph winds. A man on a boat on Lake Bistineau in northwest Louisiana was struck and killed by lightning, while the other three persons in the boat were unharmed. The man reportedly stood up in the boat and asked to be struck by lightning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the Upper Midwest. Marquette, MI, reported a record low of 26 degrees. Thunderstorms in the north central U.S. produced wind gusts to 62 mph at Idaho Falls, ID, and produced 4 inches of rain in less than four hours in northern Buffalo County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a strong cold front produced severe weather from Oklahoma to Ohio through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned nine tornadoes, and there were 155 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Hail three and a half inches in diameter was reported at Dittmer, MO, and thunderstorm winds gusting to 90 MPH caused twenty million dollars damage at Rockville IN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A rare, large and destructive EF5 tornado created a 43-mile long path across Butler and Black Hawk counties in Iowa. This tornado killed eight people, injured dozens and caused several millions of dollars in damage. The tornado was nearly three-quarters of a mile wide as it moved through the southern end of Parkersburg. A third of the town was affected by devastating damage with nearly 200 homes destroyed. This storm produced the first EF5 tornado in Iowa since 6/13/1976 and only the third EF5 tornado to occur in the United States in the past ten years.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE TYPEWRITER

C.L. Sholes enjoyed building things. He spent many hours alone trying to make life better through his inventions. One of his serious ambitions was to make a machine that would print his thoughts faster than he could write them. From this desire came the typewriter.

He worked on this "machine" for years. At the end of the Civil War, he made an agreement with Remington and Sons to manufacture 1,000 typewriters. They were to sell for \$125.00 each. But the people who bought them and the people who tried them out were not impressed. In fact, the company was about to go bankrupt in 1880.

Then one of their salesmen thought of the business community. He reasoned that if the people who wrote important letters could do it faster and neater it would make businesses more profitable. He was right! In six years nearly every business office that could afford a typewriter had a typewriter.

The Psalmist said, "Happy are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord." Our God is the God of hope and help. What more is there?

Often we have what it takes to make a difference in our life and in the lives of others. We try but nothing happens. But when we offer whatever we have to God and ask Him to bless it for His good, we can count on His help and hope that He will reward us with His blessings.

Prayer: Lord, may we use every gift and talent You have given us to honor You. May the work of our hands and the desires of our hearts bring goodness to all. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Happy are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord. Psalm 146:5



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:  
05.24.24

46 54 56 67 70 16

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$489,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 15 Hrs 37 Mins 59  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.24.24

13 17 24 29 33 7

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 52 Mins 59  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.22.24

13 24 25 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$113,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 52 Mins 58  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.22.24

10 12 19 21 67 25

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 21 Mins 58  
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: 16 Hrs 21 Mins 59  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Pronouns and tribal affiliations are now forbidden in South Dakota public university employee emails**

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

A new South Dakota policy to stop the use of gender pronouns by public university faculty and staff in official correspondence is also keeping Native American employees from listing their tribal affiliations in a state with a long and violent history of conflict with tribes.

Two University of South Dakota faculty members, Megan Red Shirt-Shaw and her husband, John Little, have long included their gender pronouns and tribal affiliations in their work email signature blocks. But both received written warnings from the university in March that doing so violated a policy adopted in December by the South Dakota Board of Regents.

"I was told that I had 5 days to remove my tribal affiliation and pronouns," Little said in an email to The Associated Press. "I believe the exact wording was that I had '5 days to correct the behavior.' If my tribal affiliation and pronouns were not removed after the 5 days, then administrators would meet and make a decision whether I would be suspended (with or without pay) and/or immediately terminated."

The policy is billed by the board as a simple branding and communications policy. It came only months after Republican Gov. Kristi Noem sent a letter to the regents that railed against "liberal ideologies" on college campuses and called for the board to ban drag shows on campus and "remove all references to preferred pronouns in school materials," among other things.

All nine voting members of the board were appointed by Noem, whose remarks in March accusing tribal leaders of benefitting from illegal drug cartels and not properly caring for children has prompted most South Dakota tribes to ban her from their land.

South Dakota's change comes in the midst of a conservative quest to limit diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives gaining momentum in state capitals and college governing boards around the country, with about one-third of the states taking some sort of action against it.

Policies targeting gender pronoun use have focused mainly on K-12 students, although some small religious colleges have also restricted pronoun use. Houghton University in western New York fired two dorm directors last year after they refused to remove gender pronouns from their work email signatures.

But some fear the South Dakota policy could signify a creep of such efforts into public colleges and universities.

"Quite frankly, this is the first I've heard of a state university choosing to use branding standards to eliminate what obviously had become a practice of including pronouns and tribal affiliations to emails," said Paulette Grandberry Russell, president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. "But I'm not surprised, given the current climate we're in."

Grandberry Russell referred to the conservative push limiting transgender rights and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts as a "testing ground" to see if discriminatory laws will be tolerated.

"It is a steady progression," she said. "This comes in the form of communications and branding standards. Is that going to be the next frontier in sanitizing the realities of our differences?"

The college faculty advocacy group American Association of University Professors is not aware of any other faculty at a public university in the U.S. being required to drop their preferred pronouns in official correspondence, spokesman Kelly Benjamin said.

"Anecdotally I'll say, because I live in Florida and have seen what's happened with all the anti-wokeness and targeting of education here, I know this is part and parcel to a longer-term agenda," Benjamin said.

A spokeswoman for the University of South Dakota declined to answer questions about whether its administrators or the University Faculty Senate had been consulted before regents adopted the policy, referring questions to the Board of Regents.

Shuree Mortenson, a spokeswoman for the regents, said all six universities under the regents board



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umbrella were given the opportunity to review the policy, "but ultimately, the Board of Regents made this decision." She declined to say whether other faculty at any of the five other schools had received warnings about not using gender pronouns, tribal affiliation or other identifiers, but defended the new policy as providing "consistency to safeguard the brand."

Mortenson did not answer questions about whether the inclusion of tribal affiliation in official public university signature blocks had been considered by the regents before adopting it or whether tribal leaders in the state had been consulted.

When the policy was announced to faculty in January, Little said he and Red Shirt-Shaw asked schools administrators how the new policy would impact the inclusion of tribal affiliations.

"It was clear that they had not considered that this would impact Native employees," Little said.

The U.S. had long tried to eradicate Native American communities and cultures through warfare, assimilation and other means before recognizing tribes' inherent right to govern themselves. Indigenous children, for example, were taken from their communities and forced into Native American boarding schools, which systematically abused students.

Red Shirt-Shaw said in social media posts that being told she could not list her tribal affiliation as part of her signature felt like further erasure of Native people in South Dakota.

"The ability to share my tribal affiliation as well as gender pronouns signals that I am a person who values the lived experiences of others," she said.

Both she and Little have begun listing their tribal affiliation and pronouns in the body of their emails, which the university currently is allowing.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota said it has heard from faculty and students at the University of South Dakota who are concerned about the new policy. The ACLU is considering next steps to address it.

"Maybe their intent was to suppress pronoun usage in email signatures, but as is often the case with any limitation or suppression of free speech, there's always unintended consequences," said Samantha Chapman, an advocacy manager for the ACLU South Dakota. "There is also a component here of double erasure. There are plenty of queer Indigenous folks in South Dakota." \_\_\_\_\_

Associated Press journalist Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona, contributed to this report.

## Millions vote in India's grueling election with Prime Minister Modi's party likely to win a 3rd term

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Millions of Indians are voting Saturday in the next-to-last round of a grueling national election with a combined opposition trying to rattle Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign for a third-consecutive term for himself and his Hindu nationalist party.

Many people lined polling stations before the start of voting at 7 a.m. to avoid the blazing sun later in the day at the peak of Indian summer. The temperature soared to 43 Celsius (109.4 Fahrenheit) in the afternoon in the Indian capital.

Lakshmi Bansal, a housewife, said while the weather was hot, people usually went out to shop and even attended festivals in such heat.

"This (election) is also like a festival, so I don't have a problem voting in the heat," Bansal said.

Saturday's voting in 58 constituencies, including seven in New Delhi, will complete polling for 89.5% of 543 seats in the lower house of Parliament.

The voting for the remaining 57 seats on June 1 will wrap up a six-week election. The votes will be counted on June 4.

President Droupadi Murmu and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar were among the early voters. Opposition Congress party leaders, Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi, also voted in New Delhi.

Mehbooba Mufti, a former top elected official of Indian-controlled Kashmir, held a protest with her supporters Saturday claiming that scores of her party workers were detained by the police to prevent them

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from voting. Mufti, the chief of the People's Democratic Party who is contesting the parliamentary election in the Anantnag-Rajouri district, said she complained to election officials.

In West Bengal state, workers belonging to the All India Trinamool Congress party, blocked the car of Agnimitra Paul, one of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party candidates, as she proceeded to vote in the Medinipur constituency. The two parties are rivals in the state and their workers often clash on the streets.

This election is considered one of the most consequential in India's history and will test Modi's political dominance. If Modi wins, he'll be only the second Indian leader to retain power for a third term, after Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister.

A less-than-expected voter turnout in the previous five rounds of voting seems to have left both sides guessing about the elections' outcome.

Election authorities said they are taking steps to ensure voters' comfort, such as setting up fans and tents and providing drinking water.

Most polls predict a win for Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which is up against a broad opposition alliance led by the Indian National Congress and powerful regional parties.

Modi was involved in a highly acrimonious and mudslinging campaign with the opposition, led by Rahul Gandhi, the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family that has produced three prime ministers.

"When the polls began it felt like a one-horse race, with Modi leading from the front. But now we are seeing some kind of shift," political analyst Rasheed Kidwai said. "The opposition is doing better than expected and it appears that Modi's party is rattled. That's the reason you see Modi ramping up anti-Muslim rhetoric to polarize voters."

Kidwai said the opposition has challenged Modi by centering its campaign narrative on social justice and rising unemployment, making the contest closer than expected.

Modi ran his campaign like a presidential race, a referendum on his 10 years of rule. He claimed to help the poorest with charity, free health care, providing toilets in their homes, and helping women get free or cheap cooking gas cylinders.

But he changed tack after a poor turnout of voters in the first round of the election and began stirring Hindu nationalism by accusing the Congress party of pandering to minority Muslims for votes.

Hindus account for 80%, and Muslims nearly 14%, of India's over 1.4 billion people.

Manish Bhatia, a New Delhi voter, said that "politics on the basis of caste and religion is dangerous for the country," adding that voting should be based on how candidates perform.

Nearly 970 million voters — more than 10% of the world's population — were eligible to elect 543 members to the lower house of Parliament for five years.

Voters' relative apathy has surprised some political analysts. In the five rounds of polling, the voter turnout ranged between 62.2% to 69.16% — averaging 65.9%. By comparison, India's 2019 national election registered the highest-ever voter turnout — 67.11%. Modi's BJP won 303 seats in parliament in 2019.

Modi's inauguration of a massive Hindu temple for the most revered Lord Rama, his massive roadshows, and big public rallies raised the BJP's hopes of a massive surge in voters' support.

The current prime minister came to power in 2014, dislodging the Congress party that governed the country for nearly 55 years after India won independence from British colonialists in 1947.

Before the election, the opposition INDIA alliance was seen bickering, but it has since held together, particularly after two chief ministers of two opposition-controlled states were sent to jail on corruption charges. Both deny the accusations.

One of them — New Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal — has since been released on bail and returned to the campaign trail.

In March, Gandhi completed a 6,713-kilometer (4,171-mile) walk across the country, starting in the violence-hit northeastern state of Manipur, to raise awareness on issues of poverty, unemployment, and democracy with voters.

"The walk helped Gandhi boost his image as a serious politician among the voters, and that is helping the opposition," Kidwai, the political analyst, said.

## **Egypt agrees to send aid trucks through Israeli crossing to Gaza but impact is unclear**

By SAM MEDNICK, LEE KEATH and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Egypt said Friday it has agreed to send United Nations humanitarian aid trucks through Israel's main crossing into Gaza, but it was unclear if they will be able to enter the territory as fighting raged in the southern city of Rafah amid Israel's escalating offensive there.

Meanwhile, the bodies of three more hostages killed on Oct. 7 were recovered overnight from Gaza, Israel's army said Friday. The CIA chief met in Paris with Israeli and Qatari officials, trying to revive negotiations for a cease-fire and a hostage release.

Gaza's humanitarian crisis has spiraled as the U.N. and other aid agencies say the entry of food and other supplies to them has plunged dramatically since Israel's Rafah offensive began more than two weeks ago. On Friday, the top U.N. court — the International Court of Justice — ordered Israel to halt the Rafah offensive, though Israel is unlikely to comply.

At the heart of the problem lie the two main crossings through which around 300 trucks of aid a day had been flowing into Gaza before the offensive began.

Israeli troops seized the Rafah crossing into Egypt, which has been inoperative since. The nearby Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza has remained open, and Israel says it has been sending hundreds of trucks a day into it. But while commercial trucks have successfully crossed, the U.N. says it cannot reach Kerem Shalom to pick up aid as it enters because fighting in the area makes it too dangerous.

As a result, the U.N. says it has received only 143 trucks from the crossing in the past 19 days. Hundreds of truckloads have been sitting on the Gaza side of the crossing unretrieved, according to Israeli officials, who say U.N. manpower limitations are to blame. U.N. and other aid agencies had to rely on the far smaller number of trucks entering daily from a single crossing in northern Gaza and via a U.S.-built pier bringing supplies by sea.

Humanitarian groups are scrambling to get food to Palestinians as some 900,000 people flee Rafah, scattering across central and southern Gaza. Aid workers warn Gaza is near famine. UNRWA, the main U.N. agency in the humanitarian effort, had to halt food distribution in Rafah city because it had run out of supplies.

The Egyptian announcement appeared to resolve a political obstacle on one side of the border.

Israel says it has kept the Rafah crossing open and asked Egypt to coordinate with it on sending aid convoys through it. Egypt refused, fearing the Israeli hold will remain permanent, and demanded Palestinians be put back in charge of the facility. The White House has been pressing Egypt to resume the flow of trucks.

In a phone call with U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi agreed to allow trucks carrying humanitarian aid and fuel to go to the Kerem Shalom crossing until a solution is found for the Rafah crossing, el-Sissi's office said in a statement.

But it remained unclear whether the U.N. will be able to access additional trucks coming from Egypt.

UNRWA did not immediately reply to requests for comment. In a post on social media outlet X on Thursday, it said, "We could resume (food distribution in Rafah) tomorrow if the crossing reopened & we were provided with safe routes."

Mercy Corps, an aid group operating in Gaza, said in a statement Friday that the offensive had caused the "functional closure ... of the two main lifelines" of aid and "has brought the humanitarian system to its knees."

"If dramatic changes do not occur, including opening all border crossings to safely surge aid into these areas, we fear that a wave of secondary mortality will result, with people succumbing to the combination of hunger, lack of clean water and sanitation, and the spread of disease in areas where there is little medical care," it said.

Fighting appeared to escalate in Rafah. Bombardment intensified Friday in eastern parts of the city, near Kerem Shalom, but shelling was also taking place in central, southern and western districts closer to the

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Rafah crossing, witnesses said.

Israeli leaders have said they must uproot Hamas fighters from Rafah to complete the destruction of the group after its Oct. 7 attack.

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's campaign of bombardment and offensives in Gaza has killed more than 35,800 Palestinians and wounded more than 80,200, the Gaza Health Ministry said Friday. Its count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The Israeli military said its troops overnight found the bodies of three people killed in the Oct. 7 attack and subsequently taken into Gaza and counted among the hostages.

The bodies of Hanan Yablonka, Michel Nisenbaum, and Orion Hernandez Radoux were found in the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, where Israeli troops have been fighting for the past week with Hamas militants, the military said.

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

Nisenbaum, 59, was a Brazilian-Israeli from the southern city of Sderot. He was killed in his car as he went to get his 4-year-old granddaughter from a site near Gaza that came under attack by the militants.

Oryon Hernandez Radoux, 30, and Yablonka, 42, a father of two, were both killed as they tried to escape the Nova music festival, where the attackers killed hundreds of people. Hernandez Radoux had been attending the festival with his partner, German-Israeli Shani Louk, whose body was among those found by the army earlier.

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.

The group representing the families of the hostages said the bodies had been returned to their families for burial. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the country had a duty to do everything to return those abducted, both those killed and those who are alive.

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

CIA Director Bill Burns was meeting in Paris on Friday with Israeli and Qatari officials in informal talks aimed at getting hostage and cease-fire negotiations back on track, a U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive discussions. Burns is in close contact with Egyptian officials, who like the Qataris have acted as mediators with Hamas, the U.S. official said.

Cease-fire talks ground to a halt at the beginning of the month after a major push by the U.S. and other mediators to secure a deal, in hopes of averting a planned Israeli invasion of the southern city of Rafah. The talks were stymied by a central sticking point: Hamas demands guarantees that the war will end and Israeli troops will withdraw from Gaza completely in return for a release of all the hostages, a demand Israel rejects.

## **It's possible no party will get a majority in South Africa's election. Here's what that would mean**

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — The focus for South Africa's national election next week is on the fate of the African National Congress party and whether it is going to lose its parliamentary majority for the first time, as many expect.

Several polls put the ANC's support below 50% ahead of Wednesday's vote, raising the prospect that it might not be the majority party for the first time since winning control of the government when Nelson Mandela led it to victory in the first all-race elections that ended white minority rule in 1994.

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But the ANC is still widely expected to be the biggest party.

Here's how no clear majority would bring an unprecedented political change and complicate how the president is elected and how the government works in Africa's most advanced economy:

## ELECTING THE PRESIDENT

The most immediate impact if there is no party with a majority would be on how the president is chosen and if ANC leader and current President Cyril Ramaphosa is reelected for a second and final five-year term.

The president is the head of state and has executive powers, but South Africans don't vote directly for the president in a national election, rather casting ballots for political parties. Those parties get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote. Lawmakers then elect the president in the first sitting of the legislature after the election.

The vote occurs in the lower house of Parliament, known as the National Assembly, and it needs at least 201 votes from its 400 lawmakers to elect a president. The ANC has always had a majority in Parliament since 1994 and so the president has always been from the ANC.

Without a majority, the ANC would need a coalition or agreement with another party or other parties to get Ramaphosa reelected. The president could even come from another, smaller party if that's the agreement, although that's very unlikely.

## NATIONAL COALITION

The word coalition makes South Africans nervous after a series of them at local government level have been spectacular failures, including in Johannesburg, the biggest city and economic hub. There, the collapse of numerous agreements between parties has led to major problems in running the city's services. Other towns and cities have had similar experiences, including the administrative capital, Pretoria.

But a national coalition government of some sort is a real possibility as a result of the ANC's declining support and would be uncharted waters for South Africa.

While a coalition might be a reflection of the democratic will of the people, some analysts say it could also be bad for South Africa's economy. It increases the chances of government instability and could lead to muddled policy, putting off foreign business investment at a time when South Africa desperately needs that.

## SMALL PARTIES, BIG SAY

There has been no indication of who the ANC might approach as a coalition partner and, for now, all options appear to be on the table. The ANC has maintained during election campaigning that it is not thinking about coalitions and is focused on retaining its majority.

Should the predictions hold and the ANC loses its majority, it could go straight to the official opposition Democratic Alliance party for a coalition. It's unclear if that's feasible as the DA has been so critical of the ANC and Ramaphosa, as have the two other main parties.

Instead, the ANC may go to a number of smaller parties with small shares of the vote to put together a coalition that would take their combined share to over 50% and allow a government to be formed.

There are dozens of parties contesting the election, many of them new and some expected to get just a few percent of the vote, but they could suddenly have a big say in South African politics. Those smaller parties would want something in return, whether Cabinet positions, some input on policy or even control of entire government departments.

## ANOTHER OPTION

Some South African political commentators have started to speak about a possible government of national unity in a kind of repeat of what happened just after the apartheid system of white minority rule ended 30 years ago. Then, Mandela invited other major parties into his government to seek some unity as South Africa took its first, uncertain steps as a democracy and went about writing a new constitution.

It was an act of reconciliation in bringing a fractured country together, though others have doubted it would work for South Africa now. For one thing, if all the major political parties were part of the government, who would hold it to account?

## Emergency convoy takes provisions to survivors of devastating landslide in Papua New Guinea

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — An emergency convoy was delivering food, water and other provisions Saturday to stunned survivors of a landslide that devastated a remote village in the mountains of Papua New Guinea and was feared to have buried scores of people, officials said.

An assessment team reported "suggestions" that 100 people were dead and 60 houses buried by the mountainside that collapsed in Enga province a few hours before dawn Friday, said Serhan Aktoprak, the chief of the International Organization for Migration's mission in the South Pacific island nation.

Aktoprak conceded that if the number of buried houses estimated by local authorities was correct, the death toll could be higher.

"The scale is so big, I wouldn't be surprised if there would be more casualties than the earlier reported 100," Aktoprak said. "If 60 houses had been destroyed, then the number of casualties would definitely be much higher than the 100."

Only three bodies had been recovered by early Saturday from the vast swath of earth, boulders and splintered trees that struck Yambali, a village of nearly 4,000 people that is 600 kilometers (370 miles) northwest of the capital, Port Moresby.

Medical treatment was provided to seven people, including a child, Aktoprak said. He had no information about the extent of their injuries.

"It is feared that the number of casualties and wounded will increase dramatically," said Aktoprak, who is based in Port Moresby.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said Friday he would release information about the scale of the destruction and loss of life when it becomes available.

All food gardens that sustain the village's subsistence farming population were destroyed and the three streams that provide drinking water were buried by the landslide, which also blocked the province's main highway.

A convoy left the provincial capital of Wabag carrying food, water and other essentials to the devastated village 60 kilometers (35 miles) away, Aktoprak said.

Village local Andrew Ruing said the survivors were in desperate need.

"People — they cannot cry or they cannot do anything, because it's difficult for them," Ruing said in a video shown by Australian Broadcasting Corp. "Because such a situation has never happened in history. And therefore, we are calling on the national government, the people on the ground, or the business houses, the heights from everywhere, anywhere — we are seeking assistance from."

Aktoprak said that besides food and water, the villagers had an urgent need for shelters and blankets. Relief would be targeted to the most vulnerable, including children, women, and disabled and older people, he said.

The relief effort was delayed by the landslide closing the province's main highway, which serves the Porgera Gold Mine and the neighboring town of Porgera.

The landslide debris, 6 to 8 meters (20 to 26 feet) deep, also knocked out power in the region, Aktoprak said.

The unstable soil posed risks to the relief effort as well as to communities downhill.

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 the most populous South Pacific nation after Australia, which is home to around 27 million.

The United States and Australia are building closer defense ties with the strategically important nation, where China is seeking closer security and economic ties.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said their governments stood ready to help respond to the landslide.

Biden, who was to become the first sitting U.S. president to visit Papua New Guinea a year ago but canceled the trip to focus on a debt crisis in Congress, said he was heartbroken by the loss of life and devastation.

"Our prayers are with all the families impacted by this tragedy and all the first responders who are putting themselves in harm's way to help their fellow citizens," Biden said in a statement.

"The United States stands with Papua New Guinea — our close partner and friend — today and always," Biden added.

Albanese posted on the social media platform X: "All Australians grieve for our brothers and sisters in Papua New Guinea after the terrible landslide."

Australia is Papua New Guinea's near neighbor and most generous provider of foreign aid.

## What we know about the young missionaries and religious leader killed in Haiti

By DÁNICA COTO and JIM SALTER Associated Press

The local director of a mission group in Haiti and a missionary couple from the U.S. were attacked and fatally shot by gang members after leaving a youth group activity at a church, a family member told The Associated Press.

Thursday's slayings of Jude Montis, the local director of Missions in Haiti Inc., and Davy and Natalie Lloyd, a young married couple from the U.S., happened in the community of Lizon in northern Port-au-Prince. They were killed as the capital crumbles under the relentless assault of violent gangs that control 80% of the capital city while authorities await the arrival of a police force from Kenya as part of a U.N.-backed deployment aimed at quelling gang violence in the troubled Caribbean country.

Here are some things to know about the missionary work that focused on helping the children of Haiti, and the gang attack that took three lives.

### WORKING IN HAITI

Missions in Haiti's website says its goal is "to see the Gospel of Christ make a difference in the lives of Haiti's young people."

Davy Lloyd's parents, David and Alicia Lloyd of Oklahoma, started the organization in 2000 with the aim of focusing on the children of Haiti. David and Alicia Lloyd are full-time missionaries in Haiti.

"Although the entire nation is steeped in poverty, the children suffer the worst," they wrote on the website. "Thousands are malnourished, uneducated, and headed for hopeless lives apart from Christ."

Hannah Cornett, Davy's sister, told The Associated Press that they grew up in Haiti. Davy Lloyd went to the U.S. to attend a Bible college and married Natalie in June 2022. After the wedding, the couple wasted little time moving to Haiti to do humanitarian work.

Cornett said Montis, a Haitian, had worked at Missions in Haiti for 20 years.

The organization's efforts include House of Compassion, which provides housing for 36 children — 18 boys and 18 girls, the website said. "All are destined to stay at House of Compassion until they have finished school and are ready to be on their own."

Good Hope Boys' Home provides a home for 22 boys, the website said. The organization also built a church, a bakery and a school with more than 240 students, the website said.

### THE ATTACK

A Facebook posting on the Missions in Haiti page stated that Davy Lloyd, 23, and Natalie Lloyd, 21, along with some children, were leaving a church when gang members in three trucks ambushed them.

Davy Lloyd later called his family to tell them that gang members hit him on the head with the barrel of a gun, forced him upstairs, stole their belongings and left him tied up, Cornett said.

As people were helping untie Davy Lloyd, another group of armed gunmen showed up, Cornett said.

"No one understood what they were doing, not sure what took place but one was shot and killed and now this gang went into full attack mode," Missions in Haiti's posting said.

The couple and Montis fled to a house connected to the mission.

"They tried to take cover in there, but the gang shot up the house," said Cornett.

Ben Baker, Natalie Lloyd's father and a Republican state representative in Missouri, posted on Facebook on Friday that the bodies of Davy and Natalie Lloyd were safely transported to the U.S. Embassy.

## GRIEVING FAMILIES

Cornett said Montis left behind two children, ages 2 and 6.

Montis' family could not immediately be reached for comment Friday. It's unclear if he used social media and, if so, whether his profiles are public. Missions in Haiti did not immediately return the AP's request for comment Friday.

Baker wrote on Facebook that his heart was broken "in a thousand pieces."

"I've never felt this kind of pain," Baker wrote. "Most of you know my daughter and son-in-law Davy and Natalie Lloyd are full time missionaries in Haiti. They were attacked by gangs this evening and were both killed. They went to Heaven together. Please pray for my family we desperately need strength. And please pray for the Lloyd family as well. I have no other words for now."

## UN court order demanding Israel to halt Gaza offensive further isolates US position

By ERIC TUCKER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A ruling by the top United Nations court ordering Israel to halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has deepened its disconnect with the United States over an operation that faces mounting international condemnation but that American officials describe, at least for now, as limited and targeted.

The decision Friday by the International Court of Justice in The Hague adds to the pressure facing an increasingly isolated Israel, coming just days after Norway, Ireland and Spain said they would recognize a Palestinian state, and the chief prosecutor of a separate international court sought arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as leaders of Hamas.

The Biden administration stands apart from the global community — though it is opposed to a major offensive in Rafah, the administration also insists that the steps its close ally Israel has taken so far have not crossed red lines.

Administration officials so far have appeared determined to press on with military and political support for Israel following the deadly Hamas attack it endured last October, while also pressuring its ally to avoid a full-scale military operation in densely populated Rafah.

"What we have seen so far in terms of Israel's military operations in that area has been more targeted and limited, has not involved major military operations into the heart of dense urban areas," national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters at a White House briefing this week.

But, he added, "We now have to see what unfolds from here."

A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the administration's internal assessment of the situation, said the operation in Gaza had "not yet moved into the core heart of Rafah that gets us to the densest of dense areas."

Earlier this month, the White House announced it was pausing a shipment of some 3,500 bombs, including massive 2,000-pound explosives that the Biden administration said were leading to civilian deaths. President Joe Biden warned during a CNN interview that "if they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah."

U.S. officials in pressuring Israel had suggested that a major operation was a red line that would undermine stalled negotiations on a deal to return Israeli hostages taken by Hamas and would lead Biden to further dial back what weaponry he would send Israel.

But the tone at the White House seemed to take a notable shift this week after Sullivan returned from a visit to Israel, where he said he had been briefed on "refinements" in the Israeli plan to root out Hamas in Rafah, and to Saudi Arabia.



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During Sullivan's talks with Netanyahu and other officials during the trip, the Israeli side addressed many of Biden's concerns about its plans for Rafah, according to a senior administration official who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The official said the administration stopped short of greenlighting the Israeli plan but Israeli officials' altered planning suggested they were taking Biden's concerns seriously.

That assessment may be of little consolation to Palestinians still trapped in Rafah — the southernmost part of the Gaza Strip on the border with Egypt, and the site of a critical crossing for aid. More than 1 million people sought refuge there in recent months after escaping fighting elsewhere but some 900,000 have since fled the city.

Israel has brought hundreds of trucks in through the other main border crossing, Kerem Shalom, but the U.N. and aid groups say Israeli military operations make it dangerous for them to pick up food, water and other supplies for starving Palestinians.

The U.S. Agency for International Development says Gaza requires a steady flow of 600 trucks a day of food and other aid to reverse the onset of what the heads of USAID and the U.N. World Food Program call famine in the north and to keep it from spreading to the south.

Even with a U.S. pier starting to bring in a small amount of aid by sea, Gaza has received only a fraction of the amount of supplies needed since the start of the Israeli offensive.

Leading international humanitarian groups welcomed the ICJ ruling for the pressure they hoped it would bring. Doctors Without Borders said it was confirmation of how "catastrophic" the situation had become for Palestinian civilians in Gaza and "the desperate need for humanitarian aid to be scaled up immediately."

There's no practical mechanism to force Israel to comply with the court order, which, in addition to ordering a halt to the offensive, also mandates an increase of humanitarian aid to the region and access to Gaza for war crimes investigators.

Israel showed no signs that it intended to change course after Friday's ruling. The war in Gaza followed an Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed roughly 1,200 people, about a quarter of them soldiers, with another 250 taken captive. At least 35,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians.

The court's demands go beyond what the U.S. has asked of Israel at the moment, though Washington has nonetheless signaled that it remains opposed to a more intrusive operation in Gaza.

"When it comes to Rafah, we've made known for a long time our concerns about a full-on military assault of Rafah and the damage that that could do to civilian population absent a clear and credible plan to protect it," Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday.

Blinken also reiterated that the administration does not believe a major offensive would achieve the results that Israel is looking to achieve, "which is to deal effectively and durably with Hamas."

"Our concerns about a full-on military assault in Rafah remain," he said. "We have other ways of dealing with the challenge posed by Hamas that we believe can be more effective and more durable."

## Trump TV: Internet broadcaster beams the ex-president's message directly to his MAGA faithful

By RICHARD LARDNER and BILL BARROW Associated Press

OPELIKA, Ala. (AP) — On the second floor of a single-family home in a sprawling suburban development, a three-member production crew sat behind banks of computer monitors and guided the conservative Right Side Broadcasting Network's coverage of a recent Donald Trump rally.

RSBN's show director, whispering into a microphoned headset, instructed the camera operators and on-air correspondent how to shoot the scenes as Trump basked in the crowd's adoration.

Otherwise, the room was quiet. The screens, all muted, were playing live footage of Trump pointing, waving and gesticulating. There was no need for sound — the director and producers have covered so many Trump rallies they seem to instinctively know what he's going to say.

"If you've heard Trump's speeches as often as we have, he does not need to be blaring," said Joe Seales,

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RSBN's founder and CEO.

In less than a decade, RSBN has gone from an upstart internet broadcaster to a major player in Trump's MAGA universe, amassing more than 2 million subscribers on its YouTube channel and on Rumble, an alternative video-sharing platform.

As Trump's loyal herald, carrying his message like a marathoner, live and unfiltered, RSBN has allowed the former Republican president to bypass traditional media and inject his vision for America directly into the veins of his diehard supporters.

The positive coverage has made RSBN a Trump favorite and a destination for his MAGA movement, a reference to the ex-president's "Make America Great Again" slogan. Out of all the conservative news outlets Trump had to choose from, he picked RSBN to host a special in March from his Mar-a-Lago estate on the day before Super Tuesday, when presidential primary voters in 16 states cast their ballots.

And it all started when a freelance website designer with zero media experience had a brainstorm: There was a big audience for Trump TV.

## A BRAINSTORM

Seales was a stay-at-home father in 2015 and was growing annoyed with the coverage of Trump's first run for the White House. The big news networks, he said, refused Trump's pleas to show the size of the crowds he was pulling in. He became convinced there was a sizable audience hungry for a steady diet of Trump's rallies, town halls and other events.

Seales and his wife, a former Navy physician's assistant who co-owns RSBN, started small, with a single camera at a Trump rally in Phoenix. Over the years, they turned a shoestring operation into one with 10 full-time employees and a house full of sophisticated computer and video gear.

Like other broadcasters, most of RSBN's revenue comes from selling ads. The commercials that run on Seales' channel skew to attract consumers of a conservative political inclination.

During a recent rally, a viewer was peppered with ads from the Birch Gold Group urging them to buy precious metals to protect their retirement accounts. "The dollar is going down!" the company warns.

Then came offers for a free "Kids Guide to President Trump," endorsed by former Arkansas Republican Gov. Mike Huckabee.

Prominent election denier and MyPillow founder Mike Lindell smiles broadly in another ad, promising "Up to 80% Off Everything."

RSBN has racked up more than 305 million views on YouTube since it launched. Still, banking on Trump is a risky bet. If he isn't stumping for office, advertising revenue drops. RSBN, Seales said, has only been profitable during presidential election years.

"If Trump's not on the air, we're not making money," he said.

Seales declined to discuss RSBN's finances in detail. But he said a single livestream of a Trump rally can generate as much as \$15,000 for RSBN.

"We're definitely not making tens of millions, I'll say that," Seales said. "We're making enough to get by and to get to each event."

## A PROPAGANDA VIBE

RSBN's broadcasts have the vibe of a state-run propaganda program. But Seales denied the channel acts as a surrogate for Trump or his presidential campaign.

"We aren't affiliated with them," Seales said. "We just cover Donald Trump. Our goal has never been to be an extension or a cheerleader for the Trump campaign. I just saw a void that I thought needed to be filled in coverage for him as a candidate. And we try to cover him as fairly and accurately as possible."

RSBN is also not going to challenge the former president. The channel's mantra is to let Trump be Trump. If he mangles the facts or ignores them altogether, which he does often, Seales said there are other news sites and sources where viewers can fact-check him.

"I don't really feel it's our place to call anyone out," he said. "I like to let people make that decision on their own and to research the facts."

That's not likely, according to Ethan Porter, an associate professor of media and public affairs at George

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Washington University.

He cited a study of the 2016 presidential election that found less than 3% of people who read or heard false or misleading material also saw a corresponding fact check.

"There's no reason to think that number has changed meaningfully since," Porter said. "People exposed to misinformation rarely choose, on their own, to read fact checks."

Jennifer Mercieca, a professor of communications at Texas A&M University and a historian of American political rhetoric, said Trump's MAGA base flocks to RSN because they trust him more than mainstream news organizations.

"RSN is a pro-Trump propaganda channel, not an objective news source," she said. "Avoiding the accountability of the press is great for presidential candidates and presidents, but it's terrible for democracy."

## COVERING A TRUMP RALLY

Seales invited The Associated Press to Opelika to watch coverage of Trump's March 2 rally in Greensboro, North Carolina, and to trail an RSN correspondent who conducted interviews with Trump's faithful supporters outside the arena.

Relaxed and amiable, Seales was hands-off during the rally. He chatted with a reporter as the production crew worked. A devout Christian who plays golf regularly with his pastor, the 43-year-old prefers to stay in the background and leave the on-air reporting and commentary to others.

Seales' reticence is rooted in his childhood. His father, Jim Seales, played guitar for Shenandoah, a Grammy Award-winning country act with a string of No. 1 hits in the 1980 and '90s. He was gone for long stretches, touring with the band.

"I could care less if anybody knows who I am," Seales said. "I know what fame can do. It took a toll on my family, my father."

That's not the case with Seales' on-air talent. His star correspondent, Brian Glenn, walked along the line of attendees in Greensboro that snaked through security barriers and stretched hundreds of yards around the arena.

While reporters from traditional news organizations generally avoid editorializing, Glenn promoted Trump and nodded approvingly as rally-goers spoke highly of the former president.

"Take a look at this line. It is insane!" Glenn said as the camera panned the throngs of people waiting to get in.

"We just got to get President Trump back in office," he said a bit later.

He asked several people why the country needs Trump back in the White House without pushing back as their answers were livestreamed.

"He is a man with morals," said one woman.

A man with "Ultra MAGA" stickers on his jacket told Glenn that Trump would "root the corruption out of the government."

Glenn did not put the comment in context by noting that numerous former Trump administration officials, campaign aides and allies have been charged with crimes. Or that Trump faces dozens of federal and state charges related to hush money payments, the hoarding of classified government documents and a scheme to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Plenty of rally veterans consider Glenn a celebrity of MAGA world. Outside the Greensboro Coliseum, a woman rushed up to hug him. "I watch you on Facebook all the time," she said.

Inside Trump events, RSN has a prime position on the platform used by television networks. Below the platform at the Greensboro rally, a smattering of attendees stood at barriers watching and listening to Glenn's pre-rally chatter as they waited to hear from Trump.

"It is the MAGA network," Glenn told the AP. "If you follow Donald Trump and the America First movement, this is the network for you."

Glenn is on intimate terms with a key member of the MAGA movement. He's dating Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Georgia Republican who is close to Trump. The relationship became a concern for Seales after Glenn kissed Greene on the cheek live on air at the end of an interview. A newly instituted rule prohibits Glenn from interviewing Greene on air, Seales said.

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"I don't like it," Seales said of reporters or media personalities dating members of Congress. "But I'm not going to tell him what he can and can't do in his personal life."

Neither Greene's congressional office nor Glenn responded to requests for comment about their relationship. On a website where Glenn promotes a bottled water called "Freedom20," he wrote next to a photo of himself, Greene and Trump that "Marjorie and I share a personal connection that goes beyond politics."

## HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The Opelika house hasn't always been RSBN's headquarters. Seales moved there for safety and privacy. He asked the AP not to disclose its precise location or to record video of the home.

The channel used to operate out of rented office space in an industrial park with its logo out front. The address was publicly listed, and jobseekers would drop in unannounced. Seales recalled a man once showed up in his pajamas and said he'd dreamed he worked there.

Far more troubling, Seales said, were threatening messages RSBN employees received. He described them as "pretty vicious and serious." He said he couldn't provide details because the messages were turned over to the FBI, which has launched an investigation, Seales said.

"We just try to play real safe with security," he said. "In this political climate, it can be pretty nerve-racking."

An FBI spokesman said the agency does not confirm or deny the existence of an investigation.

Seales has embraced the new location. In recent months, he has turned a bedroom into a studio to record podcasts. A news anchor's desk, teleprompter and professional lighting have been installed in another bedroom.

But Seales said he isn't sure how much longer he'll run RSBN. He's considering selling the company. Politics, he said, has become too vitriolic and has "taken enough of our life and our time."

RSBN also faces an uncertain future. If Trump's comeback bid for the White House fails, the channel's main attraction will no longer be running for office. Should he win, RSBN's status as the hub for wall-to-wall Trump coverage will be diminished as a global press corps tracks his every move.

"We have based our entire business model," he said, "around one man doing one thing."

## Failed Graceland sale by a mystery entity highlights attempts to take assets of older or dead people

By ADRIAN SAINZ and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The catalyst behind the failed gambit to sell off the iconic Graceland property in Memphis is a mystery.

The self-styled investment company also is under fire from a lawsuit alleging fraud, an aggressive attorney general and a community of Elvis Presley loyalists who consider the home-turned-museum of the king of rock n' roll to be sacred ground.

Among the many questions surrounding the attempt to auction Graceland is how often cases pop up in which an entity emerges to claim assets of older or dead people. Experts say it's more common than one might think.

"I have never heard of a fraud targeting such a well-known institution. So it's a bit surprising on that end," said Nicole Forbes Stowell, a business law professor at the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus. "But I don't think it's surprising to everyday people that are the targets."

Naussany Investments and Private Lending caused a stir when a public notice for a foreclosure sale of the 13-acre (5-hectare) Graceland estate was posted this month.

The notice said Promenade Trust, which controls the Graceland museum, owed \$3.8 million after failing to repay a 2018 loan. Riley Keough, an actor and Elvis Presley's granddaughter, inherited the trust and ownership of the home after her mother, Lisa Marie Presley, died in 2023.

Naussany said Lisa Marie Presley used Graceland as collateral for the loan, according to the foreclosure sale notice. Keough filed a lawsuit on May 15 alleging Naussany presented fraudulent documents regarding the loan in September 2023 and asking a Memphis judge to block the sale to the highest bidder.

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"Lisa Maria Presley never borrowed money from Naussany Investments and never gave a deed of trust to Naussany Investments," Keough's lawyer Jeff Germany wrote in the lawsuit.

"It's a scam," actor Priscilla Presley, Elvis' former wife, declared on her social media accounts.

On Wednesday, an injunction by Shelby County Chancellor JoeDae Jenkins halted the sale, which was planned for the next day. Jenkins said in court that Elvis Presley's estate could be successful in arguing Naussany's attempt to auction Graceland is fraudulent.

One reason is an affidavit from Kimberly Philbrick, the Florida notary whose name is listed on Naussany's documents. Philbrick indicated she never met Lisa Marie Presley or notarized any documents for her, according to the lawsuit. The judge said the affidavit brought the signature's authenticity into question.

On the relevant documents, the signature blocks were not correct and the paperwork references an online notarization option that was not recognized in Florida until 2020, two years after the alleged notarization, Stowell said.

"That makes me wonder if these documents were created after Lisa Marie passed away," Stowell said. "The whole thing does not pass the smell test."

Mark Sunderman, a University of Memphis real estate professor, questioned why the lender would foreclose now if it had not received payments years after the loan was issued.

"If someone starts missing payments or hasn't made a payment, you're not going to sit around for a couple of years and then say, 'Golly, I think we need to foreclose now,'" Sunderman said.

The lender's legitimacy also is in doubt after unsuccessful attempts by The Associated Press to verify its existence beyond an email address and court filing signed by a Gregory Naussany.

Court documents included company addresses in Jacksonville, Florida, and Hollister, Missouri. Both were for post offices, and a Kimberling City, Missouri, reference was for a post office box. The business also is not listed in state databases of registered corporations in Missouri or Florida.

"I've never heard of that business," Kimberling City Clerk Laura Cather said.

A search of online records for the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority showed no registration for the company. No representatives of Naussany appeared in court, though the company filed an unsuccessful motion denying the lawsuit's allegations and opposing the estate's request for an injunction.

After the sale was halted, Naussany issued a statement saying it would drop its claim because a key document in the case and loan were recorded and obtained in a different state, meaning "legal action would have to be filed in multiple states." The statement did not specify the other state.

Naussany has not responded to emailed interview requests from the AP. Online court records did not show any legal filings suggesting the claim, or the lawsuit, had been dropped.

Sunderman, the Memphis professor, said that apparently fraudulent claims involving real estate asset disputes arise more often than people think, especially in situations involving inheritances.

"It's very difficult for someone to say, 'Well, no, I didn't take out this loan, I didn't sign these papers,' when they're dead,'" Sunderman said.

Darrell Castle, a Memphis attorney not involved in the case but monitoring it, said he often sees cases where older people are targets of fraud.

"I get cases quite often where people who are really helpless in the final stages of life in a nursing home are financially victimized," Castle said. "The human mind will think of some way to cheat and steal if it can."

Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti said Thursday that his office was looking into the case to determine whether the estate was targeted with fraud.

Skrmetti's office can investigate and bring civil lawsuits, including in instances of alleged consumer fraud. It could turn over evidence of criminal wrongdoing to the district attorney or federal authorities.

Opened in 1982, Graceland quickly became Memphis' most famous tourist attraction and a touchstone for fans of Elvis Presley, the singer, actor and fashion icon who died in August 1977 at the age of 42. Hundreds of thousands of visitors flock annually to the museum and the large entertainment complex across the street.

Who would target it with a scheme that "fell apart with the first email and phone call, or internet search,"

and what holes in the legal system let it get closer to the auction block than it should have, should be the focuses of the attorney general, said Nikos Passas, a Northeastern University criminology and criminal justice professor.

"The chance of succeeding in what they were trying to do — that is, to get the property auctioned off and get the proceeds and then use the money — doesn't seem to be the actual intent, unless they are incredibly stupid," Passas said. "So, the question is then, 'What was the intent, and who was behind it?'"

## Prosecutors seek to bar Trump from statements endangering law enforcement in classified records case

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors on Friday asked the judge overseeing the classified documents case against Donald Trump to bar the former president from public statements that "pose a significant, imminent, and foreseeable danger to law enforcement agents" participating in the prosecution.

The request to U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon follows a distorted claim by Trump earlier this week that the FBI agents who searched his Mar-a-Lago estate in August 2022 were "authorized to shoot me" and were "locked & loaded ready to take me out & put my family in danger."

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee was referring to the disclosure in a court document that the FBI, during the search, followed a standard use-of-force policy that prohibits the use of deadly force except when the officer conducting the search has a reasonable belief that the "subject of such force poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the officer or to another person."

The Justice Department policy is routine and meant to limit, rather than encourage, the use of force during searches. Prosecutors noted that the search of the Florida property was intentionally conducted when Trump and his family were out of state and was coordinated in advance with the U.S. Secret Service. No force was used.

Prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team said in court papers late Friday that Trump's statements falsely suggesting that federal agents "were complicit in a plot to assassinate him" expose law enforcement — some of whom prosecutors noted will be called as witnesses at his trial — "to the risk of threats, violence, and harassment."

"Trump's repeated mischaracterization of these facts in widely distributed messages as an attempt to kill him, his family, and Secret Service agents has endangered law enforcement officers involved in the investigation and prosecution of this case and threatened the integrity of these proceedings," prosecutors told Cannon, who was nominated to the bench by Trump.

"A restriction prohibiting future similar statements does not restrict legitimate speech," they said.

Defense lawyers have objected to the government's motion, prosecutors said. An attorney for Trump didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment Friday night.

Attorney General Merrick Garland earlier this week slammed Trump's claim as "extremely dangerous." Garland noted that the document Trump was referring to is a standard policy limiting the use of force that was even used in the consensual search of President Joe Biden's home as part of an investigation into the Democrat's handling of classified documents.

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement Friday that Biden and "his hacks and thugs are obsessed with trying to deprive President Trump and all American voters of their First Amendment rights.

"Repeated attempts to silence President Trump during the presidential campaign are blatant attempts to interfere in the election. They are last ditch efforts of desperate Democrat radicals running a losing campaign for a failed president," Cheung said.

Trump faces dozens of felony counts accusing him of illegally hoarding at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, classified documents that he took with him after he left the White House in 2021, and then obstructing the FBI's efforts to get them back. He has pleaded not guilty and denied wrongdoing.

It's one of four criminal cases Trump is confronting as he seeks to reclaim the White House, but outside

of the ongoing New York hush money prosecution, it's not clear that any of the other three will reach trial before the election.

Trump has already had restrictions placed on his speech in two of the other cases over incendiary comments officials say threaten the integrity of the prosecutions.

In the New York case, Trump has been fined and threatened with jail time for repeatedly violating a gag order that bars him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to the matter.

He's also subject to a gag order in his federal criminal election interference case in Washington. That order limits what he can say about witnesses, lawyers in the case and court staff, though an appeals court freed him to speak about special counsel Smith, who brought the case.

## **Uvalde families sue Meta and Call of Duty maker on second anniversary of school attack**

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Families in Uvalde took more legal action Friday on the second anniversary of the Robb Elementary School attack, suing Meta Platforms, which owns Instagram, and the maker of the video game Call of Duty over claims the companies bear responsibility for products used by the teenage gunman.

They also filed another lawsuit against Daniel Defense, which manufactured the AR-style rifle used in the May 24, 2022, shooting — and has already been sued.

It added to mounting lawsuits over the attack and came as the small Texas city gathered to mourn the anniversary of one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history. The gunman killed 19 students and two teachers. Officers finally confronted and shot him after waiting more than an hour to enter the fourth-grade classroom.

"There is a direct line between the conduct of these companies and the Uvalde shooting," said Josh Koskoff, an attorney for the families. "This three-headed monster knowingly exposed him to the weapon, conditioned him to see it as a tool to solve his problems and trained him to use it."

Some of the same families on Wednesday filed a \$500 million lawsuit against Texas state police officials and officers who were part of the botched law enforcement response that day. More than 370 federal, state and local officers responded but waited more than an hour to confront the shooter inside the classroom as students and teachers lay dead, dying or wounded.

Friday's lawsuits are not the first to accuse technology companies of having a role in radicalizing or influencing mass shooters. Families of victims in a May 2022 attack on a Buffalo, New York, supermarket sued social media companies, including Meta and Instagram, over content on their platforms.

The lawsuit against Georgia-based gun-maker Daniel Defense was filed in Texas by the same group of 19 families who sued on Wednesday. The lawsuit against Meta and Activision Blizzard — the maker of Call of Duty — were filed in California with additional families of victims from the attack.

Activision called the Uvalde shooting "horrendous and heartbreaking in every way, and we express our deepest sympathies to the families and communities who remain impacted by this senseless act of violence. Millions of people around the world enjoy video games without turning to horrific acts."

A video game industry trade group also pushed back on blaming games for violence, arguing research has found no link.

"We are saddened and outraged by senseless acts of violence. At the same time, we discourage baseless accusations linking these tragedies to video gameplay, which detract from efforts to focus on the root issues in question and safeguard against future tragedies," the Entertainment Software Association said.

The amount of damages sought in the new lawsuits was not immediately clear.

According to the lawsuits, the Uvalde shooter had played versions of Call of Duty since he was 15, including one that allowed him to effectively practice with the version of the rifle he used at the school. The families also accused Instagram of doing little to enforce its rules that ban marketing firearms and harmful content to children.

The Uvalde shooter opened an online account with Daniel Defense before his 18th birthday and purchased the rifle as soon as he could, according to the lawsuit.

"Simultaneously, on Instagram, the shooter was being courted through explicit, aggressive marketing. In addition to hundreds of images depicting and venerating the thrill of combat, Daniel Defense used Instagram to extol the illegal, murderous use of its weapons," the families' attorneys said in a statement.

Daniel Defense and Meta each did not immediately respond to emails requesting comment.

In a congressional hearing in 2022, Daniel Defense CEO Marty Daniels called the Uvalde shooting and others like it "pure evil" and "deeply disturbing."

A separate lawsuit filed by different plaintiffs in December 2022 against local and state police, the city, and other school and law enforcement, seeks at least \$27 billion and class-action status for survivors. At least two other lawsuits have been filed against Daniel Defense.

In Uvalde, community members planned a vigil to remember those killed. Other events included a bell ringing and butterfly release at a local church.

"As we mark this solemn day, may we pray for those we lost, their loved ones, and all those who were wounded," President Joe Biden said in a letter to the community. \_\_\_\_

This story has been updated to say that the gunman killed 19 students and two teachers.

## **Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin resumes duty after undergoing procedure at Walter Reed**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin underwent a medical procedure at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Friday evening and has resumed duty after temporarily transferring power to his deputy, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a statement.

Austin is continuing to deal with bladder issues that arose in December following his treatment for prostate cancer, Ryder said.

The procedure was successful, elective and minimally invasive, "is not related to his cancer diagnosis and has had no effect on his excellent cancer prognosis," the press secretary said.

Austin transferred authority to Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks for about two-and-a-half hours while he was indisposed, the Pentagon said.

The Pentagon chief returned home after the procedure. "No changes in his official schedule are anticipated at this time, to include his participation in scheduled Memorial Day events," Ryder said.

Austin, 70, has had ongoing health issues since undergoing surgery to address a prostate cancer diagnosis. He spent two weeks in the hospital following complications from a prostatectomy. Austin faced criticism at the time for not immediately informing the president or Congress of either his diagnosis or hospitalization.

Austin was taken back to Walter Reed in February for a bladder issue, admitted to intensive care for a second time and underwent a non-surgical procedure under general anesthesia at the time.

The Pentagon has notified the White House and Congress, Ryder said.

## **Involuntary manslaughter allegation against Alec Baldwin advances toward trial with new court ruling**

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A New Mexico judge has rejected a request by Alec Baldwin to dismiss the sole criminal charge against him in a fatal shooting on the set of the movie "Rust," keeping the case on track for a trial this summer.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer on Friday upheld an indictment charging Baldwin with one count of involuntary manslaughter in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins in 2021. The judge rejected defense arguments that prosecutors flouted the rules of grand jury proceedings to divert attention away from exculpatory evidence and witnesses.



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Special prosecutors have denied accusations that the grand jury proceedings were marred and say Baldwin made "shameless" attempts to escape culpability, highlighting contradictions in his statements to law enforcement, to workplace safety regulators and in a televised interview.

Friday's decision removes one of the last hurdles for prosecutors to put Baldwin on trial in July.

"We look forward to our day in court," defense attorneys Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro said in an email.

During a rehearsal on the set of the Western film, Baldwin pointed a gun at Hutchins when the revolver went off, killing her and injuring director Joel Souza. Baldwin has maintained that he pulled back the gun's hammer but not the trigger.

Baldwin has pleaded not guilty to the involuntary manslaughter charge, which carries a maximum sentence of 1.5 years in prison.

Marlowe Sommer rejected arguments that prosecutors acted in "bad faith" after reviewing transcripts of the January grand jury proceedings, noting that prosecutors are not required to present exculpatory evidence.

"New Mexico law does not require a prosecutor to present exculpatory evidence to a grand jury, or require a grand jury to even consider exculpatory evidence after alerted to its existence," the judge wrote.

She acknowledged that some questions by grand jurors were deferred to a hired expert witness for the prosecution, but she said that didn't prevent the jury from making an independent determination in charging Baldwin.

Court arguments last week on the motion to dismiss stretched for more than two hours, as defense attorneys for Baldwin accused prosecutors of cutting off questions from grand jurors and making little or no effort to communicate with defense witnesses in case they were called upon. Detailed records of the grand jury proceedings are not open to the public.

Lead special prosecutor Kari Morrissey said she ensured jurors had questions answered by witnesses with relevant experience and that the grand jury was shown that it had access to boxes of evidence supplied by the defense. Baldwin did not appear at the hearing.

Prosecutors last year dismissed an earlier involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin after being told the gun he was holding might have been modified before the shooting and malfunctioned. A new analysis of the gun last year enabled prosecutors to reboot the case.

Prosecutors have turned their full attention to Baldwin after a judge in April sentenced movie weapons supervisor Hannah Gutierrez-Reed to the maximum of 1.5 years at a state penitentiary on an involuntary manslaughter conviction for Hutchins' death.

The two-week trial of Gutierrez-Reed gave attorneys for Baldwin and the public a unusual window into how the actor's own trial could unfold.

Baldwin figured prominently in testimony and closing arguments that highlighted his authority as a co-producer and the lead actor on "Rust." Both the prosecution and defense in Gutierrez-Reed's trial dissected video footage of Baldwin before the fatal shooting for clues about breakdowns in firearms safety.

Prosecutors said Gutierrez-Reed unwittingly brought live ammunition onto the set of "Rust," where it was expressly prohibited, and failed to follow basic gun safety protocols. Gutierrez-Reed is appealing her conviction but hasn't yet filed detailed arguments.

## Louisiana governor signs bill making two abortion drugs controlled dangerous substances

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — First-of-its-kind legislation that classifies two abortion-inducing drugs as controlled and dangerous substances was signed into law Friday by Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry.

The Republican governor announced his signing of the bill in Baton Rouge a day after it gained final legislative passage in the state Senate.

The measure affects the drugs mifepristone and misoprostol, which are used in medication abortions, the most common method of abortion in the U.S..

Opponents of the bill included many physicians who said the drugs have other critical reproductive health care uses, and that changing the classification could make it harder to prescribe the medications.

Supporters of the bill said it would protect expectant mothers from coerced abortions, though they cited only one example of that happening, in the state of Texas.

The bill passed as abortion opponents await a final decision from the U.S. Supreme Court on an effort to restrict access to mifepristone.

The new law will take effect on Oct. 1.

The bill began as a measure to create the crime of "coerced criminal abortion by means of fraud." An amendment adding the abortion drugs to the Schedule IV classification of Louisiana's Uniform Controlled Dangerous Substances Law was pushed by Sen. Thomas Pressly, a Republican from Shreveport and the main sponsor of the bill.

"Requiring an abortion inducing drug to be obtained with a prescription and criminalizing the use of an abortion drug on an unsuspecting mother is nothing short of common-sense," Landry said in a statement.

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. Other Schedule IV drugs include the opioid tramadol and a group of depressants known as benzodiazepines.

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.

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.

In addition to inducing abortions, mifepristone and misoprostol have other common uses, such as treating miscarriages, inducing labor and stopping hemorrhaging.

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.

Pressly said he pushed the legislation because of 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.

## **A woman took her dog to a shelter to be euthanized. A year later, the dog is up for adoption again.**

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

Exhausted and short on options after consulting two veterinary clinics, Kristie Pereira made the gut-wrenching decision last year to take her desperately ill puppy to a Maryland shelter to be euthanized.

So she was stunned last week to find the dog up for adoption at the same pet rescue organization where she had gotten it.

"I have a lot of questions, but first and foremost, I want him back with me," Pereira told The Associated Press on Friday.

Pereira, who now lives in San Antonio, said she was working from home in Maryland when she paid \$450 in late 2022 to adopt a 2-month-old hound mix from a local group, Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation.

She named the puppy Beau, and the two quickly became inseparable. Beau snuggled next to her as she worked, slept in her bed and even tagged along with her when Pereira would leave the house. But within weeks, it became clear something was wrong with the puppy, Pereira said.

A veterinarian concluded that the issue was most likely neurological. Blood tests did show the dog might have a liver problem, so Pereira was sent home with liver enzymes and told that she would "see improvement pretty fast" if Beau's liver was the issue.

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The dog's condition only worsened. The dog's veterinarian, the clinic's lead veterinarian and an animal emergency room veterinarian all agreed the dog's inability to control his bowels and lift his hind legs pointed to a severe neurological problem, Pereira said.

The cost to run a series of tests to find out, she said, was quoted as high as \$12,000. Despite the sticker shock, Pereira, 32, who works in digital marketing, said she would have found a way to pay it if it would save Beau.

Instead, she was told "there's a very slim chance of finding what is wrong," she recalled. "And even if we do, there's an even smaller chance of it being something that we can fix."

That is when they began suggesting that it might be more humane to euthanize the puppy. She wasn't ready to consider that option, she said, and held out for another month.

Throughout all of it, Pereira said, she was consulting staff at Lost Dog & Cat Rescue.

"Honestly, I mean, after I talked to them is really when I felt, you know, that I was going to be doing the right thing by putting him down," Pereira said. "They really gave me that support and that encouragement that, although it's hard, sometimes that's the best thing to do."

Following several sleepless nights with Beau clearly in pain, Pereira said she took Beau to Montgomery County Animal Services in Derwood, Maryland, in late March 2023 and paid \$15 for him to be euthanized. She was told that the shelter's policy does not allow people to stay with their pets as they are put down.

It was during a visit to see her mother in Maryland last week that curiosity sent her to the rescue's website to check out dogs up for adoption — and spotted Beau's picture. The puppy was bigger but had the same markings and bore the name the rescue had given him before she adopted him: Amos Hart, based on a character in the musical "Chicago."

Calls to the shelter confirmed that her dog had not been euthanized after veterinarians there didn't think he needed to be. The shelter instead called Lost Dog & Cat Rescue and turned the puppy back over to them.

The rescue confirmed that Friday in a written statement, giving an extensive timeline showing that its veterinarians found no neurological issues with the dog. After tests diagnosing a liver problem and a \$7,000 surgery — paid for through a GoFundMe campaign — the dog was declared healthy.

None of it was shared with Pereira, who said Friday she would pay the \$7,000 cost to get Beau back. It took several days for anyone at the rescue to return her calls, she said, and when they did, it was not anyone Pereira had talked with before.

"The person that called me was so rude and just disrespectful and just being really nasty towards me," she said, breaking down in tears. "Just saying, you know, that I abandoned him, and that I left him to die. That I never cared about him."

Pereira was told that the dog "will never go back to you." Then the person hung up.

Rescue spokesperson Chloe Floyd would not answer questions about whether someone at the rescue said those things to Pereira. But she defended the decision not to return the dog.

"LDCRF does not re-home an owner-surrendered dog with its former adopter/owner," Floyd said in her written statement. "Our mission is to save adoptable and safe-to-the-community dogs from euthanasia."

The rescue acknowledged that it had spoken to Pereira during her deliberation about whether to euthanize the puppy, but it said it had made clear to her the importance of taking the dog to a veterinarian that would allow her to be with the animal when it was euthanized. If she could not do that, it emphasized, the rescue would take the dog back.

The rescue and the shelter both faulted Pereira for not consenting to the extensive testing to see if it was suffering neurological issues.

Caroline Hairfield, executive director of Montgomery County Animal Services, said that it is bound by contract to return surrendered animals back to the rescue and that its hands are tied.

Hairfield said of Pereira that "everyone feels for her," but that it's up to the rescue on whether it will return the dog to her.

"That's a civil issue between the two of them," she said. "We haven't had the animal in our care for a year."

The dog remained available for adoption Friday on the rescue's website.

## Young missionary couple from US among 3 killed by gunmen in Haiti's capital, family says

By DÁNICA COTO and EVENS SANON Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A U.S. missionary couple and a Haitian man who worked with them were shot and killed by gang members in Haiti's capital after they were attacked while leaving a youth group activity held at a local church, a family member said Friday.

The attack happened Thursday evening in the community of Lizon in northern Port-au-Prince, Lionel Lazarre, head of a Haitian police union, told The Associated Press.

The slayings occurred as the capital crumbles under the relentless assault of violent gangs that control 80% of Port-au-Prince while authorities await the arrival of a police force from Kenya as part of a U.N.-backed deployment aimed at quelling gang violence in the troubled Caribbean country.

Two of the victims were a young married couple, Davy and Natalie Lloyd, according to a Facebook posting from Natalie Lloyd's father, Missouri state Rep. Ben Baker. The third victim was Jude Montis, who was the country's director of Missions In Haiti Inc.

"My heart is broken in a thousand pieces," Baker wrote on Facebook on Thursday. "I've never felt this kind of pain. Most of you know my daughter and son-in-law Davy and Natalie Lloyd are full time missionaries in Haiti. They were attacked by gangs this evening and were both killed. They went to Heaven together."

Hannah Cornett, Davy Lloyd's sister, told the AP that her brother was 23 years old and Natalie Lloyd was 21. They were going to celebrate their two-year anniversary in June and his birthday in early July.

Cornett said her parents are full-time missionaries in Haiti, and that she and her two brothers grew up there.

"Davy spoke Creole before he spoke English. It was home," she said in a phone interview. "Haiti was all we knew."

Cornett, 22, said her parents run an orphanage, school and church in Haiti, and that she and her brothers grew up with the orphans: "It was just one big happy family there."

She said her older brother was outgoing, had built a garden and raised a lot of animals. While he went back to the U.S. for Bible college and then got married, he returned to Haiti with Natalie Lloyd to do more humanitarian work.

"They just had a lot of love for Haiti, and they just wanted to help the people there," Cornett said. "That's their calling."

Cornett noted that Montis worked with her parents for 20 years and left behind two children, ages 2 and 6.

She said the night of the attack, three vehicles carrying gang members stopped the Lloyds and Montis as they crossed the street, hitting her brother in the head with the barrel of a gun. They forced him upstairs, stole their belongings and left him tied up. As people were helping untie Davy Lloyd, another group of armed gunmen showed up.

"Nobody knows what happened," she said.

An unidentified person got shot and the gunmen opened fire as the Lloyds and Montis fled to the house where her parents live, Cornett said.

"They tried to take cover in there, but the gang shot up the house," she said, adding that they were killed and their bodies set on fire.

Cornett said her mother flew back from Haiti about a month ago, and that her father and younger brother flew out Wednesday because things had been so calm in the neighborhood.

"Nobody expected this to happen," she said between tears.

On Friday afternoon, Baker posted on Facebook that the bodies of Davy and Natalie Lloyd were safely transported to the U.S. Embassy.

The couple worked for Missions In Haiti Inc. The Claremore, Oklahoma, organization was founded by David and Alicia Lloyd, Davy Lloyd's parents. Natalie Lloyd's Facebook page said the couple married on June 18, 2022, and she began working with the missionary organization in August 2022. She frequently posted photos of Haitian children on her page.

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A Facebook posting on the Missions In Haiti page late Thursday read: "Around midnight: Davy and Natalie and Jude were shot and killed by the gang about 9 o'clock this evening. We all are devastated."

Alicia Lloyd, mother of Davy Lloyd, told the Oklahoma-based Claremore Daily Progress newspaper that her son "was one of these people who could do anything."

"I hope something good can come out of this. We don't see it now, but we don't want (their lives) to be in vain," she was quoted as saying.

U.S. Department of State spokesman Matthew Miller said the ambassador in Haiti was in touch with the families "who we know are experiencing unimaginable grief."

"Unfortunately, this serves as a reminder that the security situation in Haiti cannot wait – too many innocent lives are being lost," he said in a statement as he noted the U.S. government's commitment for a swift deployment of the Kenyan-led mission.

It wasn't immediately clear which gang or gangs were responsible for the fatal shootings.

However, a gang leader called Chyen Mechan, which means "mean dog" in Haitian Creole, controls the area where the shooting occurred. His real name is Claudy Célestin, and he is a dismissed civil servant from Haiti's Ministry of the Interior.

The leader of another gang known as General Jeff also controls territory near the neighborhood where the couple was killed. Both gangs are part of a coalition known as Viv Ansanm, which means "Live Together."

The coalition is responsible for launching large-scale attacks on key government infrastructure starting Feb. 29. Gunmen have attacked police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remained closed for nearly three months before opening earlier this week and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Gangs also are blamed for killing or injuring more than 2,500 people across Haiti from January to March, a 50% increase compared with the same period last year, according to the United Nations. In addition, more than 360,000 people have been forced to flee their homes by gangs who control 80% of Port-au-Prince.

Kidnappings also are rampant, with targets including U.S. missionaries.

In October 2021, gang members kidnapped 17 missionaries, the majority U.S. citizens. Many in the group, which included five children, were held captive for more than two months before escaping.

Then in July 2023, gangs kidnapped a U.S. nurse and her daughter from the campus of a Christian-run school near Port-au-Prince. They were released nearly two weeks later.

The U.S. Department of State has long had a "do not travel" advisory for Haiti and urges any U.S. citizens in the country to depart as soon as possible.

On the Missions In Haiti website, the founders wrote that the organization was founded in 2000. It said it aimed to help with "the country's biggest need — its children."

A May 2023 newsletter posted on the mission website said Natalie "has been helping with the kids at the House of Compassion and assisting in our ACE school. Davy has been working on a lot of badly needed projects around our compound," including building a laundry room and repairing bathrooms.

## **Caleb Carr, military historian and author of bestselling novel 'The Alienist,' dies at 68**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Caleb Carr, the scarred and gifted son of founding Beat Lucien Carr who endured a traumatizing childhood and became a bestselling novelist, accomplished military historian and late-life memoirist of his devoted cat, Masha, has died at 68.

Carr died of cancer Thursday, according to an announcement from his publisher, Little, Brown and Company.

A native of Manhattan, Caleb Carr was born into literary and cultural history. Lucien Carr, along with Columbia University classmates Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, helped found the Beat movement, an early and prominent force in the post-World War II era for improvisation and non-conformity — on and off the page. Kerouac, Ginsberg and such fellow Beats as William Burroughs and Herbert Huncke were

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frequent visitors to the Carr apartment, where Caleb Carr remembered gatherings that were enriching, bewildering and, at times, terrifying.

"Kerouac was a very nice man. Allen (Ginsberg) could be a very nice guy," Carr told Salon in 1997. "But they weren't children people."

Lucien Carr would prove his son's greatest nightmare. The elder Carr had been imprisoned in the 1940s for manslaughter over the death of onetime friend David Kammerer, who clashed with him and was later found in the Hudson River. Caleb Carr, born more than a decade later to Lucien Carr and Francesca von Hartz, feared he would be the next victim. With a "gleeful" spirit, his father would slap Caleb across the back of his head and regularly knock him down flights of stairs, while trying to blame Caleb for the falls.

Out of his suffering, Caleb Carr learned to despise violence, fear insanity and probe the origins of cruelty. In his best-known book, "The Alienist," John Schuyler Moore is a New York Times police reporter in 1890s Manhattan who helps investigate a series of vicious murders of adolescent boys. Carr would call the novel as much a "whydunit" as "whodunit," and wove in references to the emerging 19th century discipline of psychology as Moore and his friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizler track down not just the killer's identity, but what drove him to his crimes.

"The Alienist," published in 1994 and the kind of carefully researched, old-fashioned page-turner the Beats had rebelled against, combined fictional characters such as Moore with historical figures ranging from financial tycoon J. P. Morgan to restaurateur Charlie Delmonico. Carr also featured the city's police commissioner at the time, Theodore Roosevelt.

Carr was so successful a novelist that his background as a military historian became obscured, or even trivialized. He taught military history at Bard College, was a contributing editor to the Quarterly Journal of Military History and had a close relationship with the scholar James Chace, with whom he wrote "America Invulnerable: The Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars."

Carr's other books included the Sherlock Holmes novel "The Italian Secretary," the historical study "The Devil Soldier" and a 2024 memoir that stood as his literary farewell, "My Beloved Monster: Masha, the Half-Wild Rescue Cat Who Rescued Me."

From childhood, Carr was so repulsed by human behavior that he found himself identifying with cats — and becoming convinced he used to be one. Carr lived alone — or at least lived with no other people — for much of his adult life, spending his later years in a massive stone house in upstate New York made possible by royalties from "The Alienist" and other books, a 1,400-acre property set in the foothills of Misery Mountain.

In "My Beloved Monster," he called his own story one of "abuse, mistrust, and then the search for just one creature on Earth" on whom he could rely. In 2005, his quest would take him to the Rutland County Humane Society in Vermont, where he noticed a gold and white kitten with outsized, deep amber eyes, a Siberian who mewed "conversationally" when Carr approached her cage.

"I answered her with, with both sounds and words, and more importantly held my hand up so that we could get my scent, pleased when she inspected the hand with her nose and found it satisfactory," he wrote. "Then I slowly closed my eyes and reopened them several times: the 'slow blink' that cats can take as a sign of friendship. She seemed receptive, taking the time to confirm with a similar blink."

Carr and Masha would share a home for the next 17 years, attuned to each other's moods and even taste in music, until Masha's death. "My Beloved Monster" was a kind of dual elegy. As Masha's health began to decline, Carr had his own troubles, including neuropathy and pancreatitis, illnesses he believed brought on from his childhood abuse. Watching Masha die, and laid inside a makeshift coffin, was like saying goodbye to his "other self."

## More severe weather moves through Midwest as Iowa residents clean up tornado damage

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Several tornadoes were reported in Iowa and Illinois as storms downed power lines and trees on Friday, just days after a deadly twister devastated one small town.

The large storm system began overnight in Nebraska before traveling across central Iowa and into Illinois. A weak tornado touched down in suburban Des Moines, according to the National Weather Service, which was also assessing damage from several other reported twisters south of Iowa City and near Moline, Illinois. No injuries or deaths were reported.

The storm also brought rain that was heavy in some areas of Iowa, where totals have reached as much as 8 inches (20 centimeters) over the last week, according to the weather service.

Also Friday, a church caught fire in Madison, Wisconsin, as a thunderstorm rolled through the area. Nate Moll, who lives two doors down from Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, said he heard a "zap zap zap" electrical sound, followed by a loud crack of thunder. Firefighters extinguished the blaze.

In Oklahoma, a tornado was on the ground for about an hour Thursday evening in Jackson County and neighboring counties as a slow-moving storm moved through, according to Ryan Bunker, a meteorologist with the weather service's Norman, Oklahoma, office. News outlets reported downed power lines and outages and damage to some structures.

Severe weather was expected in areas around the U.S. throughout the long Memorial Day weekend, with a strong risk of tornadoes on Saturday in the Great Plains, particularly Kansas and Oklahoma. In New Mexico, strong winds and low humidity could fuel wildfires.

"It's really important if you have outdoor plans to make sure that you remain aware of approaching thunderstorms," said Matt Elliott, warning coordination meteorologist with the weather service's Storm Prediction Center.

"May is the peak time of year for tornadoes and for severe weather across the United States," Elliott said.

The latest severe weather comes as residents of Greenfield, Iowa, a community of about 2,000 people, have been cleaning up after a strong tornado on Tuesday.

Friday's storm system inflicted heavy rains, dime-sized hail and wind gusts of 75 mph (121 kph) on a community still recovering after four people were killed and 35 others injured when a tornado destroyed more than 100 homes and crumpled turbines at a nearby wind farm. A fifth person was killed about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Greenfield when her car was blown off the road in a tornado, according to the Adams County Sheriff's Office.

Among the Greenfield residents who were 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 National Weather Service determined that three separate powerful tornadoes carved paths totaling 130 miles (209 kilometers) across Iowa on Tuesday.

In addition to tornadoes, Saturday's storms could bring extremely large hail, according to Elliott with the Storm Prediction Center. The risk of strong tornadoes, large hail and damaging winds shifts into parts of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky on Sunday. On Monday, the Mid-Atlantic region could see some severe thunderstorms.

Tornado risks increase in May because cold, dry air that occasionally flows down from Canada clashes with moist, warm air from the Gulf of Mexico and strong upper-level winds in the atmosphere, Elliott said.

## Hunter Biden's impending gun trial could last up to 2 weeks amid sharp disagreements over evidence

By CLAUDIA LAUER and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — The judge overseeing Hunter Biden's federal firearms charges trial agreed Friday to block prosecutors from telling jurors about some other unflattering episodes from his personal life, but left the door open to allowing them in if the president's son testifies.

It's unclear whether the president's son would take the stand during the trial that could last up to two weeks during his father's reelection campaign and likely include sharp disagreements over evidence.

President Joe Biden's son 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. A trial is set to begin June 3 and could last up to two weeks as his father's re-election campaign unfolds.

Hunter Biden 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. He didn't speak to reporters as he accompanied his lawyers to and from the Wilmington courthouse for a hearing on Friday.

Prosecutors won a victory on a key point as U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika found that they wouldn't have to prove that he specifically used drugs on the day of the purchase.

She agreed to a defense push to keep out other details about his past, including a child-support case in Arkansas and his dismissal from the Navy after a positive drug test. If he does take the stand, however, "there's a number of issues that may become more contentious," Noreika said. Prosecutors have acknowledged those episodes likely won't be relevant unless he testifies.

She also agreed to consider defense questions about the contents of a laptop that he allegedly dropped off at a Delaware repair shop.

Hunter Biden's attorneys want to raise questions about the authenticity of the laptop's data at trial. Prosecutors say that there's no evidence it has been compromised and that a drawn-out fight 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.

U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika said she will consider objections to specific pieces of data as the trial unfolds.

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, of brain cancer at age 46.

Defense attorneys argued prosecutors were cherry-picking evidence, and the judge agreed to allow Biden's attorneys to introduce wider selections.

His attorney Abbe Lowell also says there are indications that the gun-purchase form was changed by employees after the sale. Prosecutors say there were only minor additions unrelated to the parts Hunter Biden filled out.

Noreika didn't immediately rule on whether the defense could introduce an altered version of the form at trial, which is 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 former President Donald Trump, as a "sweetheart deal."

Trump, who is running to unseat the Democratic president, 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.

## **Caleb Carr, military historian and author of bestselling novel 'The Alienist,' dies at 68**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Caleb Carr, the scarred and gifted son of founding Beat Lucien Carr who endured a traumatizing childhood and became a bestselling novelist, accomplished military historian and late-life memoirist of his devoted cat, Masha, has died at 68.

Carr died of cancer Thursday, according to an announcement from his publisher, Little, Brown and Company.

"Caleb lived his writing life valiantly, with works of politics, history and sociology, but most astonishingly for this historian, with wildly entertaining works of fiction," Carr's editor, Joshua Kendall, said in a statement.

A native of Manhattan, Caleb Carr was born into literary and cultural history. Lucien Carr, along with Columbia University classmates Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, helped launch the Beat movement, an early and prominent force in the post-World War II era for improvisation and non-conformity — on and off the page. Kerouac, Ginsberg and such fellow Beats as William Burroughs and Herbert Huncke were frequent visitors to the Carr apartment, where Caleb Carr remembered gatherings that were enriching, bewildering and, at times, terrifying.

"Kerouac was a very nice man. Allen (Ginsberg) could be a very nice guy," Carr told Salon in 1997. "But they weren't children people."

Lucien Carr would prove his son's greatest nightmare. The elder Carr had been imprisoned in the 1940s for manslaughter over the death of onetime friend David Kammerer, who clashed with him and was later found in the Hudson River. Caleb Carr, born more than a decade later to Lucien Carr and Francesca von Hartz, feared he would be the next victim. With a "gleeful" spirit, his father would slap Caleb across the back of his head and regularly knock him down flights of stairs, while trying to blame Caleb for the falls.

Caleb Carr thought of his parents as "the mostly drunken architects" of his household, and they divorced when he was young. His mother, after turning down Kerouac's proposal, married writer John Speicher, the father of three girls. Carr and his two brothers referred to their new, blended family as "The Dark Brady Bunch."

Out of his suffering, Caleb Carr learned to despise violence, fear insanity and probe the origins of cruelty. In his best-known book, "The Alienist," John Schuyler Moore is a New York Times police reporter in 1890s Manhattan who helps investigate a series of vicious murders of adolescent boys. Carr would call the novel as much a "whydunit" as "whodunit," and wove in references to the emerging 19th century discipline of psychology as Moore and his friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizler track down not just the killer's identity, but what drove him to his crimes.

"The Alienist," published in 1994 and the kind of carefully researched, old-fashioned page-turner the Beats had rebelled against, combined fictional characters such as Moore with historical figures ranging from financial tycoon J. P. Morgan to restaurateur Charlie Delmonico. Carr also featured the city's police commissioner at the time, Theodore Roosevelt, with whom the author felt a surprising kinship.

"Personally and psychologically, I had always found TR one of the most compelling figures in U.S. history," Carr told Strand Magazine in 2018.

"Later I realized that some of this had to do with the fact that, as a young man stricken by physical ailments and the fears they inspire, he was brought through his darkest times by his father, a deeply compassionate and caring man. This is often key to great men with noble hearts: an overtly caring father. Having had the reverse — a father who was the chief cause of my childhood fears and ailments — I was drawn to what was, for me, an exotic upbringing."

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"The Alienist" sold millions of copies, inspired the bestselling sequel "Angel of Darkness" and was adapted into a TNT miniseries that starred Daniel Brühl, Luke Evans and Dakota Fanning. Carr was so successful a novelist that his background as a military historian became obscured, or even trivialized. He taught military history at Bard College, was a contributing editor to the Quarterly Journal of Military History and had a close relationship with the scholar James Chace, with whom he wrote "America Invulnerable: The Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars."

Carr had written for years about possible terrorism against the U.S. and published a book-length study a few months after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. In "The Lessons of Terror," he contended that military campaigns against civilian populations inevitably failed and drew upon lessons dating back to ancient Rome. "The Lessons of Terror" sold well, but some critics thought he was not up to the job.

New York Times critic Michiko Kakutani wrote that Carr "has little credibility as military historian or political analyst," and suggested he stick to thrillers, while Salon's Laura Miller called some of his contentions "slippery and elusive as a handful of live minnows." Enraged, Carr answered with an all-caps letter to the editor of Salon, in which he suggested that Miller and Kakutani should lay off military history and instead "chatter about bad women's fiction."

"Several reviews have made claims concerning my credibility that are, quite simply, libelous, and will be dealt with soon," he later posted on Amazon.com, on which he gave his book a 5-star rating.

Carr's other books included the Sherlock Holmes novel "The Italian Secretary," the historical study "The Devil Soldier" and a 2024 memoir that stood as his literary farewell, "My Beloved Monster: Masha, the Half-Wild Rescue Cat Who Rescued Me."

From childhood, Carr was so repulsed by human behavior that he found himself identifying with cats — and becoming convinced he used to be one. Carr lived alone — or at least lived with no other people — for much of his adult life, spending his later years in a massive stone house in upstate New York made possible by royalties from "The Alienist" and other books, a 1,400-acre property set in the foothills of Misery Mountain.

In "My Beloved Monster," he called his own story one of "abuse, mistrust, and then the search for just one creature on Earth" on whom he could rely. In 2005, his quest would take him to the Rutland County Humane Society in Vermont, where he noticed a gold and white kitten with outsized, deep amber eyes, a Siberian who mewed "conversationally" when Carr approached her cage.

"I answered her with, with both sounds and words, and more importantly held my hand up so that we could get my scent, pleased when she inspected the hand with her nose and found it satisfactory," he wrote. "Then I slowly closed my eyes and reopened them several times: the 'slow blink' that cats can take as a sign of friendship. She seemed receptive, taking the time to confirm with a similar blink. Finally, she imitated the move of my hand by holding up her rather enormous paws to mine, as if we'd known each other quite a long time: an intimate gesture."

Carr and Masha would share a home for the next 17 years, attuned to each other's moods and even taste in music, until Masha's death. "My Beloved Monster" was a kind of dual elegy. As Masha's health began to decline, Carr had his own troubles, including neuropathy and pancreatitis, illnesses he believed brought on from his childhood abuse. Watching Masha die, and laid inside a makeshift coffin, was like saying goodbye to his "other self."

"Some people say that grief is healing; I've never found it so. It is scarring, and scarring — is not healing. I have never had someone who was my daily reality for so many years as Masha cut out of my life, my world, and my soul; how can it heal?" Carr wrote.

"Since falling onto this Earth, it seems, I have proved as difficult for my fellow human beings, past the easy points of social convention and amusement, as they have often proved for me. But from Masha, no such questions. I was enough; not just enough, but enough that I warranted defending."

## Top UN court orders Israel to halt military offensive in Rafah, though Israel is unlikely to comply

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The United Nations' top court ordered Israel on Friday to immediately halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, but stopped short of ordering a cease-fire for the enclave. Although Israel is unlikely to comply with the order, it will ratchet up the pressure on the increasingly isolated country.

Criticism of Israel's conduct in the war in Gaza has been growing, particularly since it turned its focus to Rafah. This week alone, three European countries announced they would recognize a Palestinian state, and the chief prosecutor for another international court requested arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, along with Hamas officials.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also under some pressure at home to end the war, which was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel, killing 1,200 people, most civilians, and taking roughly 250 hostage. Thousands of Israelis have joined weekly demonstrations calling on the government to reach a deal to bring the hostages home, fearing time is running out.

"The charges of genocide brought by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice in the Hague are false, outrageous and morally repugnant," Netanyahu's government said in response to the ruling, maintaining its position that the military hasn't and won't target civilians.

South Africa was able to bring its case because it and Israel are signatories to the U.N.'s Genocide Convention, which includes a clause allowing the court to settle disputes over it.

Although the ruling is a blow to Israel's international standing, the court doesn't have a police force to enforce its orders. In another case on its docket, Russia has ignored the court's 2022 order to halt its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The sharply focused decision sent a three-pronged message to Israel, ordering a halt to the Rafah offensive, access to Gaza for war crimes investigators, and a big and immediate increase of humanitarian aid to the region, parts of which are enduring famine.

Rafah is in the southernmost part of the Gaza Strip, on the border with Egypt, and over 1 million people sought refuge there in recent months after fleeing fighting elsewhere, with many of them living in teeming tent camps. Israel has been vowing for months to invade Rafah, saying it was Hamas' last major stronghold, even as several allies warned that an all-out assault would spell disaster.

Israel started issuing evacuation orders about two weeks ago as it began operations on the edge of the city. Since then, the army says an estimated 1 million people have left as forces press deeper inside.

Rafah is also home to a critical crossing for aid, and the U.N. says the flow of aid reaching it has plunged since the incursion began, though commercial trucking has continued to enter Gaza.

The court ordered Israel to keep the Rafah crossing open, saying "the humanitarian situation is now to be characterized as disastrous."

"This legally binding and very specific ruling leaves Israel with very little wiggle room," said Reed Brody, a veteran human rights lawyer and prosecutor.

Benny Gantz, a popular centrist member of Netanyahu's war cabinet, appeared to indicate that Israel would not change its course regarding Rafah.

"The State of Israel is committed to continue fighting to return its hostages and promise the security of its citizens — wherever and whenever necessary — including in Rafah," he said.

"We will continue operating in accordance with international law wherever we might operate, while safeguarding to the best extent possible the civilian population. Not because of the ICJ, but because of who we are and the values we stand for."

Balkees Jarrah, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch, said the court's order underscored the perilous situation of Palestinians in Gaza, but warned that it could be ignored if the international community doesn't use whatever leverage it can on Israel.

"The ICJ's decision opens up the possibility for relief, but only if governments use their leverage, in-

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cluding through arms embargoes and targeted sanctions, to press Israel to urgently enforce the court's measures," Jarrah said.

The court's president, Nawaf Salam, read out the ruling as a small group of pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated outside.

Fears the court expressed earlier this year about an operation in Rafah have "materialized," the ruling said, and Israel must "immediately halt its military offensive" in the city and anything else that might result in conditions that could cause the "physical destruction in whole or in part" of Palestinians there.

But the ruling didn't call for a full cease-fire throughout Gaza, as South Africa, which has historic ties to the Palestinian people and brought the case, requested last week.

South Africa's foreign minister, Naledi Pandor, said the country's allegation that a genocide is underway is getting "stronger and stronger by the day."

"We are really pleased that the court has given very serious consideration to the matters that we put before it and has affirmed that an urgent decision is needed from the court to pause this onslaught against innocent Palestinian people," she told South African state broadcaster SABC, adding that it's now up to the U.N. Security Council to determine how to protect the Palestinians.

The cease-fire request is part of a case 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.

The court ruled Friday that Israel must ensure access for any fact-finding or investigative mission sent by the U.N. to investigate the genocide allegations.

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.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians. The operation has obliterated entire neighborhoods, sent hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes, and pushed parts of the territory into famine.

"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.

In January, ICJ judges ordered Israel to do all it could 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, the ICC's 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.

## As the election nears, Biden pushes a slew of rules on the environment and 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.

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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.

“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

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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.

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.

## **With college athletes on cusp of revenue-sharing, there are Title IX questions that must be answered**

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

The looming athlete pay system that will upend the traditional college sports model and still-to-be-determined details about how millions of dollars will be distributed are certain to bring questions about gender equity.

Of special interest will be whether schools must comply with Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in any school or education program that receives federal funds.

There are many questions to be addressed should a \$2.77 billion settlement of House vs. NCAA end up being approved by a federal judge in the months ahead after a key step forward by the NCAA and major conferences Thursday night. Among other things, the settlement is expected to allow the nation's wealthiest schools to spend approximately \$20 million each year on their own athletes, beginning as soon as next year.

Michael LeRoy, a University of Illinois labor and sports law professor, and Iliana Konidaris, a New York civil rights attorney, said Title IX rules will apply if the schools are tasked with directing payments to athletes.

Konidaris said it will be critical for the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to provide guidance on how revenue sharing and name, image and likeness compensation should be paid to keep schools in Title IX compliance.

"If the universities are going to end up exerting control over the revenue sharing," Konidaris said, "you're going to need to address pay equity very head-on."

A New York sports attorney, Christina Stylianou, said her first instinct is that Title IX would not apply because athletes would be essentially selling their media rights to their school. That said, Stylianou expects the Title IX question to be heavily litigated.

### **WHAT IS TITLE IX?**

The landmark 1972 law is intended to ensure equity between men and women in education. It applies to the classroom, sexual assault and violence on campus, employment, discrimination, admissions, financial assistance with tuition and of course athletics.

Women's and men's teams are to be treated equally under the law, though that doesn't necessarily mean that each sport will have exactly the same budget for equipment, facilities, travel or meals. Athletic departments work under what is known as "equal in effect," meaning a benefit for a men's or women's team in one area can be offset in another area as long as "the overall effects of any differences is negligible."

LeRoy said he understands the rationale for arguing that football and men's basketball players should receive larger portions of the upcoming revenue because their sports account for nearly all the conference and NCAA broadcast rights fees.

If market value is heavily weighed when determining pay, he said, it would be a stretch to believe there would be a 50-50 split between male and female athletes. But, he said, there need to be provisions for women.

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"I'm not making the argument it should be divided up equally," LeRoy said. "By bringing it inside the athletic department, I don't expect the distribution to be equal. But there is an inherent contradiction or problem if women get short-changed."

## US WOMEN'S SOCCER PRECEDENT

LeRoy said the situation is reminiscent of the legal action taken by the U.S. women's soccer national team for unequal pay compared with the U.S. men's team. The women's team prevailed in a settlement after initially claiming the U.S. Soccer Federation violated the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

Though college athletes are not yet considered employees, LeRoy and Konidaris said a legal argument could be made that direct school-to-athlete payments push athletes to the brink of being employees and that Title VII could apply.

"They're going to have in the settlement the idea (that) this isn't employment," LeRoy said. "Then what you're doing is saying a multibillion-dollar industry called NCAA Athletics is going to be treated differently than any other business in America. You cannot have separate pay."

If the schools opt to not handle payments in-house and leave athlete compensation to booster-backed collectives eager to connect athletes and sponsorship money, that could be a way to get around Title IX regulations.

## OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN

Hours after the NCAA settlement was announced, Oklahoma softball player Tiare Jennings was asked about the importance of the step. She pointed to post-college security for athletes.

"I think what they get when they leave college, just to have a foundation, have something for their future families, for themselves, just to have some security blanket when you leave college," she said. "Knowing that you can go invest or start a business, stuff like that, to just kick-start your life."

Konidaris said schools that take care of their female athletes monetarily could develop stronger women's sports programs.

"The universities that really double down on equity in college sports will be rewarded by better programs for female athletes that I think in the coming 10 years are going to be revenue-generating, just based on public interest and momentum for women's sport," Konidaris said.

The recent surge in women's sports popularity, spawned by the star power of basketball players such as Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese and others, could not have been better timed, Konidaris said. Female athletes, she said, should view the moment as "an opportunity to be aggressive, to negotiate as hard as they possibly can to litigate and go after fairness and equity in pay."

LeRoy agreed it is a pivotal moment for women's sports.

"The question," he said, "is whether they're going to be stuck with a compensation model for the next 10 years that reflects the past, not the future?"

## Over 100 feared dead in landslide in remote part of Papua New Guinea, with rescue efforts underway

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

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

The landslide struck Enga province, about 600 kilometers (370 miles) northwest of the capital, Port Moresby, at roughly 3 a.m., Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported. Residents from surrounding areas said boulders and trees from a collapsed mountainside buried parts of the community and left it isolated.

Residents said that estimates of the death toll were above 100, although authorities haven't confirmed that figure. Some villagers and local media reports said the number of people killed might be much higher, though they did not cite sources.



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The chief of the International Organization for Migration's mission in Papua New Guinea, Serhan Aktoprak, said the landslide struck Yambali village, which is about two hours' drive from Enga's provincial capital of Wabag.

Yambali sits along a road leading from the capital that is now blocked, hampering relief efforts, Aktoprak told The Associated Press.

"The land still continues sliding, therefore it makes it very difficult to operate on," he said, citing firsthand reports from IOM staff and others deployed from the provincial capital to the affected village.

He said the area affected covered the size of three to four football fields, and that the village is home to 3,895 people. He said that some houses in the village were spared by the landslide, but that the total number of casualties is not yet known.

Aktoprak, who spoke by phone from the Papuan capital, Port Moresby, said that "given the scale of the disaster," he feared that the death toll could be higher than original estimates of about 100.

Water is inaccessible in the affected area, power lines are down, and villagers are likely to struggle with accessing food, Aktoprak said. "Immediate needs are shelter, other non-food items (like) blankets and bedsheets, food and drinking water," he added.

ABC had earlier named the affected village as Kaokalam. It was not immediately possible to reconcile the differing names.

Prime Minister James Marape said authorities were responding and that 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.

Australia, a near neighbor and Papua New Guinea's most generous provider of foreign aid, said the government stood ready to help.

"We send our heartfelt sympathies to the people of PNG following the landslide," Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong posted on social media. "The loss of life and destruction is devastating," she added. "As friends and partners, Australia stands ready to assist in relief and recovery efforts."

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 that 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 around 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.

## 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 started shortly before President Vladimir Putin began his fifth term and shuffled his ally, longtime Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, into a new post.

They 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:

### 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, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

The war in Ukraine has led to ballooning defense spending that 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 with access to vast sums of money. Those projects included rebuilding 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 invasion. They also alleged that Ivanov's wife, Svetlana, divorced him in 2022 to avoid sanctions and continue living in luxury.

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 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, chief of the general staff.

A fifth ministry official was reported arrested Thursday — Vladimir Verteletsky, from the 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 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.

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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 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."

Other changes include Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Sadoenko, who was replaced by Oleg Saveliev, a former aide to Belousov, and former Shoigu spokesperson Rossiyana Markovskaya, who said she was moving to a new job.

Popov's case may be different. He fought in Ukraine and was suspended in July 2023 for criticizing the Defense Ministry leadership — like Prigozhin — 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.

With the war in Ukraine turning in Russia's favor, Putin may be emboldened to sweep out the Defense Ministry, or he may be allowing the security services to assert their dominance.

**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 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."

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## Today in History: May 25, police kill George Floyd

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 25, the 146th day of 2024. There are 220 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, was killed when a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for about 9 1/2 minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and pleading that he couldn't breathe; Floyd's death, captured on video by a bystander, would lead to worldwide protests, some of which turned violent, and a reexamination of racism and policing in the U.S.

On this date:

In 1787, the Constitutional Convention began at the Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall) in Philadelphia after enough delegates had shown up for a quorum.

In 1946, Transjordan (now Jordan) became a kingdom as it proclaimed its new monarch, Abdullah I.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy told Congress: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth."

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, ordered the Virginia county to reopen its public schools, which officials had closed in an attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka desegregation ruling.

In 1968, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis was dedicated by Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Interior Secretary Stewart Udall.

In 1977, the first "Star Wars" film was released by 20th Century Fox.

In 1979, 273 people died when an American Airlines DC-10 crashed just after takeoff from Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

In 2008, NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander arrived on the Red Planet to begin searching for evidence of water; the spacecraft confirmed the presence of water ice at its landing site.

In 2011, a judge in Salt Lake City sentenced street preacher Brian David Mitchell to life in prison for kidnapping and raping Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 at the time of her abduction in 2002.

In 2012, the private company SpaceX made history as its Dragon capsule docked with the International Space Station.

In 2016, actor Johnny Depp's wife, Amber Heard, filed for divorce in Los Angeles, citing irreconcilable differences after 15 months of marriage.

In 2018, Harvey Weinstein was charged in New York with rape and another sex felony in the first prosecution to result from the wave of allegations against him. (Weinstein would be convicted of two felony counts in 2020, but an appeals court would overturn the conviction in 2024.)

In 2022, Texas Governor Greg Abbott said that 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, the gunman who massacred 19 children and two teachers at an Uvalde elementary school a day earlier, warned in online messages sent minutes before the attack that he had shot his grandmother and was going to shoot up a school.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ann Robinson is 95. Former White House news secretary Ron Nessen is 90. Actor Sir Ian McKellen is 85. Country singer Jessi Colter is 81. Actor-singer Leslie Uggams is 81. Movie director and Muppeteer Frank Oz is 80. Actor Karen Valentine is 77. Actor Jacki Weaver is 77. Rock singer Klaus Meine (The Scorpions) is 76. Actor Patti D'Arbanville is 73. Playwright Eve Ensler is 71. Musician Cindy Cashdollar is 69. Actor Connie Sellecca is 69. Rock singer-musician Paul Weller is 66. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., is 64. Actor-comedian Mike Myers is 61. Actor Matt Borlenghi is 57. Actor Joseph Reitman is 56. Rock musician Glen Drover is 55. Actors Lindsay and Sidney Greenbush (TV: "Little House on the Prairie") are 54. Actor-comedian Jamie Kennedy is 54. Actor Octavia Spencer is 54. Actor Justin Henry is 53. Rapper Daz Dillinger is 51. Actor Molly Sims is 51. Actor Erinn Hayes is 48. Actor Cillian Murphy is 48. Actor Ethan Suplee (soo-PLÉE') is 48. Rock musician Todd Whitener is 46. Actor Corbin Allred is 45. Actor-singer Lauren Frost is 39. Actor Ebonee Noel is 34. Musician Guy Lawrence (Disclosure) is 33. Olympic gold medal gymnast Aly Raisman is 30.