

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

Wednesday, May 29

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend vegetables, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

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

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

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



Thursday, May 30

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, fudgey cake squares, fruit.

James Valley Annual Meeting, 11 a.m., GHS Gym/Arena

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library, 10 a.m.

Friday, May 31

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken on bun, oven roasted potatoes, pea and cheese salad, honey fruit salad.

High School State Tournament at Augusta University through June 1

Junior Teeners at Clark, 5:30 p.m., double header
Groton Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 4 p.m., double header

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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1440

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At least 2,000 people are feared to have been buried alive in a landslide in the South Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea. The unverified estimate from the nation's government, reported yesterday, is roughly triple the UN's estimate of 670 people killed in the landslide since Friday. At least 150 homes have been buried in debris, and five bodies have been recovered so far.

Legendary basketball star Bill Walton passed away yesterday, succumbing to a prolonged battle with cancer at the age of 71. He was known for both his Hall of Fame career on the court and his award-winning broadcasting performances while calling games.

Louisiana has become the first US state to criminalize possession of abortion medication under certain circumstances after Gov. Jeff Landry (R) Friday signed into law a bill reclassifying abortion medication as controlled substances.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Richard M. Sherman, two-time Oscar winner and half of Sherman Brothers songwriting duo, dies at 95; his work included original songs for Disney's "Mary Poppins" and "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang". Grayson Murray, two-time PGA Tour winner, dies by suicide at 30.

"Anora" wins Palme d'Or, the top prize at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival; see full list of winners. Johnny Wactor, "General Hospital" actor, dies at 37 after being shot during theft attempt.

Josef Newgarden wins 108th Indianapolis 500, becomes first back-to-back winner since 2002. Boston College wins 2024 women's NCAA lacrosse championships ... and Notre Dame wins men's title. Atlanta Braves' Ronald Acuña Jr., 2023's NL MVP, out for season with torn ACL.

Science & Technology

Boeing targets Saturday as next date for the first crewed launch of its Starliner spacecraft; company scrubbed a May 6 launch over issues with a pressure valve. New analysis of data taken by NASA's Magellan probe in 1990-92 suggests Venus may currently be volcanically active.

Genetic basis behind certain types of severe immunodeficiency in newborns discovered; findings may lead to new preventive treatments for life-threatening infections right after birth.

Scientists identify three regions of the brain that combine to form a neural circuit involved in stuttering; primary area is the left putamen, which controls lip and facial movements.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher Friday (S&P 500 +0.7%, Dow 0.0%, Nasdaq +1.1%); Nasdaq reaches new record high as shares of Nvidia and other tech companies continued to rally.

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence startup xAI now valued at \$24B after raising \$6B in new funding; investors include a16z, Sequoia, and Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal and his investment firm Kingdom Holding.

Alibaba's global arm signs advertising deal with David Beckham, marking Chinese e-commerce giant's biggest-ever brand ambassador partnership; move comes as Alibaba's rivals Temu and Shein continue to expand globally.

Politics & World Affairs

At least 45 people killed Sunday in Gaza's southern city of Rafah after Israeli airstrikes and subsequent fires, follows Hamas airstrikes in Tel Aviv for which no casualties were reported; Israel says it hit a Hamas compound and killed two senior militants, will investigate civilian deaths.

Cyclone Remal makes landfall in southern Bangladesh and eastern India, flooding coastal villages, killing at least 16 people, and leaving millions without power. At least 21 people killed after tornadoes and storms sweep across Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Kentucky over the weekend; storm system to move east.

Bipartisan US congressional delegation meets new Taiwan President Lai Ching-te in Taipei; five-day trip comes three days after China stages military exercises encircling Taiwan.

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**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Black Hills highway closure to snarl holiday traffic

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

PACTOLA RESERVOIR, S.D. – Angie Weaver, who co-owns the Pactola Marina in the Black Hills, remains hopeful that the full closure of U.S. 385 won't sink her summer revenues that are critical to remaining profitable for the entire year.

U.S. 385 is the only north-south highway through the central Black Hills and the only route people can take to get to Pactola Reservoir and the marina.

"It's going to be a weird year for us, and I'm looking forward to it being over," Weaver said. "All we can do at this point is let customers know about the construction and hope for the best."

The full closure of the highway just north of the reservoir began on May 19 and will remain closed until July 12, messing up traffic in the tourism-dominated region



The far north end of the lengthy U.S. 385 improvement project is a busy place that must be navigated with care by motorists.

(Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

67th ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 30th
Groton Area High School Arena
11:30am Registration & Lunch
12:30pm Meeting

- Membership Gift
- Lunch will be Ken's Famous Fried Chicken, Potato Salad, Chips, Beverage & Dessert
- Door Prizes, including a \$500 JVT credit
- Our Groton Office will be closed 11am-2pm



JVT

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over both the Memorial Day and July 4 holidays.

The South Dakota Department of Transportation has embarked on a \$72 million project to rebuild 15 miles of the highway, which is a scenic drive but one that also has a high rate of crashes and fatalities.

The closure will disrupt any motorist driving between Hill City on the south and the Lead-Deadwood area on the north. The hour-long, more than 50-mile official detour will require people to drive through Rapid City to get around the highway closure near Pactola.

The two-lane highway provides access to Pactola Reservoir and Sheridan Lake. The road is also a pipeline to Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Crazy Horse Memorial and helps fuel a regional tourism industry that brought \$2 billion in revenue to South Dakota in 2021.

In all, the project will include five separate complete closures of the winding two-lane highway that flows amid scenic lakes, rock outcroppings and dramatic ridges.

"This construction goes through 2027, so it's gonna be a long process," Weaver said. "But this year, for us, is going to be the biggest year in terms of affecting our business."

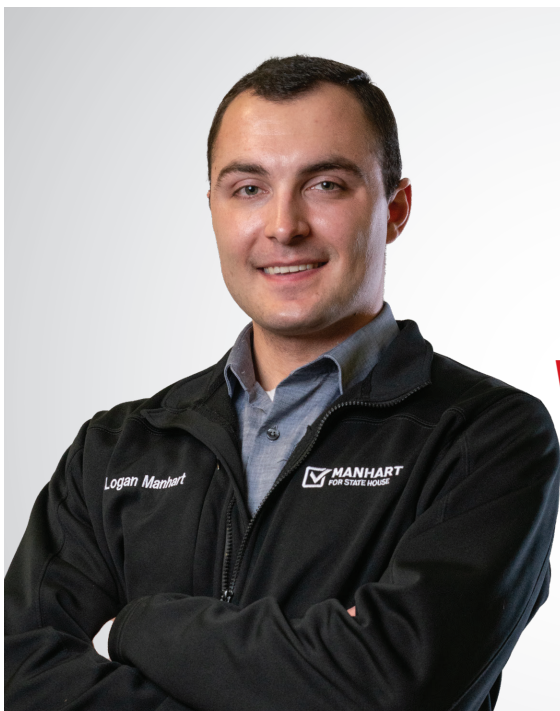
So far, so good at marina

Like other business owners in the Black Hills, Weaver and marina partner Dan Fisher have tried to get ahead of the road closure to keep customers happy and coming back.

The pair rents boats and kayaks, sells snacks and supplies and has 200 boat slip rentals, about half of which are on the north side of the reservoir where the entrance road will be closed for a while in May



The U.S. 385 closure will inhibit access to the Pactola Marina, shown here, but will moreover require a long detour for all drivers trying to get north or south in the Black Hills for nearly two months. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)



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and June. During that time, they have agreed to use a boat to ferry people from the south marina to the north marina so slip renters can still access their boats.

Weaver was heartened to see a solid pre-booking of boat rentals for the Independence Day holiday, typically her busiest time of the summer, despite the fact U.S. 385 will be completely closed during that period.

"That's a whole month-and-a-half that our renters have to drive an extra hour to get to us," she said, adding they have posted notice of the pending road closure on their website and in confirmation emails sent to renters.

DOT: New highway will be safer

The South Dakota Department of Transportation issued a press release on May 13 that spelled out the closure time frames and stated that while the road will be fully blocked, temporary



Jeff Woods, son Joe and family member Jennifer Klasen covered their boat after a recent ride at Pactola Lake. Woods said the U.S. 385 road closure won't slow down any future boat or cabin outings. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

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Angie Weaver, co-owner of the Pactola Marina, is keeping an upbeat attitude amid uncertainty about how a closure of U.S. 385 will affect her business. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

access to the Pactola north boat ramp will be available on weekends and on Memorial Day.

The overall construction project will include widening road shoulders, smoothing out sharp curves and adding turn lanes to make the road safer. In the five-year period from 2018-2022, 187 crashes were reported in the area now under construction, with four fatalities and 57 injuries. A third of those wrecks and most of the deaths occurred when motorists left the roadway, which in spots is flanked by deep ravines or craggy rocks.

DOT plans to clear trees, blast rock, enact lane closures with use of pilot cars and close the highway completely at five separate locations for up to months at a time. Tree-clearing began in November and in recent weeks, a

15-minute pilot car delay has been in place north of Highway 44. The state will open the road fully during certain high-traffic times, including for the Sturgis rally in August.

The state has created a website to provide project information and updates. Prior to the start of the project, DOT officials held a series of public meetings to inform the public about the need for the construction.

"Complete closures were deemed necessary for the safety of the traveling public and efficiency of the project due to the large amount of material being blasted and moved throughout the closure areas," DOT said in its May 13 release.

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CHRISTOPHER REDER DISTRICT 1 HOUSE

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However, Weaver and some other business owners have told News Watch that they weren't fully satisfied with the DOT's approach to the project and an overall unwillingness to listen to ideas or accommodate the needs of residents.

"There's a group of us small business owners in the area that also had a meeting with them, and it felt more like an informative meeting," she said. "Instead of a, 'Hey, what what are some suggestions,' approach, and 'What do you guys need from us,' there was none of that."

But Weaver insisted that in the end, it will all be worth it to have a safer highway through the scenic central Black Hills region.

"It's going to be a great road, and I know they're going to do a really great job," she said.

Law enforcement taking steps toward safety

Pennington County Sheriff Lt. David Switzer told News Watch that his agency is working closely with the state local fire departments, the Highway Patrol, and the Game, Fish and Parks Department to coordinate emergency response efforts during the highway closures.



Motorists who try to drive from Hill City to Lead/Deadwood, or vice versa, in the central Black Hills will contend with a major detour, indicated in yellow, due to the full closure of U.S. 385 near Pactola Reservoir. The May 19 to July 12 closure site is shown north of the lake in dark red. (Map courtesy South Dakota Department of Transportation)

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"We're aware that when there are pilot cars running up there or a full closure, there's going to be significant delays," he said.

The sheriff's office has realigned its patrol "beats" and will have more deputies in the area to respond efficiently to incidents to emergencies on both sides of the road closure, Switzer said.

"There's going to be a point where they're going to break up the road because they have to remove a big chunk of it, so you have to adjust your resources to respond to that," he said.

In advance of the full closure of U.S. 385, authorities have posted a boat in a slip at the north Pactola marina to respond to lake emergencies more quickly by not having to trailer a rescue boat through a road closure or construction zone.

"If we have any emergency at the swim beach or the marina or any of the campgrounds close to the boat ramps, we'll be able to quickly get to a boat there to respond," said Switzer, who also serves with the nearby Johnson Siding Volunteer Fire Department.

Switzer's big advice to motorists is to plan ahead, be patient and follow signage to avoid accidents or injuries.

"Don't drive around road closure signs," he said. "Follow the detours and be patient because the worst thing you can do is get stuck in a construction zone where there is no road."

Boater sees detour as minor annoyance

On a recent Sunday, Jeff Woods of Black Hawk secured his family's boat at their rented slip at the Pactola Marina after going for one of their frequent joy rides.

Woods said the highway closure will cost him about 20 minutes in extra travel time to get to the marina via the southern detour. Woods said he will take Sheridan Lake Road on the south end and shave off distance from the official detour route that takes drivers on U.S. Highway 16 through Rapid City and then back to U.S. 385.

Woods said the road blockage will not stop his family from using their boat or visiting their nearby cabin as often as usual this summer.

"It makes it more of a hassle," Woods said. "But it's really just more of an annoyance than anything else."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Bart Pfankuch at bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.



This section of U.S. 385 just north of Pactola Reservoir will be closed for construction from May 19 to July 12, cutting off a major transportation and tourism pipeline through the central Black Hills. Prior to the closure, the highway had a treacherous drop-off to the west. (Photo:

Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)



1503 N Broadway, Groton, 605/397-8145

Groton June Community Calendar

Saturday, June 1

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. at 1 p.m.

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

Sunday, June 2

Junior Legion at Mobridge 5:30 p.m. (2)

United Methodist: Worship with communion, at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.

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

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

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, June 3

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, Harvard beets, Pineapple tidbits, whole wheat bread.

Legion at Lake Morden, 6 p.m. (2)

Junior Teeners hosts W.I.N., 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10 R/W hosts Watertown, 6 p.m. (2)

U8 R/B at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (4)

SB U8 hosts Oakes, 5 p.m.

SB U10 Blk hosts Oakes, 6 p.m.

State Golf Meet at Bakker Crossing Golf Course, Sioux Falls

The Pantry at Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, June 4

Senior Menu: Pork roast, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli and carrots, peaches, whole wheat bread.

Legion hosts Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (1)

Junior Legion hosts Redfield, 7:30 p.m. (1)

U12 R/W hosts Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

SB U14 hosts Miller, 6:30 p.m.

T-Ball G/B practice, 6 p.m.

State Golf Meet at Bakker Crossing Golf Course, Sioux Falls

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

The Pantry at Community Center, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, June 5

Senior Menu: Turkey sub sandwich with lettuce and tomato, macaroni salad, tropical fruit, mixed vegetables.

Junior Teeners hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U12 B/R at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

U10 R/B at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

U8 R/B hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (4)

Chamber Meeting, Noon, at City Hall

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.

Olive Grove Men's League

Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

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Aberdeen

225-6772
1-800-843-1865



Redfield
1-800-247-4650

Webster
1-800-658-2252



JOHN DEERE

Thursday, June 6

Senior Menu: Ham, sweet potatoes, vegetable blend Provence, baked apples, dinner roll.
U10 B/W at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
SB hosts Ipswich (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 7 p.m. (2))
T-Ball G/B practice, 6 p.m.
Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, June 7

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice with beans, breadstick, cherry fluff.
T-Ball G at Andover, 6 p.m.
T-Ball B at Claremont, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 8

Inaugural Groton Day of Baseball/Softball
Junior Legion hosts W.I.N., 5 p.m. (1)
Legion hosts W.I.N., 7 p.m. (1)
Junior Teeners hosts Redfield, 3 p.m. (1)
U12 All host Britton
U10 All hosts Columbia
U8 R/B hosts Britton
SB hosts Britton (U8 at 9 a.m. (2), U10 Gld at 11 a.m. (1), U10 Blk at noon (1), U12 at 1 p.m. (2))
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 9

U12 All at Sisseton Tourney
United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45

a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.;
Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, June 10

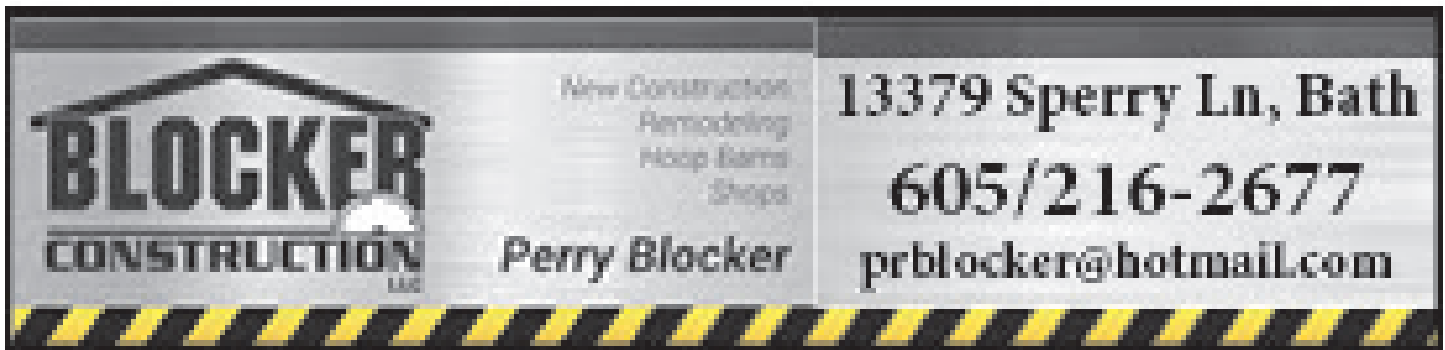
Senior Menu: Baked cod, macaroni and cheese, spinach salad with tomato, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
Junior Legion at Watertown, 5 p.m. (2)
Junior Teeners hosts Webster, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U10 R/W hosts Claremont, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U8 B hosts Claremont, 5:30 p.m. (2)
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
The Pantry at Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
United Methodist: PEO meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, June 11

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, rice pilaf, cauliflower and broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.
U12 B/W at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U8 R at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
SB U10 Gold hosts Frederick, 6 p.m. (1)
T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
The Pantry at Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council Meeting, 6 p.m.
Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.
Olive Grove Bridge, Noon

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Wednesday, June 12

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Junior Legion hosts Moberidge 5:30 p.m. (2)
Junior Teeners at Watertown, 5 p.m. (2)
U12 W/R hosts Aberdeen 11, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U10 B/R hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (2)
SB at Ipswich (U8 at 5:30 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6:30 p.m. (1), U12 at 7:30 p.m. (1))
Olive Grove Men's League
Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.

Thursday, June 13

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet, creamy noodles, tomato spoon salad, peaches, whole wheat bread.
U12 R/B at Aberdeen 12, 5:30 p.m. (2)
SB 10 Gld at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
SB hosts Mellette (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 7 p.m. (2))
Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.
Groton Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., at 104 N Main
Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

Friday, June 14 - FLAG DAY

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat. bread.
Legion hosts Lake Norden, 6 p.m. (2)
T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.
SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove

Saturday, June 15

U10 at Milbank Tourney
Possible U8 Tourney in Groton
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

Sunday, June 16

U8 Older at Milbank Tourney
United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, June 17

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, fruit cocktail, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Legion at Battle of Omaha, Neb.
Junior Teeners at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
U10 B/W hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
U8 R/B at Webster, 6 p.m. (4)
T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.
Ladies Invitational Golf Tourney at Olive Grove, Registration at 9 a.m., shotgun start at 10 a.m.
The Pantry at Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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Tuesday, June 18

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, biscuit, vegetable Catalina blend, pears, tapioca pudding.

Legion at Battle of Omaha, Neb.

U12 B/W at Aberdeen 11, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10 W/R at Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 R/B at Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (4)

SB hosts Claremont (U8 at 5 p.m. (1), U10 Gld at 6 p.m. (1), U12 at 7 p.m. (1))

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

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

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, mixed vegetables, sunset salad, whole wheat bread.

Legion at Battle of Omaha, Neb.

U12 W/R hosts Watertown, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10 R/B hosts Milbank, 6 p.m. (2)

SB at Warner (U8 at 5:30 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6:30 p.m. (1), U12 at 7:30 p.m. (1))

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m. (Julia (Grenz) and Jordan Kroll will be sharing their message)

Olive Grove Men's League

Thursday, June 20

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, vegetable capri blend, apricots, whole wheat bread.

Junior Teeners at Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U12 R/B hosts Aberdeen 11-12, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10 B/W hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 R/B at Claremont

SB at Webster (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 7 p.m. (2))

SB U14 at Oakes, 6 p.m. (1)

Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.

Transit Fundraiser, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Groton Community Center

Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

Friday, June 21

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, grape juice,

dinner roll, apple crisp, carrots and peas.

Junior Legion at Clark Tournament

Junior Teeners at Aberdeen Smitty's, 5 p.m. (2)

SB 10 Gld at Frederick 6 p.m. (1)

T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 22

Junior Legion at Clark Tournament

Legion at Northville Tournament

U8 R/B - Groton Tourney

Groton Triathlon, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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

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

Sunday, June 23

Junior Legion at Clark Tournament

Legion at Northville Tournament

United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.

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

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

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m. (Julia (Grenz) and Jordan Kroll will be the guest speakers)

Monday, June 24

Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Junior Teeners host Watertown, 5 p.m. (2)

U12 B/W at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 R/B hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (4)

SB at Mellette (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Gld at 7 p.m. (2))

The Pantry at Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, Potluck at noon

Blood Drive at the Groton Community Center, 1:15 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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Tuesday, June 25

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, vegetable capri blend, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Junior Legion hosts Hamlin, 5:30 p.m. (2)

Legion at Webster 5:30 p.m. (2)

U12 W/R at Columbia, 7 p.m., 1 7 inning game.

U10 W/R at Claremont, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 R hosts Claremont 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 B at Columbia 6 p.m. (2)

SB U18 hosts Claremont, 6 p.m. (1)

T-Ball G at Columbia 5 p.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.

Olive Grove Bridge, Noon

Wednesday, June 26

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, apricots, whole wheat bread.

U12 R/B hosts. Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10 B/R hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

SB at Claremont (U8 at 5 p.m. (1), U10 Gld at 6 p.m. (1), U12 at 7 p.m. (1))

Olive Grove Men's League

Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.

Thursday, June 27

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger quinoa casserole, cheesy breadstick, steamed Brussel sprouts, fruit.

Junior Legion at Bryant, 5:30 p.m. (2)

Junior Teeners hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5 p.m.

U12 B/W hosts Aberdeen 12, 5:30 p.m. (2)

SB at Britton (U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 6 p.m. (2))

SB U14 hosts Oakes, 6 p.m. (1)

Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.

Friday June 28

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, vanilla pudding with mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Legion hosts Milbank, 5:30 p.m. (2)

T-Ball B hosts Claremont, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 29

Junior Legion vs. Platte/Geddes at Britton, 9 a.m. (1)

U10 All - Groton Tourney

SB U10 Gld and Blk at Watertown Tournament

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

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

Moose Golf Outing at Olive Grove 10 a.m.

Sunday, June 30

Junior Legion at Britton, 11 a.m. (1), and vs. Mo-bridge at Britton 3 p.m. (1)

U12 All - Groton Tourney

United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.

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

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

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

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That's Life by Tony Bender

Dreams For Sale

Dreams for sale. Those are my dreams for sale today, mister.

You know, when I called the auctioneer, this day seemed so far away. I stalled for days before I called. It's hard selling your dreams.

I remember so well the day we bought this place. I remember like a proud papa the day we bought that Versatile. It's all been years ago, but inside I still feel like that young man who built this farm.

But when I look in the mirror, I see the years.

I didn't sleep much last night. I worried that the weather would be bad, that things wouldn't sell well. And I was half afraid that things would sell at all.

But there's no turning back.

The neighbors are here and so are relatives from far and wide. It's like a funeral except brown Key coveralls and six buckle overshoes are uniform of the day. But nobody died. And 300 strangers won't come to my funeral.

Move along, folks.

Nothing to see here.

Man's just selling his dreams.

We didn't miss the dairy herd when we sold it a year ago. They kept us from a thousand functions and now there is more time for kids and grandkids. Man, they grow up fast.

But the finality of selling those tractors and all that haying equipment is starting to sink in. Of course, no one can tell except my wife. She's the one who wears her heart on her sleeve today. Her eyes are red and her voice hoarse. Says she's got a cold. But I think she's going to miss that old grain truck. Sure, it smokes to beat the band, and the passenger side door flies open on left turns like a wounded duck trying to soar, but that truck is like a homely sister. You love her just the same.

But don't judge the quality of my equipment by that truck, mister. I took care of my machines. They were shedded and serviced regularly. I didn't take care of myself nearly as well.

I know it might sound a little weird, but I feel like I'm sending puppies to strangers. I want my machines to have a good home.

It's gotten to the point of embarrassment the way the auctioneer keeps bragging up my equipment. He calls me a proud man. A man who took pride in keeping up his equipment. But it's the God's-honest truth. I even hauled that Versatile in to the shop last week just to make sure it was 100 percent perfect; even though, I knew it was. I don't want anyone to feel cheated.

Man's reputation is something sacred.

The auctioneer was optimistic the day we signed the contract. Said it should be a barn-burner of a sale. But today he backed off of his prediction a little. But we'll just have to see what happens.

Besides, when a guy's selling his dreams...Well...ain't no price you can put on that.

As I watch the men slog through the mud today, I know I'm doing the right thing. The time is right. Weather's been uncooperative the last couple years. Too wet. Cattle price is iffy. And milk prices? Don't even want to talk about it.

It's not like it used to be. It's not automatic. Sons don't take over the farm much anymore. The dream business has changed.

But when I see young farmers in spirited bidding for my equipment, it makes me feel good. They're counting the hours saved if they can put two seed drills in the field come snow melt. That swather is a bargain and Junior ought to be able to handle it by June.

That's the way I was. Seemed like I had a year-round sunburn on my neck. Gosh, those were the days. We were quite a team, me and the wife. We had rhythm that was a beautiful thing at harvest. She'd haul one truck to the elevator, and I'd be topping off another when she pulled back into the field. Pert'near always in step. Like Fred and Ginger of the spring wheat.

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Now, the dance belongs to the bidders. They look at each other across the crowd, a cross between gun-slingers and bashful beaus at their first dance. As the bid escalates, the auctioneer points at them both. Wanna dance?

Heads nod imperceptibly. Fingers twitch. Eventually, one of them looks at his shoes and wanders away. Guess the old corn head will do for another year.

The auctioneer is glib. When he pitches those five feed bunks, everyone knows two have seen better days. But he gamely marches on, his cadence rat-a-tat-tatting like Gene Krupa. "C'mon boys, them cows don't know the difference between a good one and a broke one. Go ahead and buy 'em. Fool them cows!" The last two go for \$30. They'll make a fine bonfire some day.

After the sale, the auctioneer is beaming. It's been a good sale. He was right all along-the first time. The church ladies have had a big day as well, selling \$2 hot dogs and \$3 burgers and potato salad advertised on every sign with Dan Quayle's extra e. Lotta Republicans here today, but I suppose their money's as good as the next guy's.

Well, nice talkin to you , mister. But I gotta go now. The guy who bought the 2+2, wants me to pull it into the shed for the night. Lotta room in there today.

I know my wife will be watching from the kitchen as I drive it for the last time. Tonight, when we're finally alone, that's when we'll talk, and we'll assure each other that selling our dreams today was the right thing to do.

Now, I ain't no poet. But any farmer worth a damn stops once in a while to watch the sun rise and see the poetry around him. I'll try to express what's on my mind to her tonight. I guess I want her to know that while we sold our dreams today, we're keeping the memories.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

Starting this week, we will be taking a look at the Vikings' roster for the upcoming 2024 NFL season. We start with the quarterback position, which is undoubtedly the most important position on the team. For the past six seasons, the Vikings have had incredible stability at QB thanks to Kirk Cousins. Unfortunately, that stability didn't lead to much post-season success, which is why the team decided to move on.

Enter J.J. McCarthy

The highest-drafted quarterback in Minnesota Vikings' history, McCarthy will look to lead the Vikings to Valhalla and bring the team their first Super Bowl win. Since becoming a starter in high school, and then into his college career at Michigan, McCarthy has an impressive 63-3 record – including a 27-1 record at Michigan that culminated in a Championship just a few short months ago. He has the third-best winning percentage by a QB in college football history and the best since 1971. There is no doubt the kid can win.

Unfortunately, McCarthy also enters the league with many question marks. He is only 21 years old, and while he did start 28 games at Michigan, he was rarely asked to be anything more than a game manager. There were only four games where he was asked to throw more than 30 passes, and one of those games was in a loss to TCU during the 2022 playoffs. To put that into perspective, Kirk Cousins only threw less than 30 passes in three games under head coach Kevin O'Connell. It's worrying that in the National Championship game, he only completed 10 of 18 passes for 140 yards and zero touchdowns. Will McCarthy be able to become more than a game manager in the NFL? Will he be able to put the team on his back? Simply put, we just don't know. However, Kevin O'Connell is a former NFL QB who played for Bill Belichick in New England, so if he thinks McCarthy has what it takes to lead an NFL team, who am I to disagree?

While McCarthy will have all eyes trained on him this offseason, it will likely be Sam Darnold who begins the season as the team's starter. Darnold was brought in to be a stop-gap QB who can step in and hopefully do a good enough job that the young, inexperienced rookie doesn't have to play before he is ready.

Darnold is only 26 years old and was the third overall pick of the 2018 NFL Draft (New York Jets). He has all the tools necessary to play at a high level in the NFL, but he's been on some terrible teams and was never able to just ease into his professional career. In three seasons with the Jets, Darnold had a record of 13-25. After New York drafted his replacement, Darnold went to Carolina where he started 17 games and had an 8-9 record. After Carolina drafted his replacement, he went to San Francisco to be a backup. He knows this is his last shot to prove to the NFL that he can be a starting quarterback, so I have no doubt he will give it everything he has. With an offensive-minded head coach and a great supporting cast, I expect Darnold will surpass expectations. I just wish the Vikings had signed him to more than one year, because if he does as well as I expect, it would've been nice to be able to trade him and pick up some draft picks.

Besides McCarthy and Darnold, the team also has Nick Mullens and Jaren Hall, who will be competing for the third spot on the roster. If everything is equal, Hall will have the advantage of being a recent draft pick, which means Mullens will be the odd man out and will likely be cut if he can't be traded for a late-round pick.

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The Groton American Legion Post #39 honor guard performed at the Andover Catholic Cemetery on Memorial Day. (Photo by Debra Lesnar)

Groton Memorial Day Program



Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Roderick C. Zastrow speaks to the crowd at Monday's Memorial Day Ceremony at Groton Union Cemetery. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Debra McKiver and Tami Zimney read the honor roll during the Memorial Day Ceremony, held Monday at Groton Union Cemetery. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Tami Zimney, at the microphone, and Debra McKiver took turns reading the honor roll during the Memorial Day Ceremony held Monday at Groton Union Cemetery. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Flags for different branches of the U.S. Military surround the American flag during Monday's Groton Memorial Day Ceremony. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Members of the American Legion Post 39 Honor Guard, which includes Les Hinds, Ron Falk, Aaron Grant, Steve Dresach, Bruce Babcock, Dale Kurth, Roger Overacker, Dave McGannon, Ed Stauch, Alan Bell, Robert Voss and Robert Wegner, give a 21-gun salute during the Groton Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Members of the American Legion Post 39 Honor Guard, which includes Les Hinds, Ron Falk, Aaron Grant, Steve Dresach, Bruce Babcock, Dale Kurth, Roger Overacker, Dave McGannon, Ed Stauch, Alan Bell, Robert Voss and Robert Wegner, give a 21-gun salute during the Groton Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Crowd members stand while Taps is played during the Groton Memorial Day Ceremony held Monday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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\$300 million statewide high-speed internet initiative enters final stretch

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 27, 2024 12:15 PM

About 91% of South Dakota has access to broadband service, putting the statewide ConnectSD high-speed internet initiative in its final stretch.

"That's a lot of work, look at that," said Mike Waldner, the state's broadband project manager, to attendees at the recent 2024 Broadband Summit in Sioux Falls.

About half of South Dakota had access to high-speed internet before the initiative began in 2019.

The effort now totals over \$300 million, connecting over 31,000 locations that previously had slow or no internet. Setting aside projects already planned and funded, the number of locations yet to be connected is about 11,000.

Funding for ConnectSD has included \$85 million from the state, \$89 million of federal funds, and \$127 million of private investment from broadband providers.

Waldner's summit presentation was a status update on the initiative, launched by Governor Kristi Noem when she took office.

Waldner said the last stretch of the project focuses primarily on the Black Hills, which will be expensive. That's because of costs associated with cutting through rock and reaching remote residents who have "6-mile driveways," Waldner said, making the infrastructure per customer expensive.

He said the state has been awarded another \$207 million from the federal government, which will help complete the effort.

Waldner said the initiative is an essential infrastructure investment for the state, given that rural areas with few internet customers are rarely a profitable private investment.

"If the free market could handle it, it already would have," he told South Dakota Searchlight.

Waldner said connectivity is critical for education, work and health care. He said today's average home has 17 devices connected to the internet.

Waldner's presentation was followed by testimonies from people who have received new or improved service since the initiative's inception. Roni Daale, who runs Roni Daale & Co. Greenhouse in Fairview, said her shop and home had terrible internet before the broadband initiative improved it.

Now, her business relies on it "every minute of the day," she said, for online transactions, orders and more.

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.

As Memorial Day arrives, bill unveiled in Congress to assist Purple Heart recipients

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 27, 2024 6:00 AM

WASHINGTON — When a Purple Heart recipient named Pat reached out to U.S. Sen. Patty Murray in November to inform her that he couldn't transfer his GI bill benefits to his children, he wasn't expecting congressional action to solve the problem.

He simply just wanted to let the Washington state Democrat know, he told States Newsroom in an exclusive interview.

With a child about to head to college, Pat, who didn't want his last name used, had recently been told by the Army that he couldn't transfer his education benefits to them because he received the Purple Heart after he was medically discharged. This rule does not apply to those who receive the medal while still in service.

Murray and Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, introduced a bipartisan bill Thursday aimed at closing that loophole.

The legislation, titled the Purple Heart Veterans Education Act, would permit retroactive award recipients who served on or after Sept. 11, 2001 to transfer their education benefits to one or more dependents. It was unveiled just ahead of Memorial Day, when the nation honors its deceased service members.

"As the daughter of a Purple Heart recipient, I've seen firsthand the enormous sacrifices Purple Heart veterans make to defend our freedoms, and I feel strongly that we should be doing absolutely everything we can to help all veterans and their families thrive," Murray said in a statement Thursday.

"It doesn't make any sense that service members who are awarded a Purple Heart after their service can't transfer their GI benefits to their dependents, while those who receive it during their service can—and I am grateful to Pat, my constituent in Washington state who brought this gap in the law to my attention," continued Murray, a senior member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

"Our legislation will close this loophole and allow more children of Purple Heart veterans to further their education. I want to thank Senator Tillis for joining me on this legislation and I'll be working hard to get it passed into law."

Glitch in education benefits

Pat was medically discharged from the U.S. Army and retroactively received a Purple Heart for his actions during Iran's retaliatory missile barrage in January 2020 on an Iraq airbase, after a U.S. drone strike killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The Army later approved 39 Purple Hearts for service members who experienced the attack, according to a December 2021 report by the Army Times.

As his teenager looks to enroll at Central Washington University next year, Pat found out that by law his education benefits would only be available for transfer if he had received the award while still in service.

"My thought was, 'I doubt that legislators would have done that intentionally.' I just thought, you know, people probably just didn't think about how that happens — that some people are going to get retroactive Purple Hearts, or for whatever reason in evaluating them, they're delayed. So it's not like an unusual thing," Pat said in a phone interview.

"I wasn't thinking much was going to happen, but I just wanted to write Senator Murray, who is my local senator, and let her know the issue. They responded by saying, 'That's an oversight on our part, and we want to make good on that.'"

Pat said he's "grateful for Sen. Murray" and hopes his action is able to help other Purple Heart veterans. For now, his family is moving forward with the college enrollment process for his child, he said.

Benefits and dependents

Among the provisions in the legislation, Murray and Tillis' bill would also allow veterans to split up 36 months worth of benefits to each of their dependents. For example, they could transfer 20 months to one and 16 months to another.

The bill, if enacted, would also prohibit the benefits from being treated as marital property or a marital estate asset.

And, the bill would permit dependents to access unused benefits if their veteran family member has died.

"Purple Heart recipients are heroes who honorably served our country at great costs, and this oversight that prevents servicemembers who received this distinguished award after their service from transferring their GI bill benefits to their dependents needs to be corrected immediately," Tillis said in a statement Thursday.

"I am proud to co-introduce this commonsense legislation with Senator Murray to close this loophole and ensure every Purple Heart recipient and dependents are able to further their education," continued Tillis, who also sits on the Senate's Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The number of veterans who retroactively received the Purple Heart after their post-9/11 service is unclear. The bill is estimated to cost \$500,000 in mandatory spending over 10 years, according to an informal analysis provided to Murray's office by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The bill has received praise from veterans groups, including the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

"Unfortunately, not every veteran's service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States of America is fully recognized while they're still in uniform," IAVA CEO and Iraq War veteran Allison Jaslow said in a statement Thursday.

"The Purple Heart Veterans Education Act ensures that those veterans who've endured bodily harm on behalf of our nation, but weren't recognized for it until their service concluded, are able to turn that recognition into an investment in the education of their loved ones."

More Purple Heart recipients

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have "greatly increased" the number of Purple Heart recipients as the Department of Defense has added some traumatic brain injuries as a recognized condition for the award, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

It wasn't until a 2017 law that Purple Heart recipients were able to receive full post-9/11 GI Bill benefits regardless of their length of service. Previously, the recipients had to have 36 months of active service.

The Department of Defense does not maintain a record of the number of recipients, according to the CRS, but by law they do maintain a publicly accessible list with the permission of the veteran or next of kin.

Military historians and the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor estimate about 1.8 million Purple Hearts have been awarded since 1932. The Army Historical Foundation estimated as of 2016 that 30,000 Purple Hearts had been awarded since 2001. The CRS cited this statistic.

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

A bipartisan push to make air travel easier for new parents packing breast milk and formula

BY: ELISHA BROWN - MAY 27, 2024 5:00 PM

As the summer travel season approaches, new parents may be navigating airports with their babies — and the complexities of keeping them fed. Despite federal guidelines for airport agents laying out how to treat nursing moms, stories about problem encounters with security sometimes go viral.

In 2023, actress and singer Keke Palmer said she was at Houston airport when she faced threats to throw out her 16 ounces of breast milk. A year earlier, engineer and science TV host Emily Calandrelli said U.S. Transportation Security Administration officers escorted her out of line and made her check her partially thawed ice packs, which are used to keep breast milk cool.

"It was a very traumatizing experience, and it also didn't align with what the TSA policies were, which state that you're allowed to have them for medically necessary purposes," Calandrelli told States Newsroom.

In May 2022, she went on her first work trip away from her 10-week-old baby and was traveling from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. Calandrelli planned on pumping after going through security at LAX, but TSA officers drilled her with questions about what the ice packs were for and said it wouldn't have been an issue if her breast milk was already pumped.

"I spoke to three different males who worked at TSA, and I requested to speak to a woman but wasn't able to," she said.

Like Palmer, she shared the experience with her legions of social media followers. Calandrelli said the agency later apologized. TSA issued a statement shortly after the incident: "Our employees go through regular training to effectively engage and screen diverse traveler populations, including those who are breastfeeding and/or traveling with breast milk."

Both women's experiences violate TSA guidelines: formula, breast milk, toddler drinks and baby food are allowed on planes and carry-ons in quantities greater than 3.4 ounces. Breast milk, formula and ice packs — along with other cooling accessories — are considered medically necessary. Passengers are advised to let TSA officers know they're carrying these items when arriving at airport security.

Even though these protections exist, many lactating parents still encounter problems during air travel, and these issues carry physical and emotional side effects, according to Tina Sherman, a doula and interim executive director at the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee.

"Lactating parents have to pump on a fairly regular basis to be able to continue to keep up their supply," Sherman said.

When they can't express milk or that cycle is interrupted, mothers experience pain or breast leaks, she said. In some cases, long delays in pumping can lead to mastitis — an infection that causes swelling in the breasts and cracked nipples. Emotionally, being prevented or delayed from expressing milk can make parents feel anxious, embarrassed and stressed, Sherman said.

Calandrelli's plight two years ago led her to reach out to her local California congresswoman. U.S. Democratic Rep. Katie Porter first introduced legislation to strengthen existing protections for breastfeeding parents in August 2022.

"You have to have clear instructions and clear rules, and have people follow them in order for moms to be able to meet the standards," Porter said. "There's a lot of obstacles to breastfeeding. There's a lot of challenges to feeding a baby and traveling with a baby."

The Bottles and Breastfeeding Equipment Screening (BABES) Enhancement Act would require "hygienic handling of breast milk and baby formula" by TSA officers and private security companies. Porter's bill would direct airport officials to "minimize the risk for contamination" of breast milk, formula and infant drinks, along with ice or freezer packs and related cooling accessories.

Under the proposal, the agency must consult with maternal health organizations — March of Dimes, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine — to determine what policies and regulations need to be updated

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as pumping technology and best practices for breast milk storage evolve, she said.

BABES Act is an update to a 2016 law that required TSA training on special screening procedures for nursing parents. The original law also made it legal to carry larger amounts of breast milk, formula and infant drink — juice or purified water — in airports and on planes.

Reps. Maria Elvira Salazar, a Florida Republican, and Eric Swalwell, a California Democrat, are the lead co-sponsors in the House. Democratic Sens. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, along with GOP Sens. Steve Daines of Montana and Ted Cruz of Texas sponsored the bill in the upper chamber.

The bipartisan bill didn't go anywhere last session, but Porter reintroduced the proposal. She said the bill is set to be heard in the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee soon.

As a mother of three, Porter is acutely familiar with the problems that come with traveling with infants. Her children are adolescents and teens now, but when they were babies, lactation stations in airports were uncommon. She said a flight attendant once told her to stop nursing her baby while the plane was still on the ground. Porter said she was angry and scared, but mostly "worried about my baby, who was hungry."

As for her bill, she recognizes that TSA agents have a hard job. But the BABES Act will help them "have clear rules and better training so that they're not put in challenging situations when they're dealing with frustrated parents," she said.

Making travel for lactating parents easier could chip away at larger stigma about breastfeeding, advocates said. More than 80% of babies are breastfed in infancy, and 58% are still getting some breast milk by the time they're 6-months-old, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Still, earlier this month, an ad for lactation cookies featuring a cooking star's covered breasts and pregnant belly was temporarily removed from a Times Square billboard, according to The New York Times.

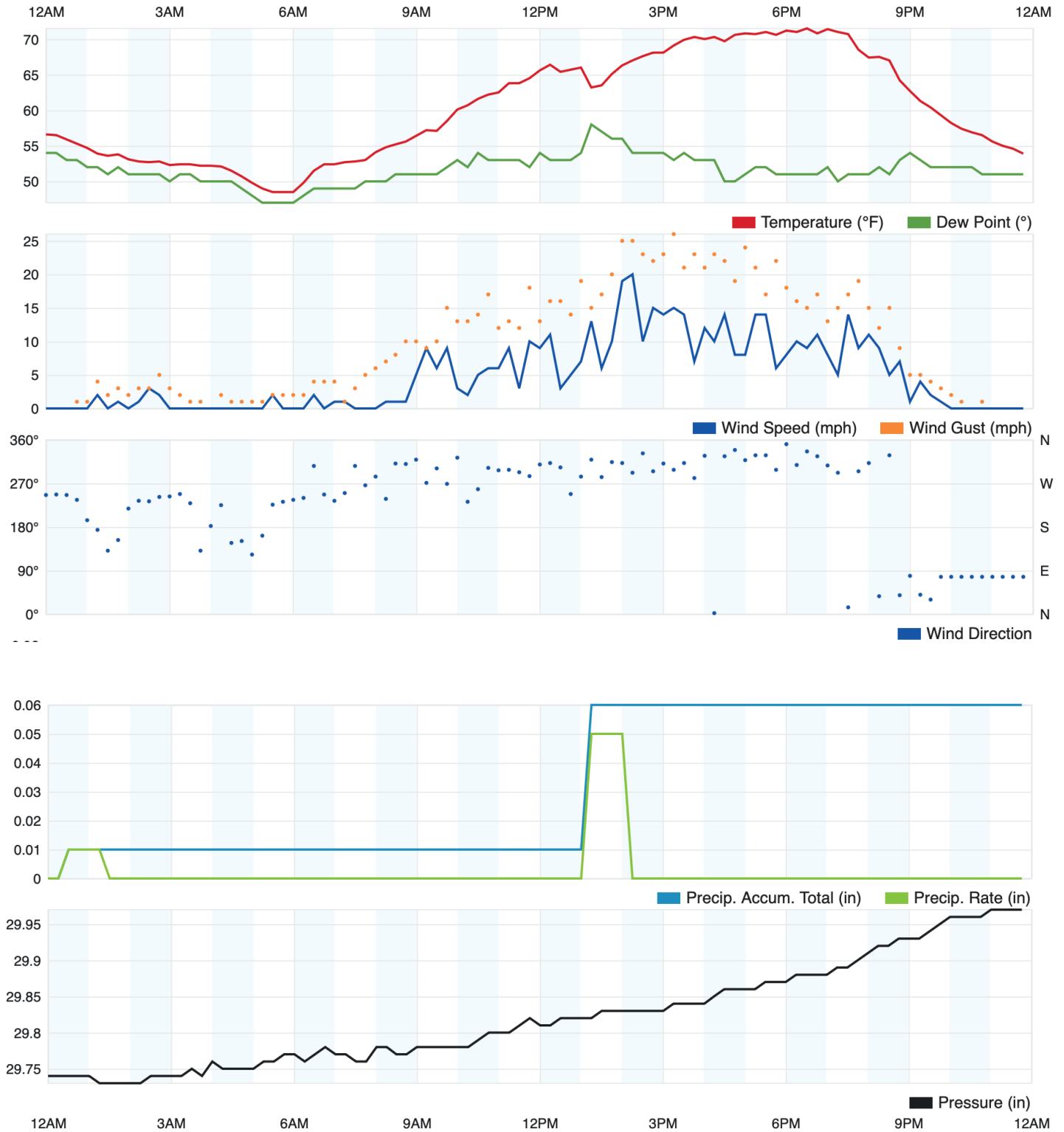
"Normalizing breastfeeding and lactation is really critical to families being able to meet their breastfeeding goals," Sherman said.

Elisha Brown is the Reproductive Rights Today newsletter author at States Newsroom. She is based in Durham, North Carolina, where she previously worked as a reporter covering reproductive rights, policy, and inequality for Facing South. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Daily Beast, The Atlantic, and Vox. She attended American University in Washington, D.C. and was raised in South Carolina.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 67 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 40 °F

Mostly Clear

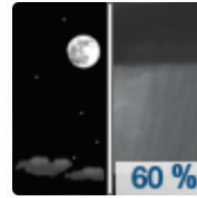
Wednesday



High: 75 °F

Sunny

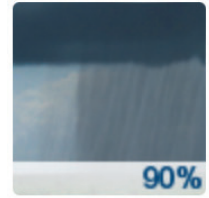
Wednesday
Night



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear
then Showers
Likely and
Breezy

Thursday



High: 70 °F

Showers and
Breezy

Last Week of May!

Tuesday



Highs: 62-72°
Lows: 41-50°

Wednesday



Highs: 70-80°
Lows: 54-60°

WINDY
Evening &
Overnight
Storms
(30-65%)

Thursday



Highs: 68-74°
Lows: 46-56°

WINDY
Scattered
Showers &
Storms
(40-90%)

Friday



Highs: 68-75°
Lows: 48-55°

Showers &
Storms
Possible
(15-30%)



Dry weather expected beyond Tuesday morning into Wednesday before an unsettled weather pattern returns Wednesday night through the end of the week.

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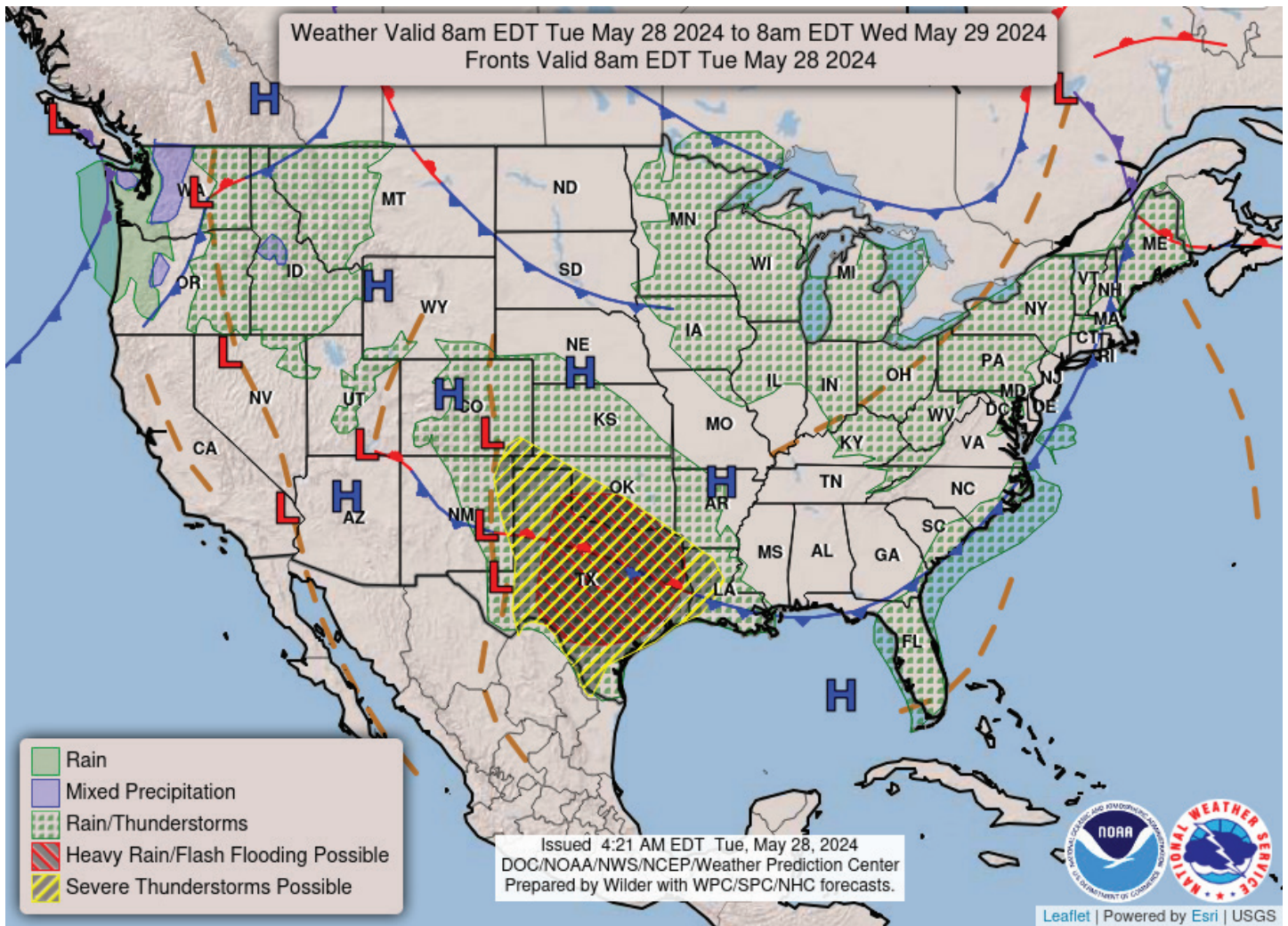
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 6:29 PM
Low Temp: 48 °F at 5:40 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 3:10 PM
Precip: : 0.06

Day length: 15 hours, 24 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1934
Record Low: 30 in 1965
Average High: 75
Average Low: 49
Average Precip in May.: 2.98
Precip to date in May: 2.14
Average Precip to date: 6.95
Precip Year to Date: 6.68
Sunset Tonight: 9:12:10 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:46:44 am



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Today in Weather History

May 28, 1934: Watertown recorded a high temperature of 102 degrees, which is the earliest yearly date when Watertown reached 100 degrees.

May 28, 1965: Low temperatures were mostly for the mid to upper 20s across a broad area. The low temperatures set back some crops and caused light damage to others. Some low temperatures around the area include; 26 degrees in Andover; 27 in Ipswich; 28 in Britton, Leola and McLaughlin; and 29 in Clear Lake, Eureka, Gettysburg, and Pierre.

1880: An estimated F4 tornado hit Savoy, Texas. The storm killed 14 people, and 60 others were injured. It leveled the entire business and northeast residential sections. The tornado was described as "a funnel blazing with balls of fire."

1877 - A "terrific" two day long sandstorm (sand) blasted Yuma, AZ. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1942 - The latest snowstorm of record for the state of Iowa left ten inches at LeMars, eight inches at Cherokee, and 7.5 inches at Waukon. Afternoon highs were in the lower 30s in parts of northwestern Iowa. (The Weather Channel)

1947 - A storm produced heavy snow across Wisconsin, with ten inches reported at Gay Mills. The snow damaged fruit and other trees, and downed power lines. The storm was followed by the coldest weather of the month for much of the High Plains Region and Missouri Valley. Williston ND reported a low of 21 degrees the morning of the 28th, and the next morning Cheyenne WY reported a morning low of 16 above zero. (David Ludlum)

1973: An F3 tornado moved east and struck the northern portion of Athens, Georgia. Destruction was massive near Athens, with losses estimated at ten million dollars. Damage from the storm included 545 homes and 17 businesses. Hundreds of large trees more than 100 years old were destroyed.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in Oklahoma and northern Texas. Lake Altus, OK, was deluged with nine inches of rain. Up to eight inches drenched northern Texas, and baseball size hail was reported north of Seminole and at Knickerbocker. Ten to 13 inch rains soaked central Oklahoma the last five days of May resulting in an estimated 65 million dollars damage, and forcing several thousand persons to evacuate their homes, many by boat or helicopter. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A sharp cold front began to usher cold, wet and windy weather into the western U.S. Thunderstorms in the Great Plains Region produced wind gusts to 80 mph near Brookings, SD. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather continued in Florida. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The record high of 98 degrees at Lakeland, FL, was their fifth in a row. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Florida late in the day, with golf ball size hail reported at Kissimmee. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Two to five inches of rain over southeastern Ohio on the 28th and 29th capped an exceptionally wet month of May, and triggered widespread flooding. Flooding which resulted claimed three lives, and caused millions of dollars damage. Numerous roads in southeast Ohio were flooded and impassable, and many other roads were blocked by landslides. (Storm Data)

2015: Some parts of Oklahoma have seen more than a foot of rain during May 2015. Storms killed at least 17 people in Texas and Oklahoma, and more than a dozen are still missing. State climatologist Gary McManus from the Oklahoma Climatological Survey calculated the May rainfall total averaged over all Sooner State reporting stations through midday May 29 - 14.18 inches - was easily outpacing the previous record wet month, set in October 1941 (10.75 inches).

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT?

A young man stopped by my office to inform me that he had been called of God to become a minister of the Gospel. It thrilled me! After praying together he said, "I'm going to the Chapel and I'm going to pray all day - maybe through the night as well - and worship God."

"Great," I replied. "If you need help, come get me."

"Oh no," he replied, "I want to be alone with God and speak only with Him. You see, I have this tablet with me and I'm going to write down on every page the things I'm going to do for God. Then I'm going to sign it."

"It would be better," I said, "if you signed each page at the bottom and then asked God to fill in the pages with the things He wants you to do for Him."

God has a perfect plan for each of us. It is a plan that He has designed and will be revealed to us plainly as we surrender our lives to Him. As we willingly become available to Him, He will transform us to become individuals with transformed minds - minds that are sensitive and open to the direction of His Spirit and lives that live to honor and obey Him.

God only wants what is best for us, but we cannot know His best until we are willing to sacrifice ourselves to Him. We know that we are "willing sacrifices" when we sign the page and allow Him to fill in the details. Then we will know what "His good, pleasing and perfect will" is for us.

Prayer: Oh Lord, it is so difficult to realize how easy it is to do what we want to do and consider it as Your will for our lives. May we learn to give You "blank pages." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2



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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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 17 Hrs 22 Mins 56
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.27.24

9 25 32 40 51 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.27.24

2 9 17 19 46 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins 56
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.25.24

7 8 10 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$119,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 52
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.27.24

20 31 39 45 56 19

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.27.24

9 30 39 49 59 21

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$143,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

'We have nothing.' As Israel attacks Rafah, Palestinians are living in tents and searching for food

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The tent camps stretch for more than 16 kilometers (10 miles) along Gaza's coast, filling the beach and sprawling into empty lots, fields and town streets. Families dig trenches to use as toilets. Fathers search for food and water, while children look through garbage and wrecked buildings for scraps of wood or cardboard for their mothers to burn for cooking.

Over the past three weeks, Israel's offensive in Rafah has sent nearly a million Palestinians fleeing the southern Gaza city and scattering across a wide area. Most have already been displaced multiple times during Israel's nearly 8-month-old war in Gaza, which is aimed at destroying Hamas but has devastated the territory and caused what the United Nations says is a near-famine.

The situation has been worsened by a dramatic plunge in the amount of food, fuel and other supplies reaching the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute to the population. Palestinians have largely been on their own to resettle their families and find the basics for survival.

"The situation is tragic. You have 20 people in the tent, with no clean water, no electricity. We have nothing," said Mohammad Abu Radwan, a schoolteacher in a tent with his wife, six children, and other extended family.

"I can't explain what it feels like living through constant displacement, losing your loved ones," he said. "All of this destroys us mentally."

Abu Radwan fled Rafah soon after the Israeli assault on the city began on May 6 as bombardment neared the house where he was sheltering. He and three other families paid \$1,000 for donkey carts to take them to the outskirts of Khan Younis, about 6 kilometers (3.6 miles) away, where it took a day living outside before they could assemble the materials for a makeshift tent. Next to the tent, they dug a toilet trench, hanging blankets and old clothes around it for privacy.

Families usually have to buy the wood and tarps for their tents, which can run up to \$500, not counting ropes, nails and the cost of transporting the material, the humanitarian group Mercy Corps said.

Israeli authorities controlling all entry points into Gaza have been letting greater numbers of private commercial trucks into the territory, the U.N. and aid worker say. More fruits and vegetables are found in markets now, and prices on some have fallen, Palestinians say.

Still, most homeless Palestinians can't afford them. Many in Gaza have not received salaries for months and their savings are depleting. Even those who have money in the bank often can't withdraw it because there is so little physical cash in the territory. Many turn to black market exchanges that charge up to 20% to give cash for transfers from bank accounts.

Meanwhile, humanitarian convoys with supplies for the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute for free have fallen to nearly their lowest levels in the war, the U.N. says.

Previously, the U.N. was receiving several hundred trucks a day. That rate has dropped to an average of 53 trucks a day since May 6, according to the latest figures from the U.N. humanitarian office OCHA on Friday. Some 600 trucks a day are needed to stave off starvation, according to USAID.

In the past three weeks, most of the incoming aid has entered through two crossings from Israel in northern Gaza and via a U.S.-built floating pier taking deliveries by sea. The two main crossings in the south, Rafah from Egypt and Kerem Shalom from Israel, are either not operating or are largely inaccessible for the U.N. because of fighting nearby. Israel says it has been letting hundreds of trucks through Kerem Shalom, but the U.N. has only been able to collect about 170 of them on the Gaza side over the past three weeks because it can't reach the crossing.

Entry of fuel has fallen to about a third of what it was before the Rafah offensive, according to OCHA. That reduced amount has to be stretched between keeping hospitals, bakeries, water pumps and aid

trucks working.

The American humanitarian group Anera "is having difficulty distributing what we are able to bring in to the people who need it because there's so little fuel for trucks," its spokesperson Steve Fake said.

Most of those fleeing Rafah have poured into a humanitarian zone declared by Israel that is centered on Muwasi, a largely barren strip of coastal land. The zone was expanded north and east to reach the edges of Khan Younis and the central town of Deir al-Balah, both of which have also filled with people.

"As we can see, there is nothing 'humanitarian' about these areas," said Suze van Meegen, head of operations in Gaza for the Norwegian Refugee Council, which has staff operating in Muwasi.

Much of the humanitarian zone has no charity kitchens or food market, no hospitals operating, only a few field hospitals and even smaller medical tents that can't handle emergencies, only pass out painkillers and antibiotics if they have them, according to testimony from Mercy Corps. "It's just a matter of time before people begin to suffer greatly from food insecurity," the group said.

The Muwasi area is mostly coastal dunes with no water resources or sewage systems. With human waste deposited near the tents and garbage piling up, many people suffer from gastrointestinal diseases such as hepatitis and diarrhea, as well as skin allergies and lice, Mercy Corps said.

One aid worker who fled Rafah said he was lucky and could afford to rent a house in Deir al-Balah. "You can't walk" in the town from all the tents that have arisen, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because his agency had not authorized him to speak.

Many people he sees in the street are yellow with jaundice or hepatitis, and "the stench is disgusting" from the sewage and piles of garbage.

Israel says its offensive in Rafah is vital to its war aim of destroying Hamas in Gaza after the group's Oct. 7 attack, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted around 250 others from southern Israel. Israel's campaign in Gaza triggered by the attack has killed some 36,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Aid groups have warned for months that an attack on Rafah will worsen Gaza's humanitarian disaster. So far, Israel's operations have been short of its planned all-out invasion, though fighting has expanded over the past three weeks from the eastern parts of Rafah to central districts of the city. A strike Sunday hit a tent camp in a western part of Rafah, causing a large fire and killing at least 45 people, according to health officials. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acknowledged a "tragic mistake" had occurred.

From the exodus the assault has caused, satellite photos taken last week show dense new tent camps running the length of the coast from just north of Rafah to outside Deir al-Balah. The ramshackle tents and shelters are densely packed in mazes of corrugated metal and plastic sheets, blankets and bedsheets draped over wooden sticks for privacy.

Tamer Saeed Abu'l Kheir said he goes out at 6 a.m. every day to find water, usually returning around noon to the tent outside Khan Younis where he and nearly two dozen relatives live. His three children, aged 4 to 10, are always sick, but he said he has to send them out to collect wood for the cooking fire, though he worries they'll come across unexploded bombs in the wrecked houses.

His aging father has trouble moving so has to use the bathroom in a bucket, and Abu'l Kheir has to regularly pay to transport him to the nearest hospital for kidney dialysis.

"Wood costs money, water costs money, everything costs money," said his wife, Leena Abu'l Kheir. She broke down in sobs. "I'm afraid I'll wake up one day and I've lost my children, my mother, my husband, my family."

Fears rise of a second landslide and disease outbreak at site of Papua New Guinea disaster

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Authorities fear a second landslide and a disease outbreak are looming at the scene of Papua New Guinea's mass-casualty disaster because of water streams and bodies trapped beneath the tons of debris that swept over a village, a United Nations official said Tuesday.

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A mass of boulders, earth and splintered trees devastated Yambali in the South Pacific nation's remote highlands when a limestone mountainside sheared away Friday. The blanket of debris has become more unstable with recent rain and streams trapped between the ground and rubble, said Serhan Aktoprak, chief of the International Organization for Migration's mission in Papua New Guinea.

The U.N. agency has officials at the scene in Enga province helping shelter 1,600 displaced people. The agency estimates 670 villagers died, while Papua New Guinea's government has told the United Nations it thinks more than 2,000 people were buried. Six bodies had been retrieved from the rubble by Tuesday, a U.N. statement said.

"We are hearing suggestions that another landslide can happen and maybe 8,000 people need to be evacuated," Aktoprak told The Associated Press.

"This is a major concern. The movement of the land, the debris, is causing a serious risk, and overall the total number of people that may be affected might be 6,000 or more," he said. That includes villagers whose source of clean drinking water has been buried and subsistence farmers who lost their vegetable gardens.

"If this debris mass is not stopped, if it continues moving, it can gain speed and further wipe out other communities and villages further down" the mountain, Aktoprak said.

A U.N. statement later tallied the affected population at 7,849, including people who might need to be evacuated or relocated. The U.N. said 42% of those people were younger than 16 years old.

Scenes of villagers digging with their bare hands through muddy debris in search of their relatives' remains were also concerning.

"My biggest fear at the moment is corpses are decaying, ... water is flowing and this is going to pose serious health risks in relation to contagious diseases," Aktoprak said.

Aktoprak's agency was raising those concerns at a disaster management virtual meeting of national and international responders Tuesday.

The warning comes as geotechnical experts and heavy earth-moving equipment are expected to reach the site soon.

The Papua New Guinea government on Sunday officially asked the United Nations for additional help and to coordinate contributions from individual nations.

An Australian disaster response team arrived Tuesday in Papua New Guinea, which is Australia's nearest neighbor. The team includes a geohazard assessment team and drones to help map the site.

"Their role will be particularly helping perform geotechnical surveillance to establish the level of the landslip, the instability of the land there, obviously doing some work around identifying where bodies are," said Murray Watt, Australia's minister for emergency management.

The Australian government has offered long-term logistical support for clearing debris, recovering bodies and supporting displaced people. The government announced an initial aid package of 2.5 million Australian dollars (\$1.7 million).

Earth-moving equipment used by Papua New Guinea's military was expected to arrive soon, after traveling from the city of Lae, 400 kilometers (250 miles) to the east, said Justine McMahon, country director of for humanitarian agency CARE International.

The landslide buried a 200-meter (650-foot) stretch of the province's main highway. But the highway had been cleared from Yambali to the provincial capital Wabag through to Lae, officials said Tuesday from Enga.

"One of the complicating factors was the destruction of parts of the road plus the instability of the ground, but they have some confidence that they can take in heavy equipment today," McMahon said Tuesday.

An excavator donated by a local builder Sunday became the first piece of heavy earth-moving machinery brought in to help villagers who have been digging with shovels and farming tools to find bodies.

Heartbroken and frustrated Yambali resident Evit Kambu thanked those who were trying to find her missing relatives in the rubble.

"I have 18 of my family members buried under the debris and soil that I'm standing on," she told Australian Broadcasting Corp. through an interpreter.

"But I can't retrieve the bodies, so I'm standing here helplessly," she added.

Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said an Australian air force C-17 Globemaster, a four-engine transport jet capable of carrying 77 metric tons (85 U.S. tons) of cargo, was already bringing supplies from Australia to Papua New Guinea's capital, Port Moresby.

Two smaller Australian air force turboprop transport planes were already at Port Moresby, which is 600 kilometers (370 miles) southeast of the devastated village.

"There is more that we are seeking to do, but to be frank, part of the issue here is about not overwhelming a system which is currently under a lot of stress," Marles told Parliament.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation with 800 languages and 10 million people who are mostly subsistence farmers.

The Latest | Israeli minister lashes out at Spain for moving to formally recognize Palestinian state

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel's foreign minister accused Spain of "being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes" on Tuesday, after the country moved to formally recognize a Palestinian state. Ireland and Norway were set to follow suit the same day in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations.

The diplomatic move has no immediate impact on the war in Gaza, but adds to international pressure on Israel to soften its devastating response to October's Hamas-led attack.

Over the weekend, an Israeli airstrike hit a tent camp in a western part of Rafah, causing a large fire and killing at least 45 people, according to health officials. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acknowledged a "tragic mishap" had occurred. The strike only added to the surging international criticism Israel has faced over its war with Hamas, with even its closest allies expressing outrage at civilian deaths. Israel insists it adheres to international law even as it faces scrutiny in the world's top courts, one of which last week demanded that it halt the offensive in Rafah.

In the past two weeks, more than a million Palestinians fled Rafah as Israeli forces pressed deeper into the city. People displaced by fighting lack shelter, food, water and other essentials for survival, the U.N. says. Israel says it needs to invade Rafah to destroy Hamas militants' last stronghold.

Israeli bombardments and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Israel launched its war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250. Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of around 30 more.

Currently:

- Netanyahu says deadly Israeli strike in Rafah was the result of a "tragic mishap."
- As Israel attacks Rafah, Palestinians are living in tents and scrounging for food.
- Spain's prime minister says its Cabinet will recognize a Palestinian state as the EU rift with Israel widens.
- An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon kills 2 people near a hospital, officials say.
- Iran's acting president addresses its new parliament. A watchdog says Iran has further increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Gaza at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's the latest:

NORWAY FORMALLY RECOGNIZES A PALESTINIAN STATE

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Norway on Tuesday formally recognized a Palestinian state with the Scandinavian foreign minister calling it "a milestone in the relationship between Norway and Palestine."

Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said "the recognition is a strong expression of support for moderate forces in both countries."

However, "it is regrettable that the Israeli government shows no signs of engaging constructively," Barth Eide said. "The international community must increase its political and economic support for Palestine and

continue the work for a two-state solution.”

Last week, Norway, along with Spain and Ireland, said in a coordinated effort that they were recognizing a Palestinian state.

SPAIN WILL BEGIN RECOGNIZING A PALESTINIAN STATE

MADRID — Spain moved to formally recognize a Palestinian state with Ireland and Norway to follow suit on Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations. Israel slammed the diplomatic move that will have no immediate impact on its grinding war in Gaza but adds to international pressure to soften its devastating response to October’s Hamas-led attack.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz accused Spain of “being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes” and told the country that its consulate in Jerusalem will not be allowed to help Palestinians.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who announced his country’s decision before parliament last week, has spent months touring European and Middle Eastern countries to garner support for recognition and a cease-fire in Gaza.

Relations between the EU and Israel nosedived Monday, the eve of the diplomatic recognition EU members Ireland and Spain, with Madrid insisting that sanctions should be considered against Israel for its continued deadly attacks in southern Gaza’s city of Rafah.

IRANIAN PARLIAMENT REELECTS HARD-LINER QALIBAF AS ITS SPEAKER

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran’s parliament reelected hard-liner Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf on Tuesday as its speaker, reaffirming its hard-right makeup in the wake of a helicopter crash that killed the country’s president and foreign minister.

Of 287 lawmakers voting Tuesday, 198 backed Qalibaf to retain the position he first took in 2021. He initially became speaker following a string of failed presidential bids and 12 years as the leader of Iran’s capital city. Many, however, know Qalibaf for his support as a Revolutionary Guard general for a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999. He also reportedly ordered live gunfire to be used against Iranian students in 2003 while serving as the country’s police chief.

Hollywood movies rarely reflect climate change crisis. These researchers want to change that

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Aquaman might not mind if the oceans rise, but moviegoers might.

That’s one of the takeaways from a new study conducted by researchers who set out to determine if today’s Hollywood blockbusters are reflective of the current climate crisis. The vast majority of movies failed the “climate reality check” proposed by the authors, who surveyed 250 movies from 2013 to 2022.

The test is simple — the authors looked to see if a movie presented a story in which climate change exists, and whether a character knows it does. One film that passed the test was the 2017 superhero movie Justice League, in which Jason Momoa’s Aquaman character says, “Hey, I don’t mind if the oceans rise” to Ben Affleck’s Bruce Wayne.

But most movies fell short — fewer than 10% of the 250 films passed, and climate change was mentioned in two or more scenes of fewer than 4% of the films. That’s out of touch with a moviegoing public that wants “to see their reality reflected on screen,” said Colby College English professor Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, lead researcher on the study.

“The top line is just that the vast majority of films, popular films produced over the last 10 years in the United States, are not portraying the world as it is,” Schneider-Mayerson said. “They are portraying a world that is now history or fantasy — a world in which climate change is not happening.”

Researchers at Maine’s Colby College published the study in April along with Good Energy, a Los Angeles-based environmental consultancy. The results were peer reviewed, and the authors are seeking publication in scientific journals. The researchers view the test as a way for audience members, writers and filmmakers to evaluate the representation of climate change on screen.

Some results were surprising. Movies that at first glance appear to have little overlap with climate or the environment passed the test. Marriage Story, Noah Baumbach's emotive 2019 drama about the collapse of a relationship, passed the test in part because Adam Driver's character is described as "energy conscious," Schneider-Mayerson said.

The 2022 whodunnit Glass Onion and the 2019 folk horror movie Midsommar were others to pass the test. Some that were more explicitly about climate change, such as the 2021 satire Don't Look Up, also passed. But San Andreas, a 2015 movie about a West Coast earthquake disaster, and The Meg, a 2018 action movie set in the ocean, did not.

The authors narrowed the selection of movies by excluding films not set on Earth or set before 2006 or after 2100. They found streaming services had a higher percentage of movies that included climate change than the major studios did.

The study is "valuable for marketing purposes, informational purposes, data accumulation," said Harry Winer, director of sustainability at the Kanbar Institute of Film and Television at the New York University Tisch School of the Arts. Winer, who was not involved in the study, said it could also help serve as an incentive to connect audiences with climate stories.

"The audience will be more open to hearing a dialogue about what is right and what is wrong," Winer said. "It's a conversation starter."

The study authors said they see the climate reality check as a kind of Bechdel-Wallace test for climate change. Alison Bechdel, a cartoonist, is credited with popularizing that test in the 1980s by incorporating her friend Liz Wallace's test about gender representation in film into a comic strip. The test asks if a movie includes at least two female characters who have a conversation about something other than a man.

Bechdel herself spoke highly of the study's climate test, which she described as "long overdue" in a social media post during this year's Academy Awards season. Bechdel said in an e-mail to The Associated Press that "for a movie set in the present to ignore this existential threat just doesn't make sense anymore" in the age of climate change.

"I do worry that screenwriters might do it in a kind of rote way, which could be counterproductive, just like rote 'strong female characters' are," Bechdel said. "But injecting an awareness of our communal plight into the stories we ingest seems like a no-brainer."

Belgium commits \$1 billion to Ukraine as Zelenskyy continues his whistlestop European tour

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday picked up a second \$1 billion promise of military aid in as many days for his war with Russia during a whirlwind tour through the European Union.

The pledge came from Belgium, which topped up the money with a commitment to give 30 F-16 fighter jets over the next four years. The Netherlands added to the goodwill by promising to quickly assemble with key EU partners a Patriot air defense system, which Zelenskyy sees as key in stopping Russia from hitting the power grid and civilian areas, as well as military targets, with devastating glide bombs that wreak wide destruction.

A day earlier, Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement with Spain that allocates 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) of military aid to Ukraine in 2024, and 5 billion euros (\$5.4 billion) by 2027.

The bilateral aid is essential since the 27-nation bloc is again struggling to overcome Hungary's objections to the bloc itself providing billions of euros in military aid to Kyiv, which is in its third year of war following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion.

An estimated 6.5 billion euros (\$7 billion) are stalled by the Hungarian government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is considered Russia's staunchest ally in the 27-nation bloc. Single member states have wide veto powers and Hungary has long held up funds aimed at boosting Ukraine's defense efforts.

Zelenskyy met with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo on Tuesday and as well as the immediate

money obtained a security agreement aimed at providing guarantees of military help until Ukraine joins the NATO alliance.

Since Russia launched a spring offensive around eastern Kharkiv, Zelenskyy has insisted Ukraine urgently needs seven more U.S.-made Patriot air defense systems to stop Russia hitting the power grid and civilian areas, as well as military targets, with devastating glide bombs that wreak wide destruction.

Dutch Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren, meeting with her EU colleagues, said that such a system will be built "in a short time frame." The Netherlands has the core components for a Patriot system and other EU nations will contribute other key parts and munitions.

"Ukraine is also fighting Europe's fight," she said.

Hungary, meanwhile, continues to oppose swift distribution of centralized EU aid, angering just about every one of its EU allies.

"We need all these critical decisions and still there are too many decisions which are not made," Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur told reporters ahead of the meeting. "The urgency is very, very acute."

Zelenskyy was to visit Belgium and Spain earlier this month but postponed all his foreign trips after Russia launched its offensive in the Kharkiv region.

Ukraine has repeatedly tried to strike behind Russian lines, often with drones, though Russia's response to the new technology used in unmanned vehicles has improved in recent months.

The onslaught unfolding as the weather improves has brought Ukraine's biggest military test since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Slow deliveries of support by its Western partners, especially a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid, have left Ukraine at the mercy of Russia's bigger army and air force.

Netanyahu says deadly Israeli strike in Rafah was the result of a 'tragic mishap'

By MELANIE LIDMAN, TIA GOLDENBERG and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that a "tragic mishap" was made in an Israeli strike in the southern Gaza city of Rafah that set fire to a camp housing displaced Palestinians and, according to local officials, killed at least 45 people.

The strike only added to the surging international criticism Israel has faced over its war with Hamas, with even its closest allies expressing outrage at civilian deaths. Israel insists it adheres to international law even as it faces scrutiny in the world's top courts, one of which last week demanded that it halt the offensive in Rafah.

Netanyahu did not elaborate on the error. Israel's military initially said it had carried out a precise airstrike on a Hamas compound, killing two senior militants. As details of the strike and fire emerged, the military said it had opened an investigation into the deaths of civilians.

Sunday night's attack, which appeared to be one of the war's deadliest, helped push the overall Palestinian death toll in the war above 36,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and noncombatants in its tally.

"Despite our utmost efforts not to harm innocent civilians, last night there was a tragic mishap," Netanyahu said Monday in an address to Israel's parliament. "We are investigating the incident and will obtain a conclusion because this is our policy."

Mohammed Abuassa, who rushed to the scene in the northwestern neighborhood of Tel al-Sultan, said rescuers "pulled out people who were in an unbearable state."

"We pulled out children who were in pieces. We pulled out young and elderly people. The fire in the camp was unreal," he said.

At least 45 people were killed, according to the Gaza Health Ministry and the Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service. The ministry said the dead included at least 12 women, eight children and three older adults, with another three bodies burned beyond recognition.

In a separate development, Egypt's military said one of its soldiers was shot dead during an exchange of fire in the Rafah area, without providing further details. Israel said it was in contact with Egyptian au-

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thorities, and both sides said they were investigating.

An initial investigation found that the soldier had responded to an exchange of fire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants, Egypt's state-owned Qahera TV reported. Egypt has warned that Israel's incursion in Rafah could threaten the two countries' decades-old peace treaty.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency closed meeting for Tuesday afternoon on the situation in Rafah at the request of Algeria, the Arab representative on the council, two council diplomats told The Associated Press ahead of an official announcement.

Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city on the border with Egypt, had housed more than a million people — about half of Gaza's population — displaced from other parts of the territory. Most have fled once again since Israel launched what it called a limited incursion there earlier this month. Hundreds of thousands are packed into squalid tent camps in and around the city.

Elsewhere in Rafah, the director of the Kuwait Hospital, one of the city's last functioning medical centers, said it was shutting down and that staff members were relocating to a field hospital. Dr. Suhaib al-Hamas said the decision was made after a strike killed two health workers Monday at the entrance to the hospital.

Netanyahu says Israel must destroy what he says are Hamas' last remaining battalions in Rafah. The militant group launched a barrage of rockets Sunday from the city toward heavily populated central Israel, setting off air raid sirens but causing no injuries.

The strike on Rafah brought a new wave of condemnation, even from Israel's strongest supporters.

The U.S. National Security Council said in a statement that the "devastating images" from the strike on Rafah were "heartbreaking." It said the U.S. was working with the Israeli military and others to assess what happened.

French President Emmanuel Macron was more blunt, saying "these operations must stop" in a post on X. "There are no safe areas in Rafah for Palestinian civilians. I call for full respect for international law and an immediate ceasefire," he wrote.

The Foreign Office of Germany, which has been a staunch supporter of Israel for decades, said "the images of charred bodies, including children, from the airstrike in Rafah are unbearable."

"The exact circumstances must be clarified, and the investigation announced by the Israeli army must now come quickly," the ministry added. "The civilian population must finally be better protected."

Qatar, a key mediator in attempts to secure a cease-fire and the release of hostages held by Hamas, said the Rafah strike could "complicate" talks. Negotiations, which appear to be restarting, have faltered repeatedly over Hamas' demand for a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, terms Israeli leaders have publicly rejected.

The Israeli military's top legal official, Maj. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, said authorities were examining the strike in Rafah and that the military regrets the loss of civilian life.

Speaking to an Israeli lawyers' conference, Tomer-Yerushalmi said Israel has launched 70 criminal investigations into possible violations of international law, including the deaths of civilians, the conditions at a detention facility holding suspected militants and the deaths of some inmates in Israeli custody. She said incidents of property crimes and looting were also being examined.

Israel has long maintained it has an independent judiciary capable of investigating and prosecuting abuses. But rights groups say Israeli authorities routinely fail to fully investigate violence against Palestinians and that even when soldiers are held accountable, the punishment is usually light.

Israel has denied allegations of genocide brought against it by South Africa at the International Court of Justice. Last week, the court ordered Israel to halt its Rafah offensive, a ruling it has no power to enforce.

Separately, the chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court is seeking arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as three Hamas leaders, over alleged crimes linked to the war. The ICC only intervenes when it concludes that the state in question is unable or unwilling to properly prosecute such crimes.

Israel says it does its best to adhere to the laws of war. Israeli leaders also say they face an enemy that makes no such commitment, embeds itself in civilian areas and refuses to release Israeli hostages unconditionally.

Hamas triggered the war with its Oct. 7 attack into Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seized some 250 hostages. Hamas still holds about 100 hostages and the remains of around 30 others after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year.

Around 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have fled their homes. Severe hunger is widespread, and U.N. officials say parts of the territory are experiencing famine.

What to know about Mexico's historic elections Sunday that will likely put a woman in power

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexicans will vote Sunday in historic elections weighing gender, democracy and populism, as they chart the country's path forward in voting shadowed by cartel violence.

With two women leading the contest, Mexico will likely elect its first female president – a major step in a country long marked by its “macho” culture. The election will also be the biggest in the country's history. More than 20,000 congressional and local positions are up for grabs, according to the National Electoral Institute.

The number of contested posts has fed bloodshed during the campaigns, as criminal groups have used local elections as an opportunity to exert power. A toxic slate of cartels and gangs have battled for turf and more than 20 people seeking political office have been killed just this year.

Also at play is the political legacy of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Mexico's often tumultuous relationship with the United States.

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES IN MEXICO'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?

Candidate Claudia Sheinbaum, the former mayor of Mexico City, has maintained a comfortable double-digit lead in polls for months. She promises to be a continuation of populist leader López Obrador and is backed by his ruling Morena party. Trained as a scientist, Sheinbaum has had to walk a fine line to carve out her own image while highlighting her connection to López Obrador, though she lacks the charisma that attracted many to her political ally.

Candidate Xóchitl Gálvez, an opposition senator and tech entrepreneur, represents a coalition of parties that have had little historically to unite them other than their recent opposition to López Obrador. Gálvez is a fierce critic of the outgoing president who doesn't shy away from verbal sparring, but who hasn't appeared to ignite much fervor for her Strength and Heart for Mexico coalition.

The third candidate is little-known Jorge Álvarez Máynez, a former federal congressman from the Citizen Movement party. He has focused on trying to scoop up the young vote, but has not gotten much traction.

WHAT HAS PRESIDENT LÓPEZ OBRADOR MEANT FOR THIS ELECTION?

Elected in 2018, López Obrador tapped into large swathes of the population like the working-class and poor, rural voters who had long felt forgotten by the political system. He made combatting corruption his top priority. Despite not being on the ballot, much of Sunday's election has revolved around him.

Though he remains highly popular, López Obrador has shown himself to be intolerant of criticism and oversight. And his critics say his moves to attack the judiciary, slash funding to Mexico's electoral agency and expand the military's responsibilities in civilian life have eroded Mexican democracy. The opposition has responded with large protests.

López Obrador is considered Sheinbaum's mentor and if she is elected, it would cement his legacy and show that his Morena party can survive beyond his presidency.

WHEN ARE MEXICO'S ELECTIONS AND HOW DOES VOTING WORK?

Parties selected their candidates well before the official start of campaigning for the presidential, congressional and municipal elections. On June 2, millions of voters will cast for their new leaders in a single round of voting. The winner of the highly anticipated presidential election will serve a six-year term.

While most eyes are on the presidential race, Mexicans will also vote for 128 senators, 500 congressional representatives and for nearly 20,000 local government positions.

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WHY HAS THE CAMPAIGN CYCLE BEEN SO VIOLENT?

Under López Obrador's "hugs not bullets" policy, which emphasizes addressing the societal root causes of violence, analysts say cartels and other criminal groups have expanded their control. Homicide rates have remained stubbornly high despite promises by López Obrador to ease the violence. López Obrador has in many cases refused to confront criminal groups, and activists say his government has tried to reduce the official count of Mexico's forcibly disappeared in the lead up to the election.

Cartels and other criminal groups see elections – particularly local elections – as an opportunity to make power grabs. They've warred for turf and at least 145 people tied to politics have been slain by organized crime this year, according to tracking by the human rights organization Data Civica.

Violence has been particularly severe in states where criminal groups are fighting for territory like Chiapas and Guerrero in the south, and Michoacan in central Mexico.

MEXICO'S FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT

Electing a female president would be a huge step in a country with soaring levels of gender-based violence and deep gender disparities.

Mexico still has a famously intense "machismo," or culture of male chauvinism, that has created large economic and social disparities in society. In its most extreme form, the misogyny is expressed in high rates of femicides, and things like acid attacks against women.

Yet a historic number of women in the socially conservative country are taking up leadership and political roles.

That's in part due to a decades-long push by authorities for greater representation in politics, including laws that require political parties to have half of their congressional candidates be women. Since 2018, Mexico's Congress has had a 50-50 gender split, and the number of female governors has shot up.

Both frontrunner Sheinbaum and Gálvez have promised to address high rates of gender-based violence and gender disparities if they win.

At least 22 dead in Memorial Day weekend storms that devastated several US states

By BRUCE SCHREINER and JULIO CORTEZ Associated Press

A series of powerful storms swept over the central and southern U.S. over the Memorial Day holiday weekend, killing at least 22 people and leaving a wide trail of destroyed homes, businesses and power outages.

The destructive storms caused deaths in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kentucky and were just north of an oppressive, early season heat wave setting records from south Texas to Florida.

Forecasters said the severe weather could shift to the East Coast later Monday and warned millions of people outdoors for the holiday to watch the skies. A tornado watch was issued from North Carolina to Maryland.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, who earlier declared a state of emergency, said at a Monday press conference that five people had died in his state. The fifth death was a 54-year-old man who had a heart attack while cutting fallen trees in Caldwell County in western Kentucky, the governor's office said.

The death toll of 22 also included seven deaths in Cooke County, Texas, from a Saturday tornado that tore through a mobile home park, officials said, and eight deaths across Arkansas.

Two people died in Mayes County, Oklahoma, which is east of Tulsa, authorities said. The injured included guests at an outdoor wedding.

The latest community left with shattered homes and no power was the tiny Kentucky town of Charleston, which took a direct hit Sunday night from a tornado that the governor said appeared to be on the ground for 40 miles (64 kilometers).

"It's a big mess," said Rob Linton, who lives in Charleston and is the fire chief of nearby Dawson Springs, hit by a tornado in 2021. "Trees down everywhere. Houses moved. Power lines are down. No utilities whatsoever – no water, no power."

Further east, some rural areas of Hopkins County hit by the 2021 tornado around the community of Barnsley were damaged again Sunday night, said county Emergency Management Director Nick Bailey.

"There were a lot of people that were just getting their lives put back together and then this," Bailey said. "Almost the same spot, the same houses and everything."

Beshear has traveled to the area where his father grew up several times for ceremonies where people who lost everything were given the keys to their new homes.

The visits came after a series of tornadoes on a terrifying night in December 2021 killed 81 people in Kentucky.

"It could have been much worse," Beshear said of the Memorial Day weekend storms. "The people of Kentucky are very weather aware with everything we've been through."

More than 400,000 customers across the eastern U.S. were without power Monday afternoon, including about 125,000 in Kentucky. Twelve states reported at least 10,000 outages earlier in the day, according to PowerOutage.us.

The area on highest alert for severe weather Monday is a broad swath of the eastern U.S., from Alabama to New York.

President Joe Biden sent condolences to the families of people who died. He said the Federal Emergency Management Agency is on the ground conducting damage assessments and he has contacted governors to see what federal support they might need.

It's been a grim month of tornadoes and severe weather in the nation's midsection.

Tornadoes in Iowa last week left at least five people dead and dozens injured. Storms killed eight people in Houston earlier this month. The severe thunderstorms and deadly twisters have spawned during a historically bad season for tornadoes, at a time when climate change contributes to the severity of storms around the world. April had the second-highest number of tornadoes on record in the country.

Harold Brooks, a senior scientist at the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, said a persistent pattern of warm, moist air is to blame for the string of tornadoes over the past two months.

That warm moist air is at the northern edge of a heat dome bringing temperatures typically seen at the height of summer to late May.

The heat index — a combination of air temperature and humidity to indicate how the heat feels to the human body — neared triple digits in parts of south Texas on Monday. Extreme heat was also forecast for San Antonio and Dallas.

In Florida, Melbourne and Ft. Pierce set new daily record highs Monday. Both hit 98 F (36.7 C). Miami set a record high of 96 F (35.5 C) on Sunday.

For more information on recent tornado reports, see The Associated Press Tornado Tracker.

Still hurting from violence, Mexican priests and families hope for peace ahead of elections

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

CHIHUAHUA, México (AP) — José Portillo Gil, the gang leader known as "El Chueco" — the Crooked One — lowered his gun. The Rev. Jesús Reyes then spoke what he feared might be his final words: Please, don't take my brothers' corpses away.

Next to him, at the altar of his church in northern Mexico, Jesuit priests Javier Campos, 79, and Joaquín Mora, 80, lay in a pool of blood.

"I could almost feel the bullets going through my body," said Reyes, who survived the attack without being shot.

The killings took place in Cerocahui in mid-2022, but the sorrow over the crimes has not diminished in the communities nestled in the remote Tarahumara mountains. Nor have Catholic leaders' demands for peace abated.

Since he took power in 2018, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has avoided direct confrontation

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with cartels and violent gangs controlling and terrorizing local communities. His " hugs, not bullets " policy has drawn extensive criticism from faith leaders, human rights organizations and journalists who have echoed victims' fears and anger.

Organized crime has long controlled swaths of territory in states such as Guerrero and Michoacan. Many people have been displaced from rural villages in Chiapas by warring cartels and some two dozen candidates have been killed ahead of June 2 elections.

Presidential front-runner and governing party candidate Claudia Sheinbaum hesitantly met with representatives from the Mexican bishops' conference. And though she agreed to sign a peace commitment that proposed strategies to reduce the violence in Mexico, the 61-year-old said she did not share the bishops' "pessimistic evaluation" of the current situation.

"In the time that I have been here in the Tarahumara, I had never faced such difficult times," said Reyes, whose hearing was severely damaged by the gunshots.

Like some other organized crime leaders, El Chueco, who was linked to the Sinaloa cartel, had control over the local beer market. He financed bars, a baseball team and had a say over local elections and police designations.

"We did not have safety, peace," Reyes said. "We were always in fear because he even showed up at parties and weddings."

Hours before El Chueco stormed into the church, furious by the defeat of his baseball team during a match, he shot one of the players and burned his home to the ground. He then headed to a hotel, where tourist guide Pedro Palma had just dropped off foreign tourists and asked El Chueco to behave. Palma, too, was shot and later taken to the church.

"Father Joaquín had just put the holy anointing on him when, all of a sudden, he (El Chueco) took out his gun and shot him twice," Reyes said. "Then Father Javier looked at him like saying 'What have you done?' and he shot him twice, too."

Members of the National Guard established a permanent base in Cerocahui in response to the killings and the military remained in the area after El Chueco was found dead in 2023. But that hasn't deterred locals from abandoning their homes to flee violence and death.

"Here in the mountains, there are many communities displaced by organized crime," said Azucena González, a teacher from the nearby town of Creel who works at a shelter for women facing risky situations. "We take in many families in which the husband is killed, and the wife can't stay."

González's hometown has a bloody history of its own.

In 2008, soon after then-President Felipe Calderon declared a war on drugs that spiked nationwide violence, armed men opened fire against a group of locals hanging out in a public square. The massacre killed 13, a baby among them.

It was a hellish scene, said Javier Ávila, another Jesuit priest who has worked in the region since the 1970s and arrived promptly at the massacre site.

"There were bodies everywhere," Ávila said. "But no signs of the police."

Instead of praying, he reached out to the local authorities and demanded security back-up. He asked the families to refrain from touching the bodies or altering the crime scene. He took late night walks to send a message: "I'm not afraid and I won't leave."

Among the inhabitants of the Tarahumara mountains, specially within the Indigenous Raramuri people, priests like Ávila, Reyes and the murdered Jesuits are often regarded as profoundly beloved figures who fearlessly offer comfort and help.

Deep in the Sierra, where no roads or phone signal are available, the Rev. Javier Campos worked closely with the impoverished communities. For his famous imitation of a rooster, he earned the nickname of "Father Gallo."

Many locals recall that he baptized their children or confirmed their grandchildren. Others remember him dearly for fixing their TVs or teaching them carpentry.

"He taught me how to play the guitar," said Rarámuri Jesús Vega during a sacred ceremony called Yúmari, which was celebrated on a recent Saturday at the town of Cuiteco.

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"When he died, I felt very sad," Vega said. "They (Campos and Mora) were very well-known priests who spoke our language."

Despite their deaths, they still seem present among those who ache from their murders.

During the recent Yúmari in Cuiteco, the community placed the Jesuits' portraits next to the image of a saint to whom they prayed for good harvests and Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of close to 100 million Mexican Catholics.

"We gathered here to ask God to look at us, because we are in need," said Sister Silvina Salmerón, from the Diocese of Tarahumara, where the murdered priests also served.

Earlier this year, four bishops from the Pacific coast state of Guerrero met with Mexican drug cartel bosses in a bid to negotiate a possible peace accord. The meeting highlighted how the government's policy of not confronting the cartels has left ordinary citizens to work out their own separate peace deals with the gangs.

"I have felt myself compelled to talk to the (criminal) leaders," said Ávila, whom the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights deemed in need of security measures for his protection. "Everyone has the freedom and right to do what they believe they should do to achieve peace."

Often, people knock on his door in Creel. A few ask for a marriage, a divorce or a blessing. Many others seek help to find missing family members or to denounce excessive use of force from the National Guard.

"People still believe in us," Ávila said.

In the last few days, a Raramuri man called him from a hill where he was hiding from criminals who took control of his ranch. "They threw us out and they are firing at us," the man told Ávila. "We've been here for three days, we've run out of food and my children are here with me. What should I do?"

Todos Los Santos Dolores Villalobos, a Raramuri women's rights defender, said Ávila, 81, taught her how to approach prosecutors' offices, civil registries, hospitals and human rights offices to intercede for the Indigenous communities she represents.

"The priests have understood us as Raramuri," Villalobos said. "We can go and tell them: they (the criminals) cut down our trees, stole our cows, locked us in. They brought destruction."

"If the priests are at risk, who will guide us?"

Celtics rally late again to close out Pacers for 4-0 sweep in Eastern Conference finals

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Derrick White stood stoically at midcourt as his teammates celebrated Monday night.

He saw Jayson Tatum toss the ball high into the air, Al Horford run toward the coaching staff and looking for his son long before Jaylen Brown hoisted the Eastern Conference finals MVP trophy. Even coach Joe Mazzulla shared the moment with his wife.

White, meanwhile, seemed ready to get back to work after making the tie-breaking 3-pointer with 43 seconds left, giving the Boston Celtics a 105-102 victory and their second trip in three years to the NBA Finals with a 4-0 sweep over the Indiana Pacers.

"Great shot. We work on that all the time, two-on-one reads," Brown said after scoring 29 points, grabbing six rebounds and blocking a key shot with 65 seconds left to preserve the lead. "Before that, I told D White just to stay ready and that was a big shot, a big shot to send us to the finals."

White scored just 16 points and made just 1 of 8 3s before making the decisive shot from the corner. Until then, he seemed to have taken a back seat to Brown, Tatum, who had 26 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, Jrue Holiday and even the 37-year-old Horford.

But when the Celtics needed a basket to chase the 18th NBA title in franchise history, the poised White delivered with a shot that will be remembered forever in Boston. The Celtics will now face either Dallas or Minnesota, which meet Tuesday in Game 4.

The Mavericks have a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals.

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"We feel confident, we feel comfortable in any type of game, and we feel we've got answers for anything at us," White said. "We've just got to find the right ones."

Boston's victory came exactly one year after White's tip-in rallied from the Celtics from a 3-0 deficit to tie the conference finals against Miami — only to lose Game 7 at home. This year, they've won seven straight playoff games, are 6-0 on the road and are 3-0 in elimination games.

It certainly wasn't easy against the Pacers, who were a perfect 6-0 on their home court before ending the season with two straight losses at a sold out Gainbridge Fieldhouse. Indiana lost three times in the series despite holding leads or being tied in the final minute. It happened again Monday as Boston pitched a shutout for the final 3 1/2 minutes.

Coach Rick Carlisle promised his team would fight hard to extend its season — and, as usual, this young roster didn't disappoint.

Tempers flared briefly in the third when Pacers center Myles Turner knocked guard White to the ground, Brown, who was named the MVP of the series, grabbed Turner's shoulder and Turner shoved Brown away. Turner was called for an offensive foul as he and Brown each drew technical fouls.

There was another scary moment when Brown's hand hit T.J. McConnell in the face, sending him crashing to the ground. The refs ruled it was a common foul following a replay review. But the two frays didn't change the back-and-forth tenor of this game — or this series — and the Pacers never backed down.

"Our guys embraced it," Carlisle said of his team's effort without Haliburton and throughout the playoffs. "Give them (the Celtics) credit for the stuff they pulled off at the end of the last two games. They simply made more plays."

Andrew Nembhard had 24 points, 10 assists and six rebounds but missed a potentially tying 3-pointer in the closing seconds and the Pacers never got the ball again. Pascal Siakam added 19 points and 10 rebounds for Indiana while T.J. McConnell had 15 points and Aaron Nesmith had 14.

But the Celtics dominated late again.

They pulled within 102-100 on Tatum's dunk with 3:12 to go, tied the score with 2:40 left on Brown's mid-range jumper and then took the lead on White's 3.

In between, Boston forced two turnovers and Brown blocked Nembhard's short at the rim with 1:05 left. Indiana had one more chance when Tatum missed a 3 with 8 seconds left, but Jrue Holiday chased down the rebound and ran out the clock before Indiana could foul.

"They fought us hard to the wire, they have pride as a team. They didn't want to give up," a relieved Tatum said. "We missed bunnies all night. I knew we were due for one. That was a big time shot."

Voter outreach groups targeted by new laws in several GOP-led states are struggling to do their work

By AYANNA ALEXANDER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — During the presidential election four years ago, the Equal Ground Education Fund hired over 100 people to go door-to-door and attend festivals, college homecomings and other events to help register voters across Florida. Their efforts for this year's elections look much different.

A state law passed last year forced them to stop in-person voter registration, cut staff and led to a significant drop in funding. Organizers aren't sure how robust their operations will be in the fall.

Genesis Robinson, the group's interim executive director, said the law has had a "tremendous impact" on its ability to host events and get into communities to engage directly with potential voters.

"Prior to all of these changes, we were able to operate in a space where we were taking action and prepare our communities and make sure they were registered to vote — and help if they weren't," he said.

Florida is one of several states, including Kansas, Missouri and Texas, where Republicans have enacted voting restrictions since 2021 that created or enhanced criminal penalties and fines for those who assist voters. The laws have forced some voter outreach groups to cease operations, while others have greatly altered or reduced their activities.

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The Florida law, signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis last May, imposed a \$50,000 fine on third-party voter registration organizations if the staff or volunteers who handle or collect the forms have been convicted of a felony or are not U.S. citizens. It also raised the fines the groups could face, from \$1,000 to \$250,000, and reduced the amount of time they are able to return registration applications from 14 days to 10 days.

A federal judge blocked portions of the law earlier this month, including the one targeting felons and those who are not citizens. Even so, the law had a direct effect on the operations of Equal Ground and other voter advocacy organizations in the state before the ruling.

The League of Women Voters in Florida, one of the plaintiffs, shifted away from in-person voter registration to digital outreach. Cecile Scoon, the league's co-president, said the law stripped the personal connection between its workers and communities. Digital tools aren't easy to use when registering voters and can be expensive, she said.

These organizations are needed because local election officials don't always provide adequate support and information, said Derby Johnson, a voter in Ormond Beach who attended a recent community event in Daytona Beach organized by Equal Ground. He said it appeared the Florida Legislature was just trying to make it harder for certain communities to register and cast ballots.

"There are parties actively working to suppress the vote, particularly in Black and brown communities, and these groups help educate and register voters to mitigate that," she said.

MOVE Texas, a voting rights group that focuses on voters who are 30 or younger, adjusted to that state's 2021 election overhaul with additional training for their staff and volunteers. Among the provisions drawing concern was one that increased criminal penalties for anyone who receives compensation for assisting a voter, which especially affected the ability to recruit high school and college students for voter registration drives.

"The law contributed to this culture of fear in our elections and being a person who registers voters," said Stephanie Gomez, the group's political director.

Republicans in Kansas overrode a veto by Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly to pass a bill that made it a felony if anyone registering voters impersonated or was assumed to impersonate an election official.

That forced Loud Light Kansas, a voter outreach group that focuses on minority communities, to stop its registration efforts. Would-be voters typically perceived their staff and volunteers as election workers even when told otherwise, said Anita Alexander, the organization's vice president.

"We're trying to engage impacted people, but we weren't willing to risk anyone getting charged by doing voter engagement work," she said.

Loud Light and other local voter registration groups sued the Legislature. The Democratic governor said there has been no evidence in the state of widespread voter fraud or instances of individuals impersonating election officials.

In Missouri, the state chapter of the League of Women Voters and the Missouri State Conference of the NAACP sued after the state enacted wide-ranging election legislation in 2022.

Among other things, the new law bans compensation for those who register voters and requires that anyone who helps more than 10 people register must also register with the secretary of state's office and be a voter themselves. Violators can face criminal penalties.

The completed secretary of state's forms are public, which presents a privacy concern for many people who might otherwise want to help with voter registration efforts, said Denise Lieberman, director and general counsel of the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition.

"Historically, when those membership lists have been obtained, they've been used to intimidate. So, there's a lot of trepidation, especially in groups that are targeting low-income or communities of color," she said. "If you just want to volunteer for one hour on a Saturday morning to help out on your college campus or on an Earth Day or anything, you have to go through this whole process."

The Missouri law is on hold while the legal challenge plays out, with a trial set for August.

Voting rights experts expect to see continued attempts to restrict voting and the activities of voter outreach groups in Republican-controlled states, said Megan Bellamy, vice president of law and policy at

the Voting Rights Lab.

"The effort to target third-party voter registration groups is just, unfortunately, one of many policy areas that state legislatures are moving to address," she said.

After a deadly heat wave last summer, metro Phoenix is changing tactics

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Terrified of being assaulted in a shelter, Pearl Marion couch surfed with family members and friends during last year's blistering summer so she didn't have to sleep outdoors.

This year, the 65-year-old woman plans to spend Phoenix's dangerously hot summer nights in a former cafeteria at the city's main library, sleeping in a chair, her head on a table. There's cool air, chilled water and security guards to keep anyone from stealing her bus pass.

"I love this place," Marion said in the space where a half-dozen other people napped and charged their phones. New arrivals were asked if they needed help with housing, substance abuse or air conditioning repair.

It's one of two overnight spaces that opened in early May after Maricopa County saw a staggering 645 heat-related deaths last year, about 50% more than the 425 confirmed for 2022.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs declared a state of emergency in 2023 after metro Phoenix experienced a 31-day streak of temperatures reaching at least 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius). The high in Phoenix has already hit 100 F (37.7 C) several times this year.

"People need cooling centers to be open longer and on weekends," said Dr. Rebecca Sunenshine, Maricopa County Department of Public Health medical director. "The other important piece we learned is that people need help finding cooling centers and other heat relief resources."

RECORD DEATHS

The record deaths came as Maricopa County led the United States in growth amid a housing crisis that saw higher rents and increased evictions. As the homelessness population swelled last year to over 9,600 countywide, climate change pushed temperatures higher.

Maricopa County's first heat-related death of 2023 was recorded on April 11 when 42-year-old Crystal Gradilla was found in a tent in a desert area as the high hit 99 F (37.2 C).

By mid-summer 2023, the county medical examiner's office reported that body storage was near capacity and put 10 refrigeration trucks on standby. While the extra storage wasn't necessary, it was clear more had to be done, especially to protect the homeless people accounting for 45% of the deaths in Arizona's most populous county.

This year, no heat-related deaths were reported in Maricopa County for 2024 through April.

WORKING TO DO BETTER

This year, Phoenix, Maricopa County and Arizona officials are working to protect people better.

Arizona has a new heat officer — Dr. Eugene Livar, the first such position in the U.S. — to carry out the governor's extreme heat preparedness plan. Phoenix appointed the nation's first city heat officer in 2021.

At least two cooling spaces in metro Phoenix will operate overnight, and others have extended hours, including on some weekend days.

A call center with 30 bilingual community health workers is tasked with helping people find the centers, pay electricity bills and repair home cooling units.

In past years, the 170 cooling centers scattered around metro Phoenix from May to October typically closed when the business day ended at 5 p.m. as high temperatures hit.

Arizona has solar-powered mobile units fashioned from shipping containers to be moved where needed.

PROTECTING HOMELESS PEOPLE

Officials and health professionals hope fewer homeless people will die this summer after a court order forced the city to clear a downtown Phoenix encampment known as "The Zone" where up to 1,200 people massed under the blazing sun.

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Hundreds went to shelters or found housing. About 150 people relocated with their tents to a nearby structured campground on a lot the city purchased.

People staying there are searched by security guards for drugs, alcohol and weapons. There are restrooms, showers and an air conditioned warehouse where up to 200 people can eat meals and escape the heat.

Hundreds more shelter beds gradually have been added in metro Phoenix in recent years. A main downtown campus hosts shelters with more than 900 beds. St. Vincent de Paul is completing a longer-term, 100-bed shelter nearby for older adults, military veterans and disabled people that will open this summer.

Maricopa County's annual count of homeless people in January showed a population slightly smaller than the previous year, with well over half now sleeping in shelters.

ELSEWHERE IN ARIZONA

While Phoenix is known for its heat, some Arizona communities get even hotter.

The state's high of 128 F (53.3 C) was recorded on June 29, 1994, in Lake Havasu City. In southwestern Yuma County, Dario Mendoza, a 26-year-old farmworker died July 20 after he collapsed in a field as the high hit 116 F (46.6 C).

Last year in Pima County, home to Arizona's second-most populous city of Tucson, there were 176 heat-related deaths and another 51 such deaths in the five additional rural counties that the medical examiner handles.

Dr. Greg Hess, Pima County's chief medical examiner, said his office can better track and categorize heat-related deaths after hiring an epidemiologist and adding a new online dashboard.

Hess said following and publicizing heat-related deaths can spark change, just as tracking fatal overdoses launched the fight against the opioid crisis.

"Investigating heat deaths has to be intentional," he said.

Last year's deadly heat wave in metro Phoenix didn't discriminate

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Priscilla Orr, 75, was living in her old white Kia in a supermarket parking lot last summer after telling her family she lost her money and home to a romance scam.

But the car broke down, and the air conditioner stopped working, leaving her vulnerable to the dangerous desert heat. Orr collapsed last July as she walked on the lot's scalding asphalt, which registered 149 degrees Fahrenheit (65 C) as the air temperature topped the triple digits.

She was dead by the time paramedics arrived.

Orr was among over 400 people who died last year in metro Phoenix from heat-associated causes during a 31-day streak of sizzling days of 110 F (43.3 C) or higher that stretched from the last day of June through all of July.

That's about two-thirds of 645 heat-related deaths confirmed from the whole year in Maricopa County, home to Phoenix and Arizona's most populous county. No other major metropolitan area in the U.S. has reported such high heat-associated death figures.

"This should not have happened to her," said Anna Marie Colella, Orr's former daughter-in-law and the mother of her three adult granddaughters. "She should have lived until she was 100, because that was just Priscilla."

Heat is the top cause of weather-related deaths, killing more people than hurricanes, tornadoes and floods combined, said Tom Frieders, the agency's warning coordination meteorologist in Phoenix.

Lives are at risk again this summer as the National Weather Service predicts above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation.

"We're just hoping it's not to the extreme level we saw last year," Frieders said.

HOTTER SUMMERS

Climate change is causing heat waves that bake more of the population for a longer time, with higher temperatures over wider areas, according to a study released this spring by Science Advances.

Last summer, Phoenix experienced the hottest three months since record-keeping began in 1895, in-

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cluding the hottest July and the second-hottest August. The daily average temperature of 97 F (36.1 C) in June, July and August passed the previous record of 96.7 F (35.9 C) set in 2020.

Of all heat-related deaths in Maricopa County last year, drugs or alcohol were a factor in nearly two-thirds, most commonly methamphetamine, followed by fentanyl. About 45% of the victims were homeless.

The July heat wave was noted by the pathologist who wrote the report on Doris Marie Long, an 89-year-old with heart disease and diabetes who died in her mobile home in the eastern suburb of Apache Junction.

Because only one of two air conditioning units were working, Long stayed most of the time in her home's cooler section. But when she was found, the indoor temperature was 116 F (44.6 C)

EVERYONE'S AT RISK

Taken together, the medical examiner reports for last year's heat wave deaths make clear that extreme weather does not discriminate.

The victims were old and young, male and female, homeless and well-to-do. They were Black, white, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American.

They ranged from a 19-year-old man addicted to fentanyl who collapsed in a roasting alley to a 96-year-old military veteran who died in a hospital after he was found unresponsive in his sweltering home without air conditioning.

Left vulnerable to the unrelenting heat after her eviction, Orr remained in frequent contact with relatives who tried to sort out exactly how she had been scammed and tried to keep her safe.

She initially stayed with different family members for a few days or weeks but always left for fear she was becoming a burden, said Hailey Orr, her youngest granddaughter.

The grandmother had been living in her car in the supermarket parking lot for several weeks before she died; family members would bring her cold water and tried to care for her.

The younger Orr told of missing her grandmother's sense of humor and love of animals, commenting on a favorite photograph of her smiling and holding a tiny kitten. She said she wishes her grandmother had accepted the family's offers for help.

VULNERABLE OLDER PEOPLE

Like Orr, almost two-thirds of the people who died were 50 or older. As people age, it becomes harder for the body to regulate its internal temperature. Older people also tend to have health conditions that make them more vulnerable to the heat, such as diabetes, heart and kidney problems, or high blood pressure. Prescription medicines like diuretics can cause dehydration, especially during warm weather in an area as arid as central Arizona.

For the aged, dementia can be a factor. An 83-year-old woman with Alzheimer's and a habit of wandering was found dead by her niece, collapsed in the stifling alley behind her home.

Most of the older heat victims were alone in their own homes, including a 73-year-old widow who died with her dog Pumpkin when the air conditioning in her \$1 million Scottsdale house malfunctioned. An 85-year-old woman of limited means who lived in an old parsonage in exchange for minimal rent and maintenance duties also died with insufficient cooling.

As the heat wave drew to an end, a caregiver found 79-year-old Concetta Davies, bedbound with dementia, and her husband, 74-year-old Ronald Davies, in the 102 F (38.8 C) heat of their home.

Not everyone who died was old.

Nathan Perkins, 33, died on a Sunday morning when he went hiking by himself in a remote desert area. The senior engineer at the utility cooperative Salt River Project was engaged to be married.

"He was a bright engineer who talked a lot about his family, fiancée and future of being a husband and dad," his supervisor Maria Naff wrote in an online tribute.

A pregnant 33-year-old woman with a history of drug use and schizophrenia was discovered on a scalding street and died on her way to the hospital. A 50-year-old homeless man died slumped at a bus stop.

LONESOME DEATHS

One thing most victims shared was isolation, spending their last moments without the comfort of loved ones or friends as the arid weather dried their sweat before they even noticed how overheated they were becoming. Heat stroke set in, their skin got hot and red, their pulse quickened and body temperature rose

before they lost consciousness.

Many older victims were people originally from the Midwest who retired in Arizona to escape cold winters, usually living alone far from relatives and without much contact with neighbors who may have checked on them. Or they were living in the street, without shelter to protect them from the brutal desert heat.

A 51-year-old man who had once been proud to be a former firefighter for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs died by himself far from his native Navajo Nation on a blistering Phoenix sidewalk the morning after he left a detox facility and went binge drinking.

A maintenance crew at a Phoenix elementary school discovered the body of a 60-year-old homeless man, Ronald Rogers, after he jumped over a 10-foot (3-meter) fence to get to the shaded grassy area next to a basketball court, breaking both legs in a jump or fall. County authorities never found his next of kin.

Rogers was later buried in Maricopa County's White Tanks Cemetery, where the dead are laid to rest if they they have no known family. Located in a rural area far west of Phoenix, the graves are lined up neatly in rows, each marked with a single red brick bearing a name and date of birth.

Michele Castañeda-Martinez's job as a division administrator for the county's Department of Public Health includes ensuring a proper cremation and interment of the ashes of people who die such lonesome deaths. Military veterans are entitled to interment at a national or state cemetery, but White Tanks becomes the final resting place for hundreds of people annually, with 513 burials there last year.

"Many times, there isn't anyone, even after all of our efforts," she said.

In Trump's hush money trial, prosecutors and defense lawyers are poised to make final pitch to jury

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, ERIC TUCKER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — Prosecutors and defense lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial are set to deliver closing arguments to the jury Tuesday, each side looking to score final points with the panel before it starts deliberating the fate of the first former American president to be charged with felony crimes.

The arguments, expected to last the entire day, will give the attorneys one last chance to address the Manhattan jury hearing the landmark case. After more than four weeks of testimony, the summations tee up a momentous and historically unprecedented task for the jury as it decides whether to convict the presumptive Republican presidential nominee in connection with payments during the 2016 election to prevent a porn actor from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump.

Prosecutors will tell jurors that they have heard enough testimony to convict Trump of all charges while defense attorneys will aim to create doubts about the strength of evidence by targeting the credibility of Michael Cohen, Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer who pleaded guilty to federal charges for his role in the hush money payments and who served as the star prosecution witness in the trial.

After the closing arguments are given, the judge will instruct the jury, likely Wednesday, on the law governing the case and the factors it can take into account during deliberations. The deliberations will then proceed in secret, though some clues as to the jury's thinking may arrive through any notes it sends to the judge with questions.

Trump faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records, charges punishable by up to four years in prison. He has pleaded not guilty and denied any wrongdoing. It's unclear whether prosecutors would seek imprisonment in the event of a conviction, or if the judge would impose that punishment if asked.

The case centers on a \$130,000 payment Cohen made to porn actor Stormy Daniels in the final days of the 2016 election to prevent her from going public with her story of a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump 10 years earlier in a Lake Tahoe hotel suite. Trump has denied Daniels' account, and his attorney, during hours of questioning in the trial, accused her of making it up.

When Trump reimbursed Cohen, the payments were logged as being for legal services, which prosecutors say was designed to conceal the true purpose of the transaction with Daniels and to illegally interfere in the 2016 election, in which Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump's lawyers contend they were legitimate payments for actual legal services, and they say that

his celebrity status, particularly during the campaign, made him a target for extortion, points they are expected to revisit during their closing arguments Tuesday.

The nearly two dozen witnesses included Daniels, who described in sometimes vivid detail the encounter she says she had with Trump; David Pecker, the former publisher of the National Enquirer, who testified that he used his media enterprise to protect Trump by squelching stories that could harm his campaign, including by paying \$150,000 to a former Playboy model to keep her from going public with a claim that she had had a yearlong affair with Trump; and Cohen, who testified that Trump was intimately involved in the hush money discussions — “Just pay it,” the now-disbarred lawyer quoted Trump as saying.

Prosecutors are expected to remind jurors of the bank statements, emails and other documentary evidence they have viewed, as well as an audio recording in which Cohen and Trump can be heard discussing the deal involving the Playboy model, Karen McDougal.

Defense lawyers called two witnesses — neither of them Trump. They focused much of their energy on discrediting Cohen, pressing him on his own criminal history, his past lies and his recollection of key details.

On cross-examination, for instance, Cohen admitted stealing tens of thousands of dollars from Trump’s company by asking to be reimbursed for money he had not spent. Cohen acknowledged once telling a prosecutor he felt that Daniels and her lawyer were extorting Trump.

Though jurors witnessed numerous memorable moments, they won’t be told during closing arguments about exchanges and rulings that occurred outside their presence — and there were many. Judge Juan M. Merchan, for instance, fined Trump \$10,000 for violating a gag order barring incendiary out-of-court comments and threatened to jail him if it continued.

The New York prosecution is one of four criminal cases Trump is confronting as he seeks to reclaim the White House from Democrat Joe Biden.

The three other state and federal cases center on charges of illegally hoarding classified documents at his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, and conspiring to overturn the 2020 presidential election. But it’s unclear that any of them will reach trial before the November election.

An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon kills 2 people near a hospital, officials say

By MOHAMMED ZINATY Associated Press

BINT JBEIL, Lebanon (AP) — An Israeli strike targeting a motorcycle in southern Lebanon hit next to a hospital entrance Monday, killing the motorcycle driver and a hospital security guard and wounding several civilians nearby, local health officials said.

It was not immediately clear who the driver was or why he was targeted in the strike in the town of Bint Jbeil.

The Israeli army did not give a statement on the strike but said it had targeted other areas of southern Lebanon in response to “terrorist launches.”

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has been exchanging strikes with Israeli forces in the border area almost daily since Oct. 8, a day after the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza began.

Mohammed Suleiman, director of the Salah Ghandour Hospital in Bint Jbeil, said they had initially received one person killed and nine wounded in the strike, most of whom were “civilians who were in front of the hospital, where family members and people accompanying the patients usually gather.”

Hospital officials later said that a security guard who was wounded in the strike had died.

The strike also caused minor damage to the hospital, an Associated Press photographer at the scene said.

Hezbollah later said it had launched a barrage of dozens of missiles at Meron, Safsufa and Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel in response.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 400 people in Lebanon since the war in Gaza began, most of them militants with Hezbollah and allied groups but also including more than 70 civilians and non-combatants. On the Israeli side, strikes from Lebanon have killed 15 soldiers and 10 civilians.

The clashes have displaced tens of thousands on each side of the border. Israeli officials have said they may launch an offensive in Lebanon if no diplomatic solution is reached that would allow the displaced to return.

The Israeli military said Monday that its reservists had in recent weeks "conducted a division-level and brigade-level exercise that simulated ground operations in Lebanon."

Hezbollah legislator Hassan Fadlallah, who visited the site of the strike in Bint Jbeil, said that Israel "will not be able to return settlers (residents) to the north in this way."

"The only way to stop everything that is happening in the region today and on the border with Lebanon is to stop the aggression against Gaza," he said.

Western countries, in particular the U.S. and France, have come forward with a series of proposals for a cessation of hostilities on the Lebanon-Israel border. Hezbollah has refused to enter into an agreement until a cease-fire is implemented in Gaza.

Initially, the proposals stipulated that Hezbollah would move its forces several kilometers away from the border, but a French diplomatic official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing negotiations said the latest proposal has abandoned this idea as Hezbollah would not agree to it unless Israel also halted its overflights in Lebanese airspace.

Instead, the new proposal would rely on a strengthened presence of the official Lebanese army and UNIFIL peacekeeping forces in southern Lebanon to enforce the cessation of hostilities, with a long-term aim of negotiations for demarcation of the land border between Lebanon and Israel.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was expected to arrive in Beirut on a diplomatic visit Tuesday.

At least 2,000 feared dead in Papua New Guinea landslide.

These are some challenges rescuers face

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The Papua New Guinea government said more than 2,000 people are believed to have been buried alive in a landslide in the South Pacific island nation, after the side of a mountain came down in the early hours of Friday morning when the village of Yambali was asleep.

The settlement is located in a restive and remote area in the interior of the poor, rural nation off the northern coast of Australia, making search and rescue efforts complicated and hazardous.

The government death toll is roughly triple the U.N. estimate of 670 killed. The remains of only six people had been recovered so far.

In a letter seen by The Associated Press to the United Nations resident coordinator dated Sunday, the acting director of Papua New Guinea's National Disaster Center Luseta Laso Mana said the landslide "buried more than 2,000 people alive" and caused "major destruction" at Yambali village in the Enga province.

Estimates of the casualties have varied widely since the disaster occurred, and it was not immediately clear how officials arrived the number of people affected.

Here's a look at some of the challenges:

DIFFICULT ACCESS, RESTIVE POPULATION

The village of at least 4,000, but believed to be substantially larger, is in a mountainous and forested part of Papua New Guinea's Enga province. It's located alongside a winding highway to the town of Porgera and a mine that has produced billions of dollars of gold but whose security personnel have been accused by rights groups of abuses.

The highway was covered by the landslide, effectively cutting off Porgera and the other villages past Yambali from the provincial capital of Wabag, some 60 kilometers (35 miles) from where the disaster occurred.

Emergency responders have brought aid in from Wabag, but have had to make the final 200 meters (yards) of the journey by foot over the rubble-covered highway.

Debris 6 to 8 meters (20 to 26 feet) deep covering an area the size of three or four football fields was being cleared exclusively by hand with shovels and picks for more than two days, until an excavator donated by a local builder arrived on Sunday.

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Survivors have been hesitant to allow heavy machinery to be used, however, because they do not want the bodies of their relatives harmed, said Serhan Aktoprak, the chief of the U.N. migration agency's mission in Papua New Guinea. The donated excavator was driven away Monday morning, though it's not clear whether that was related to locals' objections or for another reason, he said.

Military engineers with additional heavy equipment are being transported to the disaster scene 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the east coast city of Lae and are expected to arrive Tuesday or Wednesday.

DEADLY LOCAL FEUDS ARE COMPLICATING THE RESPONSE

Longtime tribal warfare in Enga province has not relented despite the disaster, meaning that soldiers have had to provide security for the aid convoys heading toward Yambali.

At least 26 men were killed in an ambush in February, and eight more died in a clash between two rival clans on Saturday in a longstanding dispute that's unrelated to the landslide. About 30 homes and five retail businesses were burned down in the fighting, officials said.

Convoys have only been able to travel by daylight due to the security risks, and with a two-hour drive each way, their time on site has been seriously restricted, Aktoprak said in a phone interview from Port Moresby, the country's capital.

Approximately 25 people from the U.N., other agencies and the military have been making the daily journey. On Monday, they reported seeing burning houses and men armed with machetes along the way, Aktoprak said.

Emergency crews also face the threat of an ongoing natural disaster as the earth continues to shift in the disaster zone.

The debris is getting increasingly waterlogged from three streams covered by the landslide, making it dangerous to work on and increasing the possibility it could slide farther downhill. Communities below have already been evacuated, Aktoprak said.

"We have a situation that is getting worse and worse every moment," he said.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

With the disaster ongoing and the rescue efforts still in their early stages, it's hard to know exactly what comes next.

But with all the small farms and food gardens that sustain the village's subsistence farming population destroyed, as well as much of its livestock, it is clear that the survivors of Yambali will need help for some time.

The village is near a river, but residents had relied on the three streams buried by the landslide for their drinking water.

Justine McMahon, country director of the humanitarian agency CARE International, said moving survivors to more stable ground was an immediate priority along with providing them with food, water and shelter. The military was leading those efforts.

In addition to people who have been evacuated from settlements lower than Yambali, Aktoprak said an estimated 6,000 have been affected by the disaster so far. If survivors end up moving to urban areas, "this will trigger additional economic and social problems."

Porgera and other towns past Yambali on the highway are now cut off and only accessible by helicopter, and it was not immediately clear what assistance people living in those areas may need as well.

The government of Papua New Guinea formally asked Monday for more international help.

The United States and Australia, a near neighbor and Papua New Guinea's most generous provider of foreign aid, are among governments that have publicly stated their readiness to do more.

Papua New Guinea makes up the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, with the western half belonging to Indonesia. It sits in the Pacific Ocean's so-called "Ring of Fire," a belt of active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.

Its population is officially around 10 million, but the U.N. has said there hasn't been a comprehensive census for years and the actual figure could be closer to 17 million.

Bill Walton, Hall of Fame player who became a star broadcaster, dies of cancer at 71

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Bill Walton was never afraid to be himself.

Larger than life, only in part because of his nearly 7-foot frame, Walton was a two-time NCAA champion at UCLA, a two-time champion in the NBA, a Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, an on-court icon in every sense of the word. And off the court, Walton was a chronic fun-seeker, a broadcaster who adhered to no conventional norms and took great joy in that, a man with a deeply serious side about the causes that mattered most to him.

"Bill Walton," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said, "was truly one of a kind."

Walton died Monday at the age of 71 after a prolonged fight with cancer, the league announced on behalf of his family. He was the NBA's MVP in the 1977-78 season, the league's sixth man of the year in 1985-86 and a member of the league's 50th anniversary and 75th anniversary teams. That followed a college career in which he blossomed while playing under coach John Wooden at UCLA, becoming a three-time national player of the year.

"I am sad today hearing that my comrade and one of the sports world's most beloved champions and characters has passed," Julius "Dr. J" Erving, a fellow Hall of Famer, wrote on social media. "Bill Walton enjoyed life in every way. To compete against him and to work with him was a blessing in my life."

Tributes immediately began pouring in, and the NBA held a moment of silence to commemorate Walton's life before Game 4 of the Boston Celtics-Indiana Pacers matchup in the Eastern Conference finals on Monday night.

Walton, who entered the Hall of Fame in 1993, was one of the game's most celebrated figures. His NBA career — disrupted by chronic foot injuries — lasted only 468 games combined with the Portland Trail Blazers, the San Diego/Los Angeles Clippers and the Celtics. He averaged 13.3 points and 10.5 rebounds in those games, neither of those numbers exactly record-setting.

Still, his impact on the game was massive.

"I love him as a friend and as a teammate," Celtics legend Larry Bird said. "It was a thrill for me to play with my childhood idol and together we earned an NBA championship in 1986. He is one of the greatest ever to play the game. I am sure that all of my teammates are as grateful as I am that we were able to know Bill. He was such a joy to know and he will be sorely missed."

Walton's most famous game was the 1973 NCAA title game, UCLA against Memphis, in which he shot 21 for 22 from the field and led the Bruins to another national championship.

"One of my guards said, 'Let's try something else,'" Wooden told The Associated Press in 2008 for a 35th anniversary retrospective on that game.

Wooden's response during that timeout: "Why? If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

They kept giving the ball to Walton, and he kept delivering in a performance for the ages.

"It's very hard to put into words what he has meant to UCLA's program, as well as his tremendous impact on college basketball," UCLA coach Mick Cronin said Monday. "Beyond his remarkable accomplishments as a player, it's his relentless energy, enthusiasm for the game and unwavering candor that have been the hallmarks of his larger-than-life personality.

"It's hard to imagine a season in Pauley Pavilion without him."

When Walton retired from the NBA he turned to broadcasting, something he never thought he could be good at — and an avenue he sometimes wondered would be possible for him, because he had a pronounced stutter at times in his life.

Turns out, he was excellent at broadcasting: Walton was an Emmy winner, eventually was named one of the top 50 sports broadcasters of all time by the American Sportscasters Association and even appeared on The New York Times' bestseller list for his memoir, "Back from the Dead." It told the story of a debilitating back injury suffered in 2008, one that left him considering taking his own life because of the constant pain, and how he spent years recovering.

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"I lived most of my life by myself. But as soon as I got on the court I was fine," Walton told The Oregonian newspaper for a story published in 2017. "But in life, being so self-conscious, red hair, big nose, freckles and goofy, nerdy looking face and can't talk at all. I was incredibly shy and never said a word. Then, when I was 28 I learned how to speak. It's become my greatest accomplishment of my life and everybody else's biggest nightmare."

The last part of that was just Walton hyperbole. He was known for his on-air tangents and sometimes appeared on-air in Grateful Dead T-shirts; Walton was a huge fan of the band and referenced it often, even sometimes recording satellite radio specials celebrating what it meant to be a "Deadhead."

And the Pac-12 Conference, which has basically evaporated in many ways now because of college realignment, was another of his many loves. He always referred to it as the "Conference of Champions" and sang its praises all the way to the end.

"It doesn't get any better than this," he once said on a broadcast, tie-dyed T-shirt on, a Hawaiian lei around his neck.

Walton was involved in the broadcasts of college and NBA games for CBS, NBC and ABC/ESPN in his career, along with stints working for the Clippers and Sacramento Kings as an analyst. He returned to ESPN and the Pac-12 Network, further touting the roots of his league, in 2012.

"Bill Walton was a legendary player and a singular personality who genuinely cherished every experience throughout the journey of his extraordinary life," ESPN Chairman Jimmy Pitaro said. "Bill often described himself as 'the luckiest guy in the world,' but anyone who had the opportunity to interact with Bill was the lucky one. He was a truly special, giving person who always made time for others. Bill's one-of-a-kind spirit captivated and inspired audiences during his second career as a successful broadcaster."

But Walton will always be synonymous with UCLA's dominance.

He enrolled at the school in 1970, before freshmen could play on the varsity team. Once he could play for Wooden, the Bruins were unbeatable for more than two years — Walton's UCLA teams won their first 73 games, the bulk of the Bruins' extraordinary 88-game winning streak. It was snapped against Notre Dame in 1974, a 71-70 loss in which Walton shot 12 for 14 from the field.

"Bill Walton's passing is a sad tragedy. One of the great ones in UCLA basketball history," Digger Phelps, who coached that Notre Dame team, posted Monday on social media. "We were great friends over the years. It won't be the same without him."

UCLA went 30-0 in each of Walton's first two seasons, and 86-4 in his career on the varsity team.

"My teammates ... made me a much better basketball player than I could ever have become myself," Walton said at his Hall of Fame speech in 1993. "The concept of team has always been the most intriguing aspect of basketball to me. If I had been interested in individual success or an individual sport, I would have taken up tennis or golf."

Walton led Portland to the 1977 NBA title, then got his second championship with Boston in 1986.

"Bill Walton was an icon," said Jody Allen, the chair of the Trail Blazers. "His leadership and tenacity on the court were key to bringing a championship to our fans and defined one of the most magical moments in franchise history. We will always treasure what he brought to our community and the sport of basketball."

The Celtics released a statement saying: "Bill Walton was one of the most consequential players of his era. ... Walton could do it all, possessing great timing, complete vision of the floor, excellent fundamentals and was of one of the greatest passing big men in league history."

Walton considered himself fortunate to have been guided by two of the game's greatest minds in Wooden and Celtics patriarch Red Auerbach.

"Thank you John, and thank you Red, for making my life what it has become," Walton said in his Hall of Fame speech.

Walton was the No. 1 pick by Portland in the 1974 draft. He said Bill Russell was his favorite player and referred to Bird as the toughest and best he played with, so it was appropriate that his playing career ended as a member of the Celtics. "Playing basketball with Larry Bird," Walton once said, "is like singing with Jerry Garcia," referencing the co-founder of the Grateful Dead.

In his final years, Walton spoke out about issues that mattered most to him, such as the problem of homelessness in his native San Diego, urging city leaders to take action and create shelter space to help those in need.

"What I will remember most about him was his zest for life," Silver said in a statement. "He was a regular presence at league events — always upbeat, smiling ear to ear and looking to share his wisdom and warmth. I treasured our close friendship, envied his boundless energy and admired the time he took with every person he encountered."

Walton died surrounded by his loved ones, his family said. He is survived by wife Lori and sons Adam, Nate, Chris and Luke — a NBA championship-winning player and now a coach.

Said Pacers coach Rick Carlisle, who was teammates with Walton in Boston: "He defiantly competed for every moment in life to be the greatest it could possibly be."

Major retailers are offering summer deals to entice inflation-weary shoppers

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans who spend Memorial Day scouting sales online and in stores may find more reasons to celebrate the return of warmer weather. Major retailers are stepping up discounts heading into the summer months, hoping to entice inflation-weary shoppers into opening their wallets.

Target, Walmart and other chains have rolled out price cuts — some permanent, others temporary — with the stated aim of giving their customers some relief. The reductions, which mostly involve groceries, are getting introduced as inflation showed its first sign of easing this year but not enough for consumers who are struggling to pay for basic necessities as well as rent and car insurance.

The latest quarterly earnings reported by Walmart, Macy's and Ralph Lauren underscored that consumers have not stopped spending. But multiple CEOs, including the heads of McDonald's, Starbucks and home improvement retailer Home Depot, have observed that people are becoming more price-conscious and choosy. They're delaying purchases, focusing on store brands compared to typically more expensive national brands, and looking for deals.

"Retailers recognize that unless they pull out some stops on pricing, they are going to have difficulty holding on to the customers they got," Neil Saunders, managing director of consulting and data analysis firm GlobalData, said. "The consumer really has had enough of inflation, and they're starting to take action in terms of where they shop, how they shop, the amount they buy."

While discounts are an everyday tool in retail, Saunders said these aggressive price cuts that cover thousands of items announced by a number of retailers represent a "major shift" in recent strategy. He noted most companies talked about price increases in the past two or three years, and the cut mark the first big "price war" since before inflation started taking hold.

WHERE CAN SHOPPERS FIND LOWER PRICES?

Higher-income shoppers looking to save money have helped Walmart maintain strong sales in recent quarters. But earlier this month, the nation's largest retailer expanded its price rollbacks — temporary discounts that can last a few months — to nearly 7,000 grocery items, a 45% increase. Items include a 28-ounce can of Bush's baked beans marked down to \$2.22, from \$2.48, and a 24-pack of 12-ounce Diet Coke priced at \$12.78 from \$14.28.

Company executives said the Bentonville, Arkansas-based retailer is seeing more people eating at home versus eating out. Walmart believes its discounts will help the business over the remainder of the year.

"We're going to lead on price, and we're going to manage our (profit) margins, and we're going to be the Walmart that we've always been," CEO Doug McMillon told analysts earlier this month.

Not to be outdone by its closest competitor, Target last week cut prices on 1,500 items and said it planned to make price cuts on another 3,500 this summer. The initiative primarily applies to food, beverage and essential household items. For example, Clorox scented wipes that previously cost \$5.79 are on shelves for \$4.99. Huggies Baby Wipes, which were priced at \$1.19, now cost 99 cents.

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Low-cost supermarket chain Aldi said earlier this month that it was cutting prices on 250 products, including favorites for barbecues and picnics, as part of a promotion set to last through Labor Day.

McDonald's plans to introduce a limited-time \$5 meal deal in the U.S. next month to counter slowing sales and customers' frustration with high prices.

Arko Corp., a large operator of convenience stores in rural areas and small towns, is launching its most aggressive deals in terms of their depth in roughly 20 years for both members of its free loyalty program and other customers, according to Arie Kotler, the company's chairman, president and CEO. For example, members of Arko's free loyalty program who buy two 12-packs of Pepsi beverages get a free pizza. The promotions kicked off May 15 and are due to end Sept. 3.

Kotler said he focused on essential items that people use to feed their families after observing that the cumulative effects of higher gas prices and inflation in other areas had customers hold back compared to a year ago.

"Over the past two quarters, we have seen the trend of consumers cutting back, consumers coming less often, and consumers reducing their purchases," he said.

In the non-food category, crafts chain Michaels last month reduced prices of frequently purchased items like paint, markers and artist canvases. The price reductions ranged from 15% to up to 40%. Michaels said the cuts are intended to be permanent.

DO THESE CUTS BRING PRICES BACK TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS?

Many retailers said their goal was to offer some relief for shoppers. But Michaels said its new discounts brought prices for some things down to where they were in 2019.

"Our intention with these cuts is to ensure we're delivering value to the customer," The Michaels Companies said. "We see it as an investment in customer loyalty more than anything else."

Target said it was difficult to compare what its price-reduced products cost now to a specific time frame since inflation levels are different for each item and the reductions varied by item.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which tracks consumer prices, said the average price of a two-liter bottle of soda in April was \$2.27. That compares with \$1.53 in the same month five years ago. A pound of white bread cost an average of \$2 last month but \$1.29 in April 2019. One pound of ground chuck that averaged \$5.28 in April cost \$3.91 five years ago.

WHY ARE COMPANIES CUTTING PRICES ON SOME ITEMS?

U.S. consumer confidence deteriorated for the third straight month in April as Americans continued to fret about their short-term financial futures, according to the latest report released late last month from the Conference Board, a business research group.

With shoppers focusing more on bargains, particularly online, retailers are trying to get customers back to their stores. Target this month posted its fourth consecutive quarterly decline in comparable sales — those from stores or digital channels operating at least 12 months.

In fact, the share of online sales for the cheapest items across many categories, including clothing, groceries, personal care and appliances, increased from April 2019 to the same month this year, according to Adobe Analytics, which covers more than 1 trillion visits to U.S. retail sites.

For example, the market share for the cheapest groceries went from 38% in April 2019 to 48% last month, while the share for the most expensive groceries went down from 22% to 9% over the same time period, according to Adobe.

HOW ARE RETAILERS FUNDING PRICE CUTS?

GlobalData's Saunders said he thinks companies are subsidizing price cuts with a variety of methods — at the expense of profits, at the cost of suppliers and vendors, or by reducing expenses. Some retailers may be using a combination of all three, he said.

Saunders doesn't think retailers are raising prices on other items to make up for the ones they lowered since doing that would bring a backlash from customers.

Target declined to disclose details but said its summer price promotion was incorporated into the company's projected profit range, which falls below analysts' expectations at the low end.

GPM Investments, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of ARKO Corp. said its suppliers are funding the convenience store promotions.

Closing arguments, jury instructions and maybe a verdict? Major week looms in Trump hush money trial

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The testimony in Donald Trump's New York hush money trial is all wrapped up after more than four weeks and nearly two dozen witnesses, meaning the case heads into the pivotal final stretch of closing arguments, jury deliberations and possibly a verdict.

It's impossible to say how long all of that will take, but in a landmark trial that's already featured its fair share of memorable moments, this week could easily be the most important.

Here's what to expect in the days ahead:

WHAT HAPPENS DURING CLOSING ARGUMENTS?

Starting Tuesday morning, prosecutors and defense lawyers will have their final opportunity to address the jury in closing arguments expected to last for much of the day, if not all of it.

The arguments don't count as evidence in the case charging Trump with falsifying business records to cover up hush money payments during the 2016 presidential election to a porn star who alleged she had a sexual encounter with him a decade earlier. They'll instead function as hourslong recaps of the key points the lawyers want to leave jurors with before the panel disappears behind closed doors for deliberations.

Look for prosecutors to remind jurors that they can trust the financial paperwork they've seen and the witnesses they've heard from. That includes porn actor Stormy Daniels, whose account of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump is at the heart of the case, and Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer Michael Cohen, who testified that Trump was directly involved in the hush money scheme and authorized payments.

It's worth remembering that the defense, which called only two witnesses but not Trump, doesn't have to prove anything or convince jurors of Trump's innocence.

To prevent a conviction, the defense simply needs to convince at least one juror that prosecutors haven't proved Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, the standard for criminal cases.

Expect the defense to try to poke holes in the government's case by disputing Daniels' testimony about her hotel suite encounter with Trump and by distancing Trump from the mechanics of the reimbursements to Cohen, who was responsible for the \$130,000 hush money payment to Daniels.

The defense may also assert one last time that Trump was most concerned about shielding his family from salacious stories, not winning the election, when it comes to the hush money that was paid.

And it'll certainly attack the credibility of Cohen, who pleaded guilty to federal charges related to the payment and who was accused by Trump's lawyers of lying even while on the witness stand. How much of his testimony the jury believes will go a long way in determining the outcome of the case.

Since the prosecution has the burden of proof, it will deliver its summation last — the reverse order from opening statements, in which the prosecution went first.

ONE LAST THING BEFORE THE JURY DELIBERATES

A critical moment will take place, perhaps Wednesday morning, before the jury begins its deliberations.

Judge Juan M. Merchan is expected to spend about an hour instructing the jury on the law governing the case, providing a roadmap for what it can and cannot take into account as it evaluates the Republican former president's guilt or innocence.

In an indication of just how important those instructions are, prosecutors and defense lawyers had a spirited debate last week outside the jury's presence as they sought to persuade Merchan about the instructions he should give.

The Trump team, for instance, sought an instruction informing jurors that the types of hush money payments at issue in Trump's case are not inherently illegal, a request a prosecutor called "totally inappropriate." Merchan said such an instruction would go too far and is unnecessary.

Trump's team also asked Merchan to consider the "extraordinarily important" nature of the case when issuing his instructions and to urge jurors to reach "very specific findings." Prosecutors objected to that as well, and Merchan agreed that it would be wrong to deviate from the standard instructions.

"When you say it's a very important case, you're asking me to change the law, and I'm not going to do

that," Merchan said.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, requested an instruction that someone's status as a candidate doesn't need to be the sole motivation for making a payment that benefits the campaign. Defense lawyers asked for jurors to be told that if a payment would have been made even if the person wasn't running, it shouldn't be treated as a campaign contribution.

ONCE THE JURY GETS THE CASE

The deliberations will proceed in secret, in a room reserved specifically for jurors and in a process that's intentionally opaque.

Jurors can communicate with the court through notes that ask the judge, for instance, for legal guidance or to have particular excerpts of testimony read back to them. But without knowing what jurors are saying to each other, it's hard to read too much into the meaning of any note.

It's anyone's guess how long the jury will deliberate for and there's no time limit either. The jury must evaluate 34 counts of falsifying business records, so that could take some time, and a verdict might not come by the end of the week.

To reach a verdict on any given count, either guilty or not guilty, all 12 jurors must agree with the decision for the judge to accept it.

Things will get trickier if the jury can't reach a consensus after several days of deliberations. Though defense lawyers might seek an immediate mistrial, Merchan is likely to call the jurors in and instruct them to keep trying for a verdict and to be willing to reconsider their positions without abandoning their conscience or judgment just to go along with others.

If, after that instruction, the jury still can't reach a verdict, the judge would have the option to deem the panel hopelessly deadlocked and declare a mistrial.

Armenians, Hmong and other groups feel US race and ethnicity categories don't represent them

By TERRY TANG and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The federal government recently reclassified race and ethnicity groups in an effort to better capture the diversity of the United States, but some groups feel the changes miss the mark.

Hmong, Armenian, Black Arab and Brazilian communities in the U.S. say they are not represented accurately in the official numbers. While the revisions were widely applauded, these communities say the changes have created a tension between how the federal government classifies them versus how they identify themselves.

The groups say money, political power and even health could be at stake. Being lumped into the wrong column can mean a gain or loss of government funds that are distributed based on data. For some, it's about their identity and feeling seen by their own country.

The Office of Management and Budget said the working group that oversaw the revisions held 94 "listening sessions" with many advocacy groups, academics and the general public, and it will continue to reach out to communities.

HMONG AND THE SECRET WAR

During the Vietnam War and unbeknownst to the American public, the CIA recruited Lao and Hmong people to fight the spread of communism throughout Southeast Asia. Tens of thousands of Hmong soldiers died while others fled to the U.S. as a result of what became known as the "secret war."

By the 1970s, many Hmong had resettled in Minnesota, Wisconsin and central California. Today, Hmong in the U.S. number more than 300,000. Some states recognize Hmong and Lao veterans with annual ceremonies, and in April, the Wisconsin governor signed a law mandating that Hmong American history be taught in schools.

Given their history fighting in that region for the U.S., many Hmong feel strongly that they should be classified as Southeast Asian. But because China is considered the Hmong ancestral homeland, the U.S. Census Bureau categorized them as East Asian after the 2020 census.

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"That has been very hurtful to our elders and to our veterans who sacrificed so much to get us here to this country after everything they did to help the U.S. during the Vietnam War," said May yer Thao, president and CEO of the St. Paul, Minnesota-based Hmong American Partnership.

The East Asian label also pains them because the Hmong were oppressed in China as an ethnic minority and sought refuge in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, according to Quỳên Dinh, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

Those who object to the classification also have a practical concern: the East Asian grouping could hide socioeconomic disparities between Hmong and other Asian households that need to be addressed. The per capita income of Hmong was almost \$26,000, while it was more than \$53,000 for Asians overall, according to the 2022 American Community Survey.

"We are still one of the most impoverished communities in this nation," Thao said.

The Census Bureau says it's working with the Hmong community to improve their classification.

THE EXCLUDED BACKGROUNDS

When the government revised its race and ethnicity standards in March — its first major alteration since 1997 — its seven categories included a new one, Middle Eastern or North African, or MENA. The revisions also encouraged detailed data collection about respondents' backgrounds, such as African American, Jamaican and Haitian under the Black category.

Missing from the list of backgrounds under the new MENA category: Black Arabs from such countries as Somalia and Sudan, and Armenians. The groups were left out after a 2015 field test by the Census Bureau found that most Armenians still identified as white and most Somali and Sudanese respondents identified as Black even when MENA was an option.

Some advocates said the decision to omit Black Arabs from being included in the MENA category was based on outdated research.

For many Armenian Americans, not having their own category amounts to an existential threat as a large part of their diaspora's culture is now concentrated in the United States. Ethnic Armenians also have communities around Europe and the Middle East, in particular Lebanon.

Many are descendants of those who fled the 1915 campaign by Ottoman Turks in which some 1.5 million Armenians died in massacres, deportations and forced marches. The atrocities, which emptied many ethnic areas in eastern Turkey, are widely viewed by historians as genocide. Turkey rejects the description of genocide, saying the toll has been inflated and that those killed were victims of civil war and unrest during World War I.

Without Armenian inclusion in the MENA subcategories, many will likely categorize themselves as being from a different country. That could diminish their official numbers and reduce their power when it comes to redrawing political districts in places with large Armenian communities, said Sophia Armen, chair of the Census Taskforce of the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region.

"We will now be undercounted by potentially hundreds of thousands of people," Armen said. "It spells out a very real destruction of Armenian identity in the next two generations."

During the last redistricting round following the 2020 census, Armenians in greater Los Angeles — which has the largest concentration of Armenians outside Armenia — were almost split up into different city districts, but the redistricting plan was modified after they sounded the alarm. There are an estimated 460,000 Armenian Americans in the U.S., with half living in California, according to the 2022 American Community Survey.

Being identified in the data correctly also is important to local health departments. It can influence anything from vaccination outreach in the proper language to tailoring health campaigns for specific communities.

Armenian Americans, for instance, are more likely to suffer from hypertension than the general population, but there's not a lot of data.

MANY BRAZILIANS IDENTIFY AS HISPANIC

A coding error last year in an annual Census Bureau survey offered unprecedented insight into how large

numbers of Brazilians in the U.S. identify as Hispanic or Latino.

An analysis by Pew Research Center showed that the coding mistake revealed at least 416,000 Brazilians, or more than two-thirds of Brazilians in the U.S., also identified as Hispanic in the 2020 American Community Survey.

Usually, if someone marks Hispanic and Brazilian on the survey, they are recoded as "not Hispanic" when the numbers are crunched.

Not including Brazilians, or Haitians for that matter, in the definition of Hispanic or Latino, means that large numbers of Afro-Latinos aren't counted, Michelle Bueno Vásquez, a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Northwestern University, wrote the Office of Management and Budget.

"The OMB as it stands fails Latinos, especially Afro-Latinos who continually suffer double discrimination and marginalization, on top of statistical invisibility, in the United States," she said.

Researching the impacts of categorizing Brazilians as Hispanic was among the recommendations a Census Bureau advisory committee made last month.

"Policy is driven by data, first and foremost," Armen said of people who feel missed in the classifications. "It just seems like we are purposely being ignored."

Iran further increases its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels, watchdog says

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Iran has further increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels, according to a confidential report on Monday by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the latest in Tehran's attempts to steadily exert pressure on the international community.

Iran is seeking to have economic sanctions imposed over the country's controversial nuclear program lifted in exchange for slowing the program down. The program — as all matters of state in Iran — are under the guidance of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and that likely won't change in the wake of last week's helicopter crash that killed Iran's president and foreign minister.

The report by the International Atomic Energy Agency also comes against the backdrop of heightened tensions in the wider Middle East over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. Israel and Iran have carried out direct strikes on each other's territory for the first time last month.

The report, seen by The Associated Press, said that as of May 11, Iran has 142.1 kilograms (313.2 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60% — an increase of 20.6 kilograms (45.4 pounds) since the last report by the U.N. watchdog in February. Uranium enriched at 60% purity is just a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

By IAEA's definition, around 42 kilograms (92.5 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60% is the amount at which creating one atomic weapon is theoretically possible — if the material is enriched further, to 90%.

Also as of May 11, the report says Iran's overall stockpile of enriched uranium stands at 6,201.3 kilograms (1,3671.5 pounds), which represents an increase of 675.8 kilograms (1,489.8 pounds) since the IAEA's previous report.

Iran has maintained its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only, but the IAEA chief, Rafael Mariano Grossi, has previously warned that Tehran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade levels to make "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to do so. He has acknowledged the U.N. agency cannot guarantee that none of Iran's centrifuges may have been peeled away for clandestine enrichment.

Tensions have grown between Iran and the IAEA since 2018, when then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers. Since then, Iran has abandoned all limits the deal put on its program and quickly stepped up enrichment.

Under the original nuclear deal, struck in 2015, Iran was allowed to enrich uranium only up to 3.67% purity, maintain a stockpile of about 300 kilograms and use only very basic IR-1 centrifuges — machines that spin uranium gas at high speed for enrichment purposes.

The 2015 deal saw Tehran agree to limit enrichment of uranium to levels necessary for generating nuclear

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power in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. At the time, U.N. inspectors were tasked with monitoring the program.

Monday's report also said that Tehran has not reconsidered its September 2023 decision to bar IAEA inspectors from further monitoring its nuclear program and added that it expects Iran "to do so in the context of the ongoing consultations between the (IAEA) agency and Iran."

According to the report, Grossi "deeply regrets" Iran's decision to bar inspectors — and a reversal of that decision "remains essential to fully allow the agency to conduct its verification activities in Iran effectively."

The deaths of Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian have triggered a pause in the IAEA's talks with Tehran over improving cooperation, the report acknowledged.

Before the May 19 helicopter crash, Iran had agreed to hold technical negotiations with IAEA on May 20, following a visit by Grossi earlier in the month. But those meetings fell apart due to the crash. Iran then sent a letter on May 21, saying its nuclear team wants to continue discussions in Tehran "on an appropriate date that will be mutually agreed upon," the report said.

The report also said Iran has still not provided answers to the IAEA's years-long investigation about the origin and current location of manmade uranium particles found at two locations that Tehran has failed to declare as potential nuclear sites, Varamin and Turqzabad.

It said the IAEA's request need to be resolved, otherwise the the agency "will not be able to confirm the correctness an completeness of Iran's declarations" under a safeguards agreement between Tehran and the nuclear watchdog.

The report also said there was no progress so far in reinstalling more monitoring equipment, including cameras, removed in June 2022. Since then, the only recorded data is that of IAEA cameras installed at a centrifuge workshop in the city of Isfahan in May 2023 — although Iran has not provided the IAEA with access to this data.

The IAEA said that on May 21, IAEA inspectors after a delay in April "successfully serviced the cameras at the workshops in Isfahan and the data they had collected since late December 2023 were placed under separate Agency seals and Iranians seals at the locations."

Friday's preholiday travel breaks the record for the most airline travelers screened at US airports

ATLANTA (AP) — A record was broken ahead of the Memorial Day weekend for the number of airline travelers screened at U.S. airports, the Transportation Security Administration said Saturday.

More than 2.9 million travelers were screened at U.S. airports on Friday, surpassing a previous record set last year on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, according to the transportation security agency.

"Officers have set a new record for most travelers screened in a single day!" the TSA tweeted. "We recommend arriving early."

The third busiest day on record was set on Thursday when just under 2.9 million travelers were screened at U.S. airports.

In Atlanta, the world's busiest airport had its busiest day ever. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport broke a traffic record on Thursday when 111,000 passengers, airlines crew and airport employees were screened at security checkpoints. The second busiest day followed on Friday when 109,960 people were screened, according to the TSA.

With 104.6 million passengers, the Atlanta airport was the busiest in the world last year, according to Airports Council International.

U.S. airlines expect to carry a record number of passengers this summer. Their trade group estimates that 271 million travelers will fly between June 1 and August 31, breaking the record of 255 million set last summer.

AAA predicted this will be the busiest start-of-summer weekend in nearly 20 years, with 43.8 million people expected to roam at least 50 miles from home between Thursday and Monday — 38 million of them taking vehicles.

The annual expression of wanderlust that accompanies the start of the summer travel season is happening at a time when Americans tell pollsters they are worried about the economy and the direction of the country.

In what had long been celebrated every May 30 to honor America's fallen soldiers, Memorial Day officially became a federal holiday in 1971, observed on the last Monday in May.

Jason Redman, a retired Navy SEAL who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, told The Associated Press last year that he honors the friends he's lost. Thirty names are tattooed on his arm "for every guy that I personally knew that died."

Biden says each generation has to 'earn' freedom, in solemn Memorial Day remarks

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden marked Memorial Day with a pledge that the country would continue the work of the nation's fallen toward a more perfect union, "for which they lived, and for which they died."

Delivering remarks at a solemn remembrance ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, Biden said each generation must ensure the sacrifice of the country's service members is not in vain.

"Freedom has never been guaranteed," Biden said under gray skies in the memorial amphitheater. "Every generation has to earn it, fight for it, defend it in the battle between autocracy and democracy, between the greed of a few, and the rights of many."

He added: "On this day, we came together again to reflect, to remember, and above all, to recommit to the future they fought for, a future grounded in freedom, democracy, opportunity and equality. Not just for some, but for all."

Before the ceremony began, Biden, joined by Vice President Kamala Harris and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In his remarks, Biden invoked the anniversary this week of the death of his son Beau, who served in Iraq and later died from brain cancer that the president attributes to his time stationed near toxic burn pits, to highlight the importance of honoring the service of those who came home with injuries, in addition to the dead.

"Last year, the VA delivered more benefits and processed more claims than ever in our history," Biden said, crediting the PACT Act which grants automatic coverage for certain health conditions suffered by veterans by presuming they result from their military service. "For too long after fighting for our nation, these veterans had to fight to get the right health care, to get the benefits they had earned, not anymore."

Biden began the day hosting a breakfast at the White House for administration officials, military leaders, veterans, and Gold Star family members.

Suspect identified in stabbings at a Massachusetts theater and a McDonald's

BRAINTREE, Mass. (AP) — A Massachusetts man will be arraigned Tuesday on multiple charges including assault with the intent to murder after six people, including four girls at a movie theater, were stabbed in separate attacks, officials said.

Jared Ravizza, 26, of Chilmark, a town on Martha's Vineyard, was arrested Saturday night after a police pursuit.

Police said a person entered the AMC Braintree 10 south of Boston about 6 p.m. Saturday and went into one of the theaters without paying.

The girls, ages 9 to 17, were inside the theater when the individual suddenly attacked them "without saying anything and without any warning" before running out, the Braintree Police Department said in a

news release.

The four suffered non-life-threatening injuries and were taken to hospitals.

Video footage showed the suspect's vehicle and a license plate, and that information was broadcast to law enforcement, police said.

A vehicle matching that description was later seen in Plymouth, about 27 miles (43 kilometers) south of Braintree. Police said it had left a McDonald's restaurant, where a 21-year-old woman and a 29-year-old man were found stabbed. Both were taken to hospitals with injuries.

Surveillance video appears to show Ravizza allegedly reaching through the drive-through window and stab the man with a large knife, according to the district attorney's office.

State police found the vehicle another 20 miles (32.19 kilometers) south, in Sandwich, and unsuccessfully attempted to pull it over. The vehicle later crashed.

Ravizza, the driver, was taken into custody shortly afterward and was being treated at a hospital for non-life-threatening injuries, police said.

Ravizza is being charged in the restaurant attack and is being investigated in the theater stabbings, officials said.

Ravizza was arrested in April on Martha's Vineyard and charged with assault and battery on a family or household member, as well as vandalism, after he allegedly attacked his father, according to court records, The Boston Globe reported.

Ravizza's father told officers that Ravizza "had just had a mental break and attacked him" inside his home, according to the police report.

The newspaper reported that Ravizza was sent to Martha's Vineyard Hospital for a mental health evaluation, but "did not meet their standards to be held," the report said. The Edgartown case was sent to pretrial diversion.

It was not immediately known if Ravizza has an attorney who can speak on his behalf. No phone listing could be found in Ravizza's name.

Relations between EU and Israel plummet as Spain, Ireland prepare to recognize a Palestinian state

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Relations between the European Union and Israel took a nosedive Monday, the eve of the diplomatic recognition of a Palestinian state by EU members Ireland and Spain, with Madrid insisting that sanctions should be considered against Israel for its continued deadly attacks in southern Gaza's city of Rafah.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz told Spain that its consulate in Jerusalem will not be allowed to help Palestinians.

At the same time, the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell threw his weight to support the International Criminal Court, whose prosecutor is seeking an arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others, including leaders of the Hamas militant group.

"The prosecutor of the court has been strongly intimidated and accused of antisemitism — as always when anybody, anyone does something that Netanyahu's government does not like," Borrell said. "The word antisemitic, it's too heavy. It's too important."

Spain, Ireland and Norway plan to make official their recognition of a Palestinian state on Tuesday. While dozens of countries have recognized a Palestinian state, none of the major Western powers has done so, and it is unclear how much of a difference the move by Ireland, Spain and non-EU member Norway might make on the ground. The recognition, however, is a significant accomplishment for the Palestinians, who believe it confers international legitimacy on their struggle.

Angry words abounded, with Katz accusing Spain of "rewarding terror" by recognizing a Palestinian state, and saying that "the days of the Inquisition are over." He referred to the infamous Spanish institution

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started in the 15th century to maintain Roman Catholic orthodoxy that forced Jews and Muslims to flee, convert to Catholicism or, in some instances, face death.

"No one will force us to convert our religion or threaten our existence. Those who harm us, we will harm in return," said Katz.

Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares slammed the comments, and said his colleagues from Ireland and Norway were "also receiving absolutely unjustified and absolutely reprehensible provocations from our Israeli colleague" because of their plans to recognize Palestine.

"In the face of those who want to divide us with any type of intimidating propaganda, the unity of Europeans is essential to send a very powerful message," he said.

Also on Monday, Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob said his government will decide on the recognition of a Palestinian state on Thursday and forward its decision to parliament for final approval. Slovenia launched the recognition procedure earlier this month, and Golob has been under pressure to speed up the process since Spain, Norway and Ireland announced they would go ahead with recognition.

Borrell said the actions of the Israeli government, including plans to stop transferring tax revenue earmarked for the Palestinian Authority, could no longer be reconciled with the idea he had about the state of Israel.

"From now on, I will never again say 'Israel,' (but) will say 'Netanyahu government' because it is this government who is taking these decisions," Borrell said.

Even though the EU and its member nations have been steadfast in condemning the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack in which militants stormed across the Gaza border into Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage, the bloc has been equally critical of Israel's ensuing offensive that has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

The latest attacks have centered on Rafah, where Palestinian health workers said Israeli airstrikes killed at least 45 people Sunday, hit tents for displaced people and left "numerous" others trapped in flaming debris.

Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto said such strikes will have long-standing repercussions. "Israel with this choice is spreading hatred, rooting hatred that will involve their children and grandchildren. I would have preferred another decision," he told SKY TG24.

The strikes came after the U.N.'s top court, the International Court of Justice, on Friday demanded that Israel immediately halt its offensive on Rafah, even if it stopped short of ordering a cease-fire for the Gaza enclave.

Albares said Spain and other countries asked Borrell "to provide a list of what measures the European Union could apply" to make Israel heed the ICJ's ruling and explain what the EU has done in the past in similar circumstances "when there has been a flagrant violation of international law."

The joint announcement by Spain, Ireland and Norway last week triggered an angry response from Israeli authorities, which summoned the countries' ambassadors in Tel Aviv to the Foreign Ministry, where they were filmed while being shown videos of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack and abductions.

Albares criticized the treatment of the European ambassadors in Israel. "We reject something that is not within diplomatic courtesy and the customs of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," he said.

"But at the same time we have also agreed that we are not going to fall for any provocation that distances us from our goal," he added. "Our aim is to recognize the state of Palestine tomorrow, make all possible efforts to achieve a permanent cease-fire as soon as possible and also, in the end, to achieve that definitive peace."

A woman could be Mexico's next leader.

Millions of others continue in shadows as domestic workers

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Concepción Alejo is used to being invisible.

Alejo, 43, touches her face up with makeup on a Tuesday morning, and steps out of her tiny apartment on the fringes of Mexico City. She walks until the cracked gravel outside her home turns into cobblestones, and the campaign posters coating small concrete buildings are replaced with the spotless walls of gated communities of the city's upper class.

It's here where Alejo has quietly worked cleaning the homes and raising the children of wealthier Mexicans for 26 years.

Alejo is among approximately 2.5 million Mexicans — largely women — who serve as domestic workers in the Latin American nation, a profession that has come to encapsulate gender and class divisions long permeating Mexico.

Women like her play a fundamental role in Mexican society, picking up the burden of domestic labor as a growing number of women professionals enter the workforce. Despite reforms under the current government, many domestic workers continue to face low pay, abuse by employers, long hours and unstable working conditions some equate to "modern slavery."

Now, as Mexico is on its way to elect its first female president, women like her who feel forgotten by their government hope that having a female leader might shift the balance in their favor.

"I've never voted all these years, because it's always the same for us whoever wins. ... When have they ever listened to us, why would I give them my vote?" Alejo said. "I have hope that at least by having a woman, maybe things will be different."

Still, as two female politicians — former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum and former senator Xóchitl Gálvez — are leading the race to the June 2 presidential election, it's unclear how much it will shift the realities of working women in the country.

'YOUR LIFE ISN'T YOUR OWN'

Born to a poor family in the central Mexican state of Puebla, Alejo dropped out of school at age 14 because her parents had no money to pay for her to continue studying. Instead, she and two of her sisters each moved to Mexico City to do one of the few jobs available to them as lower class women: domestic work.

Women in Mexico, like much of Latin America, work in informal jobs — tasks like selling things on the street without a fixed contract or benefits — in rates greater than their male counterparts, something experts following the topic attribute to misogyny in their cultures.

Like many young women coming to the city, Alejo began working as a live-in nanny, sleeping in a small room in the house of the family she worked for.

"It's like you're a mother. The kids would call me 'mama,'" she said. "Their children were born and I would bathe them, care for them, do everything from the moment I awoke to the moment they slept."

While some domestic workers live separately from families, many more live with families and work weeks, if not months, without breaks. They're isolated from family and friends, in a custom that roots back to slavery, said Rachel Randall, a Latin American Studies researcher at the Queen Mary University of London.

"In a region like Latin America and the Caribbean, the history of slavery and colonialism continues to weigh on relationships to domestic workers even today in terms of class, race and gender dynamics," she said.

Alejo said the demands, combined with the low pay of domestic work, led her not to build a family or have children herself. Others told The Associated Press they were fired from their positions after they fell ill and asked for help and time off from the family they've worked with for years.

Carolina Solana de Dios, 47, said she started working as a live-in nanny when she was 15 to escape an abusive household. While she feels free from the abuse and knows her job is important, she added: "When you work in someone else's house, your life isn't your own."

'WE COULDN'T TAKE IT ALL ON ALONE'

At the same time, their help is essential for working women like 49-year-old Claudia Rodríguez, as they

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continue to fight to enter professional spaces historically dominated by men. Rodríguez, a single mother and owner of an IT company, said she's had to work twice as hard to get half as far as male counterparts.

In Mexico and much of Latin America, a gap has long divided men and women in the workplace. In 2005, 80% of men were either employed or looking for jobs, compared to 40% of women, Mexican government data shows.

That gap has slowly closed over time, and at the end of 2023, 76% of men were active in the workforce, compared to 47% of women. Large gaps in salary and leadership roles still exist.

Born in a town two hours from Mexico City, Rodríguez fled an abusive father with her mother and siblings, taking refuge in the capital. After watching her mother toil away selling food on the streets and any other job to pay rent, Rodríguez decided from an early age she didn't want to follow the same path.

Instead of pursuing her dream of professionally dancing, she began selling computers when she was 16. "I didn't want to make the same sacrifice that she was making for me," she said. "So I began to work and study."

She spent years clawing her way up in the IT industry despite sexual harassment and "men slamming doors in our faces." But when she married and had children, she said, she would often have to do all the housework in addition to running her own business.

Caregiving can shift the trajectory of a woman's career in Mexico, making it harder for them to reach higher level professional positions, according to a 2023 survey from the Mexican Institute for Competition. While more than half the women in Mexico say they've had to pause their careers to care for children, only one in five men reported the same.

When her husband left her for another woman six years ago, hiring a live-in domestic worker was the only thing she could do to stay afloat.

Today, she and her nanny, Irma, both wake up at 5 a.m., one making lunch for her two daughters while the other drops them off at school. While it's hard to keep up, now, at least she can breathe.

"She is part of our family," she said. "In the case of women in business, we couldn't take it all on alone simply because it's far too much that society expects of you."

'WE'RE GOING TO TAKE ACTION FOR WOMEN'

Despite the load, a historic number of women in the socially conservative country are taking up leadership and political roles. Between 2005 and 2021, the gap between men and women in roles of government and international entities slimmed by more than 25%, according to government data.

That's in part due to a decades-long push by authorities for greater representation in politics, including laws that require political parties to have half of their congressional candidates be women. Since 2018, Mexico's Congress has had a 50-50 gender split, and the number of female governors has shot up.

While neither presidential candidate has spoken explicitly about domestic workers, both Sheinbaum and Gálvez have proposed addressing soaring violence against women in Mexico and working to close the country's gender pay gap.

"In our government, women won't just be recognized for having a woman president, we're going to take action for women," frontrunner Sheinbaum said in a speech on International Women's Day.

But Norma Palacios, head of the country's domestic workers union, known as SINACTRAHO, said many of the social advances seen in recent years haven't trickled down to poorer classes of working women, least of all domestic workers.

In 2019, the government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador passed landmark legislation granting domestic workers basic rights like paid leave, limits on working hours and access to health insurance paid by employers.

But failures by the government to enforce those rules has left women "unprotected" and locked in a "dynamic of power inequality," Palacios said.

"Nothing has changed, and (domestic workers) continue to face informal working conditions, in precarious work, with low salaries facing violence and discrimination, even if on paper we should have more labor rights," Palacios said.

Neither Alejo, the domestic worker, nor Rodríguez, the single mother, say they particularly identify with

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either candidate on the ballot, though they both plan to vote. While both say having a woman leading the country would be a step forward, the women — long disillusioned by Mexican politics — still see the leaders as more of the same.

They echo other analysts who say that having a woman on the ballot doesn't necessarily mean they will make gender issues a priority. Still, they and Palacios, the head of the domestic workers union, hope it will mark a longer-term shift.

"It's still a woman who is going to be at the head of a country — a sexist country, a country of inequality, a country of violence against women, a country of femicides," Palacios said.

Meanwhile, workers like Alejo continue down a shaky path as they struggle to push for their own rights.

Alejo is among the 98% of the 2.5 million domestic workers who have yet to enroll in health insurance, according to SINACTRAHO data. She and many others fear that asking for their new rights to be respected would end in them being fired.

Alejo, who long worked as a live-in nanny, eventually moved into her own small apartment alone in a poorer area of the city. After years of low pay and one case of sexual abuse, the 43-year-old said she finally works with a family that pays her a fair wage and respects her.

Still, as she summons up the courage to ask the family to pay for her health insurance, she adds that she knows they see her as replaceable.

"They don't like that you ask for things," she said. "It's not easy finding work, and if you need to work, you end up accepting whatever they give you."

Today in History: May 28, Dionne quintuplets are born in Canada

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, May 28, the 149th day of 2024. There are 217 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 28, 1934, the Dionne quintuplets — Annette, Cecile, Emilie, Marie and Yvonne — were born to Elzire Dionne at the family farm in Ontario, Canada.

On this date:

In 1863, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, made up of freed Black men, left Boston to fight for the Union in the Civil War.

In 1892, the Sierra Club was founded in San Francisco.

In 1918, American troops fought their first major battle during World War I as they launched an offensive against the German-held French village of Cantigny (kahn-tee-NYEE); the Americans succeeded in capturing the village.

In 1937, Neville Chamberlain became prime minister of Britain.

In 1940, during World War II, the Belgian army surrendered to invading German forces.

In 1959, the U.S. Army launched Able, a rhesus monkey, and Baker, a squirrel monkey, aboard a Jupiter missile for a suborbital flight which both primates survived.

In 1964, the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization was issued at the start of a meeting of the Palestine National Congress in Jerusalem.

In 1972, Edward, the Duke of Windsor, who had abdicated the English throne to marry Wallis Warfield Simpson, died in Paris at age 77.

In 1977, 165 people were killed when fire raced through the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Southgate, Kentucky.

In 1987, to the embarrassment of Soviet officials, Mathias Rust (mah-TEE'-uhs rust), a young West German pilot, landed a private plane in Moscow's Red Square without authorization. (Rust was freed by the Soviets the following year.)

In 1998, comic actor Phil Hartman of "Saturday Night Live" and "NewsRadio" fame was shot to death at his home in Encino, California, by his wife, Brynn, who then killed herself.

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In 2013, calling it perhaps the biggest money-laundering scheme in U.S. history, federal prosecutors charged seven people with running what amounted to an online, underworld bank, saying that Liberty Reserve handled \$6 billion for drug dealers, child pornographers, identity thieves and other criminals around the globe.

In 2020, people torched a Minneapolis police station that the department was forced to abandon amid spreading protests over the death of George Floyd. Protesters in New York defied a coronavirus prohibition on public gatherings, clashing with police; demonstrators blocked traffic and smashed vehicles in downtown Denver before police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. At least seven people were shot as gunfire erupted during a protest in Louisville, Kentucky, to demand justice for Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was fatally shot by police in her home in March.

In 2021, officials announced that the remains of more than 200 children, some as young as 3 years old, had been found buried on the site of what was once Canada's largest indigenous residential school.

In 2022, director Ruben Ostlund's social satire "Triangle of Sadness" won the Palme d'Or at the 75th Cannes Film Festival, giving Ostlund one of cinema's most prestigious prizes for the second time.

In 2023, the critically acclaimed HBO drama "Succession" ended with its the finale of its fourth season.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Carroll Baker is 93. Producer-director Irwin Winkler is 93. Basketball Hall of Famer Jerry West is 86. Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is 80. Singer Gladys Knight is 80. Singer Billy Vera is 80. Singer John Fogerty (Creedence Clearwater Revival) is 79. Country musician Jerry Douglas is 68. Actor Louis Mustillo is 66. Former governor and U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., is 64. Actor Brandon Cruz (TV: "The Courtship of Eddie's Father") is 62. Country singer Phil Vassar is 60. Actor Christa Miller is 60. Singer-musician Chris Ballew (Presidents of the USA, Caspar Babypants) is 59. Rapper Chubb Rock is 56. Singer Kylie Minogue (KY'-lee mihn-OHG') is 56. Actor Justin Kirk is 55. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., is 53. Olympic gold medal figure skater Ekaterina Gordeeva is 53. Television personality Elisabeth Hasselbeck is 47. R&B singer Jaheim is 47. Actor Jake Johnson is 46. Actor Jesse Bradford is 45. Actor Monica Keena is 45. Actor Alexa Davalos is 42. Actor Megalyn Echikunwoke (eh-cheek-uh-WALK'-ay) is 42. Pop singer Colbie Caillat (kal-LAY') is 39. Actor Carey Mulligan is 39. Actor Joseph Cross is 38. Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Craig Kimbrel is 36.