

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday, May 30

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, fudge 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

## 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.

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



## 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.

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

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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# 1440

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

South Africans headed to the polls yesterday amid the biggest challenge to the African National Congress' 30-year rule since the end of apartheid.

Major League Baseball officially updated its statistics leaderboard yesterday to include 2,300 qualifying men who played in the Negro Leagues between 1920 and 1948. The integration incorporates findings from a three-year research process initiated after MLB first recognized the Negro Leagues as major leagues in December 2020.

OpenAI announced licensing agreements with The Atlantic and Vox yesterday, allowing the company behind ChatGPT to train future AI models on their content.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

All charges dropped against world No. 1 golfer Scottie Scheffler, including felony assault of a police officer and three misdemeanors; Scheffler was arrested May 17 outside PGA Championship venue.

Harvey Weinstein may face new indictment as prosecutors say more accusers may testify in Weinstein's retrial; a New York appeals court overturned his 2020 rape conviction last month.

The 2024 Women's College World Series kicks off today from Oklahoma City; see previews for all eight teams in the field. Minnesota beats Boston 3-0 to win Professional Women's Hockey League's inaugural Walter Cup.

## Science & Technology

New "smart" antibiotic targets a group of gram-negative bacteria—those most likely to turn into drug-resistant superbugs—without affecting the microbiome. Trillions of organisms live in your gut.

First menstrual cycles in US-born girls shifted from 12.5 years to 11.9 years in a comparison of those born from 1950-69 and 2000-05; childhood obesity may be a partial driver of overall trend, effect more pronounced in minority adolescents.

Precision Neuroscience sets record for largest number of pins on a neural interface chip to be implanted in a human brain with 4,096 connections. Researchers demonstrate transparent skull implant allowing direct imaging of patient's brain.

## Business & Markets

Markets close down (Dow -1.1%, S&P 500 -0.7%, Nasdaq -0.6%); Dow falls more than 400 points, with shares of UnitedHealth falling more than 3%. Salesforce shares drop 17% after missing revenue estimates.

Oil giant ConocoPhillips to acquire rival Marathon Oil in \$17.1B all-stock deal; bid, the latest in a string of energy industry consolidations, must be approved by Marathon shareholders.

Carmaker Stellantis says it plans to introduce a \$25K fully electric jeep in the US market in the near future; current average sticker price of an electric vehicle is above \$55K.

## Politics & World Affairs

Jury to begin second day of deliberations as former President Donald Trump faces 34 counts related to allegations of hush-money payments. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito tells House Democrats he will not recuse himself from two Trump-related cases.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee (R) signs laws barring people from helping minors get an abortion or receive gender-related medical care without parental consent; those who violate the laws face an almost one-year prison sentence.

Israel expects war in Gaza to last until at least the end of 2024. Israeli military says it captured entirety of the buffer zone between Gaza and Egypt, uncovering 20 previously unknown tunnels,

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## Sen. Thune visits various Groton businesses

U.S. Senator John Thune talked Farm Bill progress, slow business recovery and how to make a Blizzard during a visit to Groton on Wednesday afternoon.

The Senate Minority Whip made three stops in town, visiting with local businesses, city officials and residents.

Thune's first stop was at Groton Ford, where he met with staff and toured the auto shop.

Thune asked how business was going, and Dan Richardt in sales told him about slowed sales due to interest rate hikes. While the auto inventory shortage has eased, Richardt said there are still times it takes a while to get parts.

Thune also visited with city officials early in the afternoon.

Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon and Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich shook hands with the senator, before going over some issues of concern, including CDL driver requirements, projects in town and working limitations for teenagers.

Thune's second stop was to Groton Ag Partners, where he answered questions about prospects for a Farm Bill this year.

"It's not looking great, but it could change," Thune said.

Thune talked about ways they've been looking into cutting back expenses in the bill and "harvest some savings," he said.

Groton Ag Partners Agent and Co-Owner Carl Schwab replied, "It's kind of hard to dig your heels in on SNAP changes when you go into a grocery store."

Thune said he hopes to get something passed, but there will likely be another extension of the previous Farm Bill for now.

Fellow Agent Tom Woods joked, "I was going to put a bet in Vegas that we'd get a Farm Bill, so don't do that?"

He added, though, that he's rather they get it right rather than rush into an agreement.

The next few months are going to be busy in Congress, with commemorating the 80th anniversary of D-Day, political conventions and the upcoming campaign season, Thune said.

"If we can get some forward momentum on it, I think we can get something going," he said. "...We'll stay on it."

Thune ended his Groton tour with a stop at Dairy Queen, where he met with residents including some recent high school graduates. He also got behind the counter, learning from Co-Owner Dale Grenz how to make a Blizzard.

Thune hesitated before Grenz convinced him to flip the Blizzard upside down before handing it off to the customer.

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**Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon shakes hands with Sen. John Thune at Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Dan Richards shakes hands with Sen. John Thune at Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich and Mayor Scott Hanlon speak with Sen. John Thune at Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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**Sen. John Thune spoke with individuals and took a tour of Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune spoke with individuals and took a tour of Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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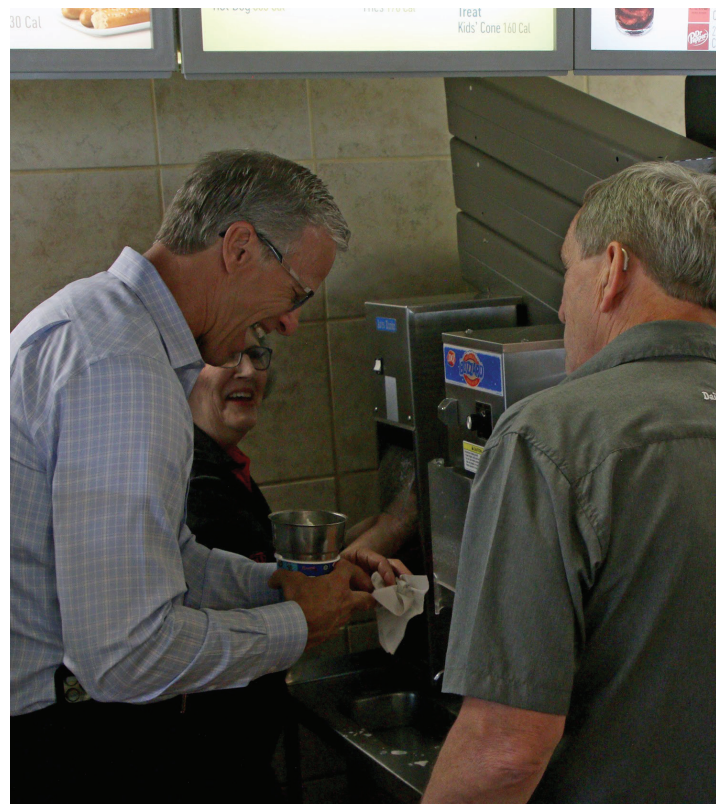
**Sen. John Thune spoke with individuals and took a tour of Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune spoke with individuals and took a tour of Groton Ford on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune sports the Groton Ford hat.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Dairy Queen owners Dale and Joyce Grenz show Sen. John Thune how to make a Blizzard on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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**Sen. John Thune poses with some of the staff at Groton Ford.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune spoke with individuals at Groton Ag Partners on Wednesday afternoon.**

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune poses with some of the staff at Groton Ag Partners.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



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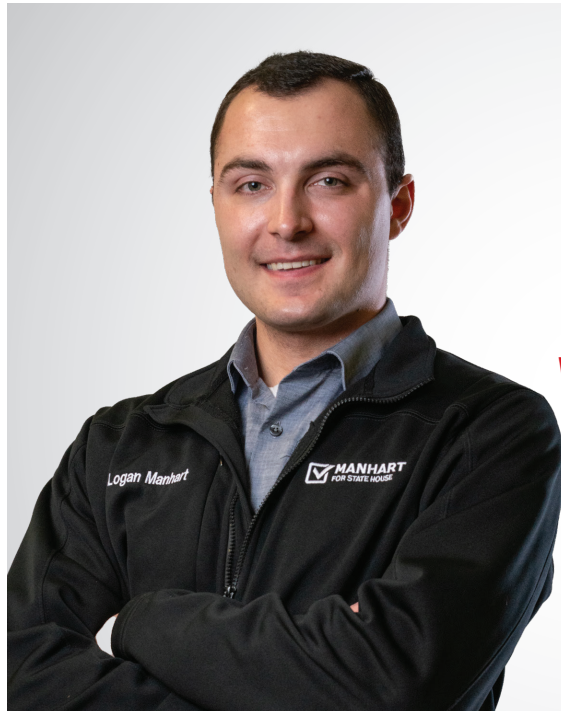
**Sen. John Thune holds up the Blizzard he made at Dairy Queen in Groton on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Sen. John Thune speaks with a group of teenagers at Dairy Queen in Groton on Wednesday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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## MANHART

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 1

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

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



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[facebook.com/ManhartLogan](https://facebook.com/ManhartLogan)

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## JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 67<sup>th</sup> 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





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Activists fail to convince Board of Elections to move toward hand-counting

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 29, 2024 4:00 PM

The state Board of Elections did not approve petitions Wednesday from activists who want to move the state toward hand-counting ballots.

A Republican state Senate candidate, Rick Weible, of Elkton, petitioned the board for declaratory rulings. The petitions asked the board to take several actions, including deeming certain election tabulating software non-compliant with state law and de-certifying its use. The board did not grant the requests.

Board member Scott McGregor said afterward that Weible and his supporters routinely attend board meetings to pursue their agenda.

"It's all about going back to hand-counting our elections," McGregor said.

He added that Weible and others in attendance are misguided: The appointed board serves an administrative function and does not make law.

"They need to talk to the Legislature," McGregor said.

During the meeting, Weible and his group lashed out at Republican Secretary of State Monae Johnson, the state's top elections official. Weible helped Johnson win the office, and while she was campaigning, she repeatedly declined to say whether she accepted the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Attendees at Wednesday's meeting accused Johnson of betraying them since she won her office. She did not respond.

Meanwhile, three South Dakota counties will ask voters Tuesday if they should ban the use of tabulator machines in future local elections. Each of the measures was petitioned onto local ballots by members and supporters of a group called South Dakota Canvassing, of which Weible is a member.

If the measures pass, the auditor's offices in each county would have to hand-count ballots in the Nov. 5 general election and thereafter. The votes are in Gregory, Haakon and Tripp counties.

*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.*

### Rapid City man indicted for role in Jan. 6 insurrection

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 29, 2024 1:30 PM

A 37-year-old Rapid City man has been indicted for two felonies and five misdemeanor offenses for his alleged role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection in the U.S. Capitol.

William George Knight is charged in the District of Columbia with obstructing law enforcement during a civil disorder and assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers, both of which are felony crimes.

Knight also faces misdemeanor charges of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, engaging in physical violence in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, and an act of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings.

Knight was arrested in his Rapid City home on Sunday.

Court documents filed in the case say Knight was among a group of "Stop the Steal" protesters to have pursued U.S. Park Police officers who'd taken another protester into custody and taken them to a glass screening facility.

According to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office in South Dakota, Knight "aggressively approached the glass wall four times over approximately seven minutes, each time pushing himself off the wall and gesturing toward police."

"Knight then put his middle fingers up to the glass and pointed menacingly at the police inside the Screening Center," the news release said.

Knight went on to breach the Capitol building, the news release said, pulled down a makeshift bike rack barrier put up by police and was among the protesters to push a metal sign toward officers. He also allegedly shoved a Metropolitan Police Department officer and helped breach a police line at Lower West Plaza later in the afternoon.

Knight's initial appearance was set for Wednesday at the federal courthouse in Rapid City.

More than 1,400 people have been indicted for their roles in the Jan. 6 incident since the event occurred, the news release said.

Darrell Goins, 42, of Newell, was indicted about two weeks ago. His six felony offenses include civil disorder; assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers using a dangerous weapon; assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers; and entering and remaining, disorderly or disruptive conduct; and an act of physical violence in a restricted building or grounds using a dangerous weapon.

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

## **COMMENTARY**

### **A memorial's abandonment says a lot about society. Hopefully its rescue does, too.**

**SETH TUPPER**

RAPID CITY — Volunteerism may not move mountains, but today it rescued a memorial from a mountainside.

The memorial is for Alice Gossage, a pioneering journalist, businesswoman and philanthropist who was one of Rapid City's first residents in the 1880s.

She ran the Rapid City Journal and wrote a column for many years while the newspaper's founder — her husband, Joe Gossage — was often ill. She also operated a "Sunshine Room," where she distributed clothing and other items to the poor. Her leadership and generosity during the city's formative years earned her the nickname "mother of Rapid City."

After she died, some of her admirers selected a site atop a mountain ridge above the city and raised money to erect a roughly 4-foot-tall concrete memorial to Gossage, which they dedicated in 1938. The Rapid City Journal described it as the highest point around, offering views of "Rapid City to the east, Cowboy hill to the north, western Rapid valley to the west, and to the south the Harney range of the Black Hills."

It says a lot about Alice Gossage that people trekked all the way to that spot — about 500 feet higher than the young city below — to memorialize her.

And it says a lot about the treatment of women in history that the memorial was shoved aside for a television broadcast tower about 20 years later.

Incredibly, the memorial remained there, lying on its side behind that tower, abandoned, forgotten and deteriorating, for the last 67 years.

Until today, that is, when volunteers used a telehandler to pluck the memorial and its footing — esti-

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mated to weigh a combined 9,000 pounds — from the side of the ridge. It'll stay in storage for a while as preparations are made to place it permanently in the front yard of the Journey Museum, with a walkway and an interpretive sign.

The effort to rescue the memorial began with its rediscovery in 2019. Local history buff Pat Roseland came across a 1930s-era picture of the memorial in all its original glory. He'd never heard of it and wondered what happened to it.

He and fellow history buff Jean Kessloff did some research and located the memorial. I was a reporter at the Rapid City Journal at the time; they called me, and I wrote a story about the memorial and its fate.

I got help from Mark Slocum at the Black Hills Historical Society, which has a trove of historical documents related to the memorial. From those documents, and from Journal newspaper clippings and county real estate records, we pieced together the story of the memorial's demise.

The land for the memorial was donated by a local man. The city built Skyline Drive up to the memorial site, but the winding and high-elevation road promptly fell into disrepair. In 1947, the Journal reported that the road was "blocked off" and "growing up to weeds." In other words, the memorial was accessible only by a strenuous hike.

The son of the original landowner successfully sued to get the memorial land back, based on the city's failure to care for it. Then, in the 1950s, he apparently participated in a three-way deal: He gave the land to the Black Hills Historical Society, the society sold the land to a local company, and the company built a tower on it for a new television station. The society, which was then known as the Minnilusa Historical Association, was raising money for a building addition.

To retain some kind of memorial to Gossage, the society took the bronze sundial and plaque from the original memorial and slapped it onto a stone-and-mortar pedestal in Rapid City's Halley Park (the sundial was a tribute to Gossage's Sunshine Room). That pedestal still stands as a pale shadow of the gleaming concrete structure that once overlooked the city from high on Skyline Drive.

After publishing my story, I accepted a few invites from community groups to give a talk about the memorial. One of those talks got the attention of Johnny Sundby, a friend and journalistic collaborator of mine who owns Johnny Sundby Photography and serves on the Black Hills Historical Society board.

Johnny formed a committee of concerned citizens and obtained permission from Keloland Media Group — which now operates the broadcast tower — to access the site. Bierschbach Equipment & Supply donated the use of a telehandler, which Kasey Kurtz and Craig Hall, of Dean Kurtz Construction, used to do the precarious work of plucking the old memorial from the mountainside. They moved it to their shop, where they'll prepare it to be placed upright again.

The Rapid City Parks and Recreation Department has done some dirt work to prep the site at the Journey. Frontier Construction & Renovation is ready to donate its labor for a concrete walkway around the memorial, and the Black Hills Historical Society is raising money to pay for the walkway materials and interpretive signage. The original bronze sundial and plaque will also be placed on the memorial with the help of James Van Nuys, a living relative of Gossage.

The memorial came off the hillside in one piece. It's weathered, and its new location won't be nearly as scenic as a mountaintop. But at least it'll be right-side-up and no longer out of sight.

When then-Mayor Robert Hill dedicated the memorial in 1938, he spoke of Gossage and said, "The community owes a debt to such a person."

Rapid City has been in default on that debt for almost seven decades. Hopefully the rescue of the memorial is a down payment.

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Funds for clean school buses coming to hundreds of districts, White House says

**Tripp-Delmont the lone South Dakota beneficiary**

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MAY 29, 2024 8:15 AM**

WASHINGTON — As part of its ongoing effort to replace diesel-fueled school buses, the Biden administration on Wednesday said it will provide approximately 530 school districts across nearly all states with almost \$1 billion to help them purchase clean school buses.

The initiative, part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, will give funds to school districts in 47 states and the District of Columbia to help them buy over 3,400 clean school buses. Alaska, Hawaii and Nevada are not part of this round of funding.

In South Dakota, the program will send \$365,000 in funding to the Tripp-Delmont School District, according to a list of recipients from the White House.

Nearly all of the clean school buses purchased will be electric, at 92%, according to the administration. "This announcement is not just about clean school buses, it's about the bigger picture," EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan said during a call with reporters on Tuesday, prior to the announcement. "We are improving air quality for our children, reducing greenhouse gas pollution and expanding our nation's leadership in developing the clean vehicles of the future."

Low-income, rural and tribal communities — accounting for approximately 45% of the selected projects — are slated to receive roughly 67% of the total funding, per the administration.

Regan noted how "low-income communities and communities of color have long felt the disproportionate impacts of air pollution leading to severe health outcomes that continue to impact these populations."

As for business and economic opportunities, Regan pointed to the development of new, well-paying manufacturing jobs and investment in local businesses stemming from the increasing demand for these clean school buses.

"As more and more schools make the switch to electric buses, there will be a need for American-made batteries, charging stations and service providers to maintain the buses supercharging and reinvigorating local economies," he added.

The Clean School Bus Program has now collectively awarded nearly \$3 billion to fund approximately 8,500 electric and alternative fuel buses for over 1,000 communities across the United States, according to the administration.

The program started through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden, which includes \$5 billion over five years to transform the country's existing school buses with "zero-emission and low-emission models," per the EPA.

Among many negative health and environmental effects, especially for communities of color, diesel exhaust exposure can lead to major health conditions such as asthma and respiratory illnesses, according to the EPA.

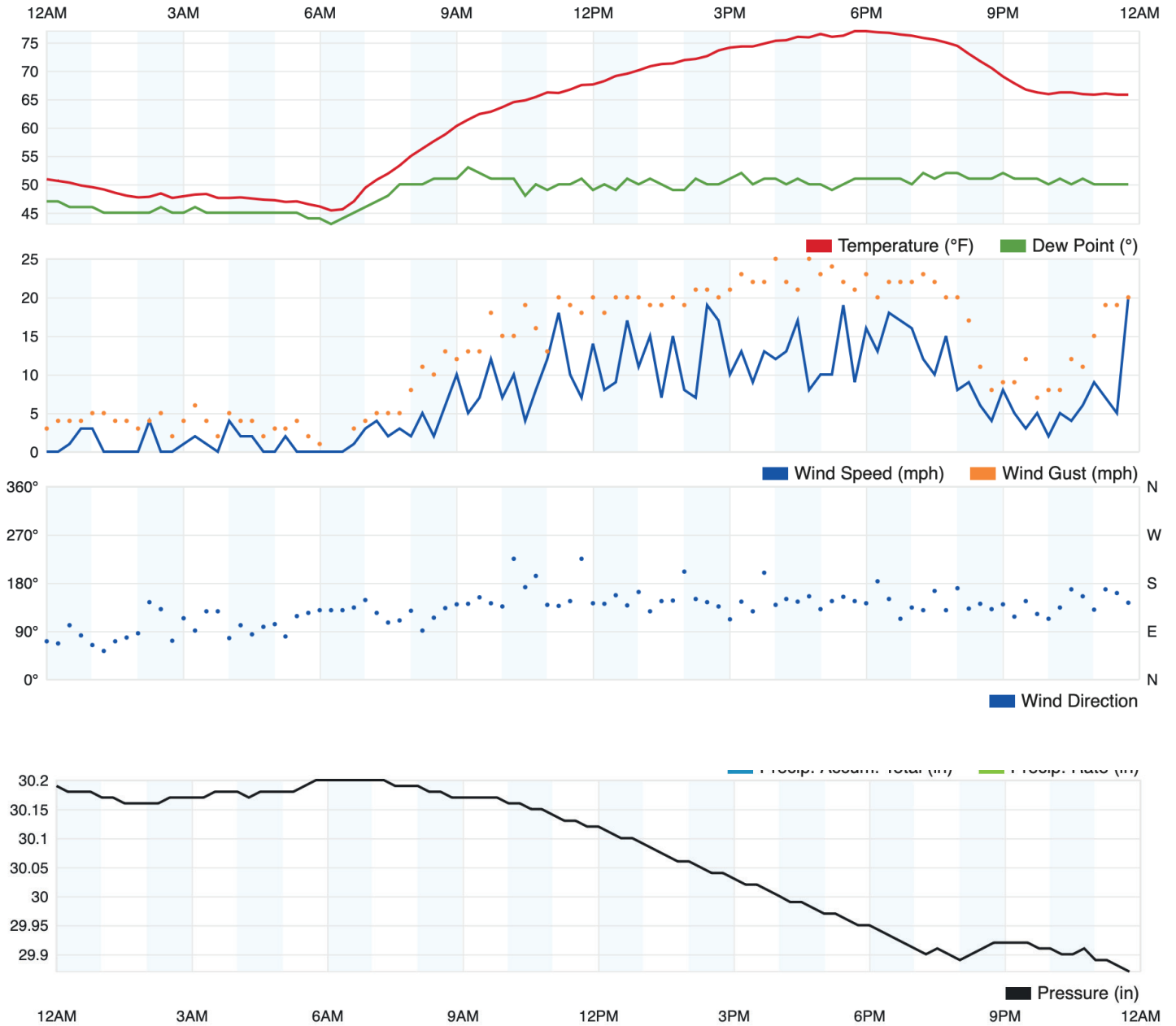
Exposure to diesel exhaust can also "worsen existing heart and lung disease, especially in children and the elderly," the agency said.

*Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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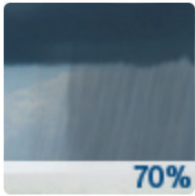
Thursday

Thursday  
Night

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



High: 73 °F

Showers  
Likely and  
Breezy



Low: 45 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 71 °F

Partly Sunny



Low: 47 °F

Chance  
Showers



High: 78 °F

Sunny



## Rain and Thunderstorms Continue Today

May 30, 2024  
5:39 AM

Strongest Wind Gusts will be from the SE up to 40mph this Morning Across NE SD/WC MN

### Probability of Thunder Forecast (%)

|             | 5/30<br>Thu |     |      |     |     |     | 5/31<br>Fri |     |
|-------------|-------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|
|             | 6am         | 9am | 12pm | 3pm | 6pm | 9pm | 12am        | 3am |
|             | Aberdeen    | 45  | 45   | 35  | 30  | 5   | 5           | 0   |
| Britton     | 30          | 45  | 30   | 50  | 15  | 5   | 5           | 0   |
| Brookings   | 25          | 35  | 30   | 45  | 55  | 60  | 35          | 25  |
| Chamberlain | 40          | 45  | 35   | 30  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 5   |
| Clark       | 35          | 45  | 45   | 50  | 40  | 20  | 10          | 5   |
| Eagle Butte | 30          | 15  | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 5   |
| Ellendale   | 40          | 45  | 30   | 20  | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Eureka      | 50          | 40  | 15   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Gettysburg  | 40          | 35  | 15   | 5   | 5   | 0   | 0           | 5   |
| Huron       | 45          | 55  | 50   | 55  | 30  | 20  | 10          | 10  |
| Kennebec    | 45          | 40  | 20   | 10  | 5   | 5   | 5           | 5   |
| McIntosh    | 30          | 15  | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Milbank     | 15          | 30  | 30   | 40  | 50  | 45  | 20          | 5   |
| Miller      | 45          | 50  | 35   | 30  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 0   |
| Mobridge    | 50          | 30  | 5    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Murdo       | 40          | 20  | 5    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 5           | 5   |
| Pierre      | 35          | 25  | 5    | 5   | 5   | 5   | 5           | 5   |
| Redfield    | 45          | 50  | 40   | 40  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 0   |
| Sisseton    | 20          | 35  | 30   | 45  | 50  | 20  | 10          | 5   |
| Watertown   | 25          | 35  | 35   | 45  | 55  | 35  | 15          | 10  |
| Webster     | 30          | 40  | 40   | 50  | 35  | 15  | 10          | 0   |
| Wheaton     | 15          | 25  | 25   | 35  | 50  | 35  | 15          | 5   |

### Today

Highs: 68-76°  
Winds: SE 20-35mph  
becoming W-NW 15-30mph

### Tonight

Lows: 44-52°  
Winds: W-NW 5-15mph

### Probability of Precipitation Forecast (%)

|             | 5/30<br>Thu |     |      |     |     |     | 5/31<br>Fri |     |
|-------------|-------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|
|             | 6am         | 9am | 12pm | 3pm | 6pm | 9pm | 12am        | 3am |
|             | Aberdeen    | 50  | 60   | 70  | 25  | 5   | 5           | 0   |
| Britton     | 45          | 65  | 75   | 70  | 15  | 5   | 5           | 0   |
| Brookings   | 25          | 60  | 55   | 55  | 70  | 60  | 40          | 25  |
| Chamberlain | 40          | 45  | 45   | 30  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 5   |
| Clark       | 50          | 75  | 60   | 75  | 40  | 20  | 10          | 5   |
| Eagle Butte | 35          | 15  | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 10  |
| Ellendale   | 55          | 65  | 70   | 20  | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Eureka      | 60          | 45  | 15   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Gettysburg  | 50          | 35  | 15   | 5   | 5   | 5   | 0           | 5   |
| Huron       | 45          | 65  | 55   | 60  | 30  | 20  | 10          | 10  |
| Kennebec    | 45          | 40  | 20   | 10  | 5   | 5   | 5           | 5   |
| McIntosh    | 35          | 15  | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Milbank     | 20          | 65  | 60   | 60  | 75  | 45  | 20          | 5   |
| Miller      | 45          | 50  | 55   | 25  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 0   |
| Mobridge    | 50          | 30  | 5    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0           | 0   |
| Murdo       | 40          | 20  | 5    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 5           | 5   |
| Pierre      | 40          | 25  | 5    | 5   | 5   | 5   | 5           | 5   |
| Redfield    | 45          | 60  | 60   | 40  | 15  | 10  | 5           | 0   |
| Sisseton    | 25          | 65  | 70   | 80  | 50  | 20  | 10          | 5   |
| Watertown   | 35          | 75  | 60   | 75  | 70  | 35  | 15          | 10  |
| Webster     | 40          | 70  | 60   | 80  | 35  | 15  | 10          | 0   |
| Wheaton     | 15          | 50  | 60   | 70  | 70  | 35  | 15          | 5   |

A storm system moving through the region today will continue to bring a round of showers and thunderstorms to the area. Most of the activity will be sub-severe, but a few storms by midday and afternoon could be on the strong side with small hail and locally gusty winds. Rain chances will dwindle from west to east through the day and end across far northeast SD and west central MN this evening. Another round of strong winds will be possible through midday across northeast SD/west central MN where gusts could range from 30-40mph. Winds turn northwesterly across central SD by mid to late morning and gust to between 25-35mph this afternoon.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 5:57 PM

Low Temp: 45 °F at 6:18 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 4:01 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 27 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 110 in 1934

Record Low: 27 in 1947

Average High: 76

Average Low: 50

Average Precip in May.: 3.17

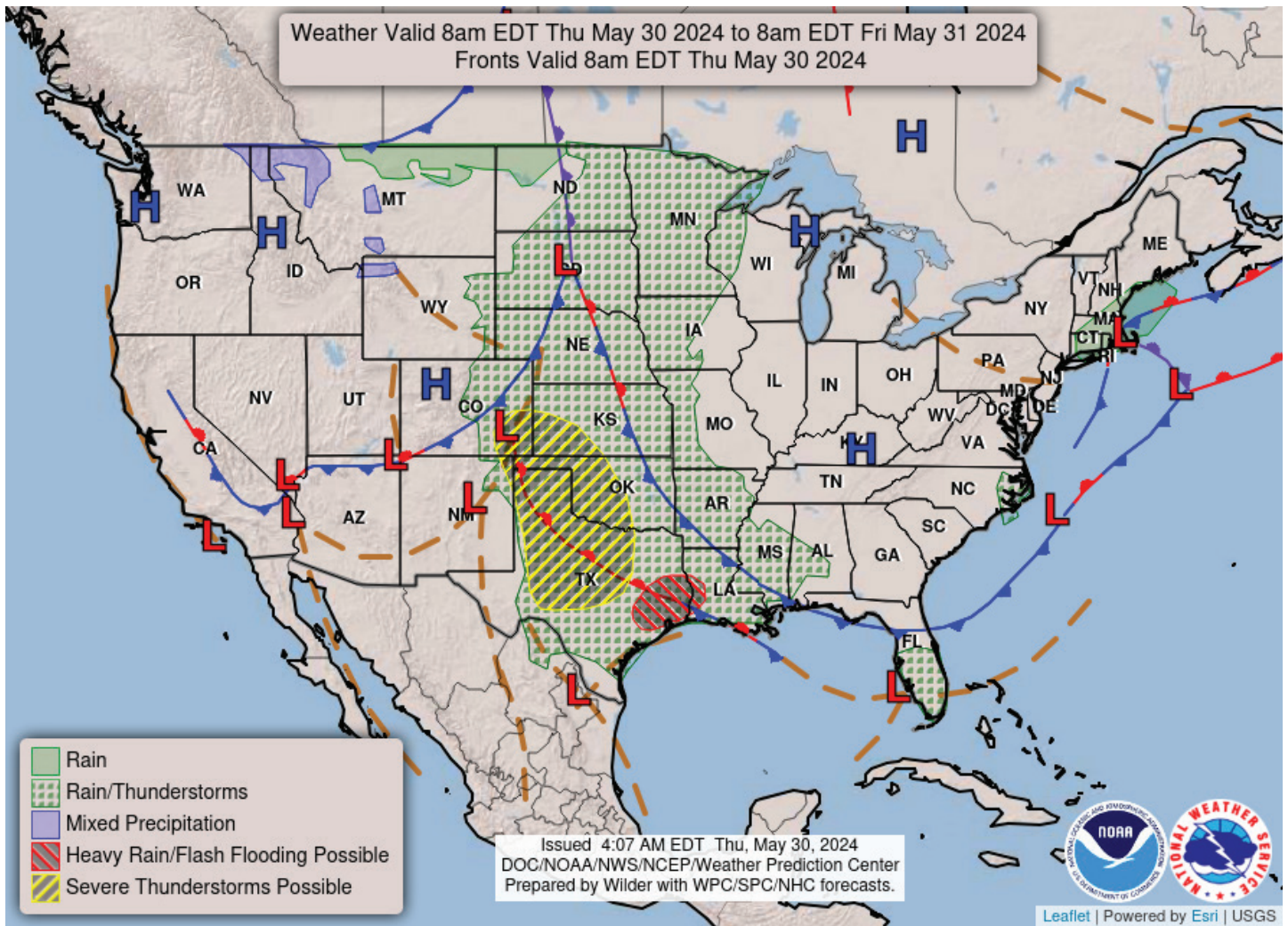
Precip to date in May: 2.26

Average Precip to date: 7.14

Precip Year to Date: 6.80

Sunset Tonight: 9:14:01 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45:32 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 30, 1998: An F4 tornado moved through southeast South Dakota, killing six people and injuring another 150. The tornado crossed into McCook County at approximately 7:38 pm, CST and moved through downtown Spencer at about 7:39 pm, CST. The total cost of damage was more than \$18 million with an additional half million in crop damage.

1879: A significant outbreak of severe weather occurred in Kansas and western Missouri. In Kansas, tornadoes killed eighteen persons at Delphos and thirty persons at Irving. Two tornadoes struck the town of Irving within a few minutes time virtually wiping the small Kansas community off the map. The second tornado was perhaps two miles wide and exhibited multiple vortices.

1927: The Kentucky River peaks during a massive flood that killed 89 people and left thousands homeless. Torrential rains caused this unprecedented flood.

1948 - A railroad bed acting as a dam gave way during a flood along the Columbia River destroying the town of Vanport, OR. The nearly 19,000 residents escaped with little more than the clothes on their backs. (David Ludlum)

1948 - Twenty carloads of glass were needed in Denver, CO, to replace that destroyed by a severe hailstorm. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the eastern U.S. Eighteen cities, from Virginia to Ohio and Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Baltimore, MD, and Washington, DC, and 98 degrees at Newark, NJ, were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Memorial Day heralded heavy snow in some of the mountains and higher passes of Wyoming, closing roads in Yellowstone Park. McDonald Pass, MT, was blanketed with eight inches of snow, while the temperature at Miles City, MT, soared to 94 degrees. A "supercell" thunderstorm in west Texas produced baseball size hail in Bailey and Lamb counties, and up to five inches of rain in less than an hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Upper Ohio Valley during the day. A powerful (F-4) tornado injured three persons and caused a million dollars damage at New Providence, IA. Baseball size hail was reported at Blue Earth, MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a warm front spawned fourteen tornadoes in northeastern Texas during the late afternoon and evening hours. The thunderstorms also produced baseball size hail near Marshall, wind gusts to 77 mph at Commerce, and up to five inches of rain. Thunderstorms over southwestern Kansas produced up to six inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHICH HAND?

"Grandma," said little Josie, "did you know that God created the world with His left hand?"

"My goodness, Honey, wherever did you get that idea? What do you mean He used His left hand?" asked Grandma.

"The way I figure it," she explained, "God had to use His left hand because Jesus was sitting on His right hand."

Josie heard the story in Sunday school and in her childlike faith accepted its truth. How precious is a faith that believes. And although we may not know all of the details, God reveals Himself and His plan for His creation and His children, us, in His Word. But there is another thought we must remember when we think about where Jesus is.

His final words to His disciples were, "Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

What does it mean when He said, "I am with you?" Simply this: Jesus was with His disciples physically as He went about His work while on earth and after His resurrection until He ascended into heaven. Now, He is with us through the work of the Holy Spirit. He knew there would be difficult days and trying times for His disciples then and now. So He gave His Word, "I am with you until the end." To those who accept Him as Savior there is no fear that they need face life alone.

Prayer: How blest we are, Father, to know that You are with us every moment of our lives. Give us a peace that comes from Your presence as we faithfully serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20



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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.28.24

12 18 48 57 62 4

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$522,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 6  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

8 9 11 29 36 3

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,750,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 21  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

9 12 15 41 46 4

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 36 Mins 42  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

18 24 27 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$125,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 36  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

23 29 35 36 39 22

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

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 5  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

17 34 56 60 61 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$161,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 5  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined  
Yankton Press & Dakotan. May 28, 2024.

Editorial: Tribal Affiliation Identity Is Important

A policy implemented by the South Dakota Board of Regents that effectively forbids staff from using their personal pronouns for identification purposes in their official emails comes off as another political volley in the recent culture wars targeting of “wokeness” in its various alleged forms.

However, the apparent expansion of that directive to forbid Native American employees from listing their tribal identifications in their emails raises additional concerns.

This war on highlighting diversity — which is really what all these policies and laws are about — comes off as an attempt to sanitize America’s self-image. Indeed, “diversity” has become yet another dirty word in certain ideological circles.

Targeting pronouns is a means of removing gender identity issues, which is no surprise in the current political climate.

However, targeting tribal identity labels, especially in a state where Native American culture should be seen as a rich and essential piece of our tapestry, is absurd.

The Associated Press reported over the weekend that two University of South Dakota professors were warned in March that their practice including their tribal affiliation along with their gender identities would not be tolerated.

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

The AP reported that the rule change came about late last year when Gov. Kristi Noem sent a letter to the regents criticizing “liberal ideologies” on campus. Among these nefarious ideologies was the use of personal pronouns.

But somehow, it appears this edict also impacts tribal affiliations.

For some Native Americans, this is an essential piece of their heritage and identity.

However, it might also be seen as a reminder of how U.S. policy has treated Native Americans over the centuries. It’s a fact of our history, but apparently not one we necessarily want to acknowledge.

This move recalls the state’s recent efforts to change its social studies curriculum. Proposed changes recommended by a task force were submitted, but the final product took out a great deal of Native American references. After a major outcry, this proposal was retracted and a new committee, made up mostly of gubernatorial nominees, came up with a new proposal that attempted to placate the critics, at least somewhat.

This tribal identification issue didn’t escape the notice of the South Dakota Education Equity Coalition (SDEEC), which last Friday issued a press release describing the actions by USD as “contrary to the values of respect, inclusion and personal dignity.”

However, instead of leaving the criticism at that or leveling condemnations, the SDEEC took the high road and encouraged discussion on the matter.

“... We are calling (USD) in and inviting the university to engage in open dialogue with us,” the press release said. “SDEEC believes in unity and the strength that comes from our diverse backgrounds. We are ready to collaborate with USD to foster an atmosphere of understanding and respect.

“SDEEC is eager to work alongside the University of South Dakota to transform these challenges into opportunities for growth and learning, ensuring that our educational environments reflect the principles

of equity and respect that we stand for.”

That is how one should deal with issues of diversity and division: seek to bridge differences and find some common ground.

Making that effort is a simple and practical thing to do — if that’s your real intent.

If not, you usually end up issuing edicts and threatening people if they don’t comply. You just change things without factoring the reactions. Discussion never happens.

Dialogue has often been lacking in these “diversity” clashes both here and abroad. Perhaps at this point, in this situation, a start should be made.

END

## **Iran opens registration for the June presidential election after Raisi died in a helicopter crash**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran opened a five-day registration period Thursday for hopefuls wanting to run in the June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others.

The election comes as Iran grapples with the aftermath of the May 19 crash, as well as heightened tensions between Tehran and the United States, and protests including those over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that have swept the country.

While Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 85, maintains final say over all matters of state, presidents in the past have bent the Islamic Republic of Iran toward greater interaction or increased hostility with the West.

The five-day period will see those between the ages of 40 to 75 with at least a master’s degree register as potential candidates. All candidates ultimately must be approved by Iran’s 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei. That panel has never accepted a woman, for instance, nor anyone calling for radical change within the country’s governance.

Ahmad Vahidi, Iran’s interior minister, opened the registration period. The Interior Ministry, in charge of the country’s police, run Iranian elections with no substantial international observation.

“These elections, like the parliamentary elections, will be held in complete safety and health, with good competition and wide participation of all dear people,” Vahidi said.

Raisi, a protege of Khamenei, won Iran’s 2021 presidential election after the Guardian Council disqualified all of the candidates with the best chance to potentially challenge him. That vote saw the lowest turnout in Iran’s history for a presidential election. This year’s parliamentary vote saw an even-lower turnout amid widespread boycott calls.

That likely was a sign of voters’ discontent with both a hard-line cleric sanctioned by the U.S. in part over his involvement in mass executions in 1988, and Iran’s Shiite theocracy over four decades after its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Who will run — and potentially be accepted — remains in question. The country’s acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, a previously behind-the-scenes bureaucrat, could be a front-runner, because he’s already been seen meeting with Khamenei. Also discussed as possible aspirants are former hard-line President Mohammad Ahmadinejad and former reformist President Mohammad Khatami — but whether they’d be allowed to run is another question.

The five-day registration period will close on Tuesday. The Guardian Council is expected to issue its final list of candidates within 10 days afterwards. That will allow for a shortened two-week campaign before the vote in late June.

The new president will take office while the country now enriches uranium at nearly weapons-grade levels and hampers international inspections. Iran has armed Russia in its war on Ukraine, as well as launched a drone and missile attack on Israel amid the war in Gaza. Tehran also has continued arming proxy groups in the Middle East, like Yemen’s Houthi rebels and Lebanon’s Hezbollah militia.



Meanwhile, Iran's economy has faced years of hardship over its collapsing rial currency. Widespread protests have swept the country, most recently over Amini's death following her arrest over allegedly not wearing her mandatory headscarf to the liking of authorities, A U.N. panel says the Iranian government is responsible for the "physical violence" that led to Amini's death.

Raisi is just the second Iranian president to die in office. In 1981, a bomb blast killed President Mohammad Ali Rajai in the chaotic days after the Islamic Revolution.

## The US-built pier in Gaza broke apart. Here's how we got here and what might be next

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A string of security, logistical and weather problems has battered the plan to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid to Gaza through a U.S. military-built pier.

Broken apart by strong winds and heavy seas just over a week after it became operational, the project faces criticism that it hasn't lived up to its initial billing or its \$320 million price tag.

U.S. officials say, however, that the steel causeway connected to the beach in Gaza and the floating pier are being repaired and reassembled at a port in southern Israel, then will be reinstalled and working again next week.

While early Pentagon estimates suggested the pier could deliver up to 150 truckloads of aid a day when in full operation, that has yet to happen. Bad weather has hampered progress getting aid into Gaza from the pier, while the Israeli offensive in the southern city of Rafah has made it difficult, if not impossible at times, to get aid into the region by land routes.

Aid groups have had mixed reactions — both welcoming any amount of aid for starving Palestinians besieged by the nearly eight-month-old Israel-Hamas war and decrying the pier as a distraction that took pressure off Israel to open more border crossings, which are far more productive.

It's "a side-show," said Bob Kitchen, a top official of the International Rescue Committee.

The Biden administration has said from the start that the pier wasn't meant to be a total solution and that any amount of aid helps.

"Nobody said at the outset that it was going to be a panacea for all the humanitarian assistance problems that still exist in Gaza," national security spokesman John Kirby said Wednesday. "I think sometimes there's an expectation of the U.S. military — because they're so good — that everything that they touch is just going to turn to gold in an instant."

"We knew going in that this was going to be tough stuff," he added. "And it has proven to be tough stuff."

Before the war, Gaza was getting about 500 truckloads of aid on average every day. The United States Agency for International Development says it needs a steady flow of 600 trucks a day to ease the struggle for food and bring people back from the brink of famine.

The aid brought through the pier was enough to feed thousands for a month, but U.N. data shows it barely made a dent in the overall need of Gaza's 2.3 million people.

Here's a look at the timeline of the pier, the problems it faced and what may come next:

MARCH: ANNOUNCEMENT AND PREP

MARCH 7: President Joe Biden announces his plan for the U.S. military to build a pier during his State of the Union address.

"Tonight, I'm directing the U.S. military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the coast of Gaza that can receive large shipments carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters," he said.

But even in those first few moments, he noted the pier would increase the amount of humanitarian aid getting into Gaza but that Israel "must do its part" and let more aid in.

MARCH 8: Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon spokesman, tells reporters it will take "up to 60 days" to deploy the forces and build the project.

MARCH 12: Four U.S. Army boats loaded with tons of equipment and steel pier segments leave Joint

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Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia and head to the Atlantic Ocean for what is expected to be a monthlong voyage to Gaza.

The brigade's commander, Army Col. Sam Miller, warns that the transit and construction will be heavily dependent on the weather and any high seas they encounter.

LATE MARCH: U.S. Army vessels hit high seas and rough weather as they cross the Atlantic, slowing their pace.

APRIL: CONSTRUCTION AND HOPE

APRIL 1: Seven World Central Kitchen aid workers are killed in an Israeli airstrike as they travel in clearly marked vehicles on a delivery mission authorized by Israel.

The strike fuels ongoing worries about security for relief workers and prompts aid agencies to pause delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

APRIL 19: U.S. officials confirm that the U.N. World Food Program has agreed to help deliver aid brought to Gaza via the maritime route once construction is done.

APRIL 25: Major construction of the port facility on the shore near Gaza City begins to take shape. The onshore site is where aid from the causeway will be delivered and given to aid agencies.

APRIL 30: Satellite photos show the U.S. Navy ship USNS Roy P. Benavidez and Army vessels working on assembling the pier and causeway about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the port on shore.

MAY: THE PIER OPENS ... THEN CLOSES

MAY 9: The U.S. vessel Sagamore is the first ship loaded with aid to leave Cyprus and head toward Gaza and ultimately the pier. An elaborate security and inspection station has been built in Cyprus to screen the aid coming from a number of countries.

MAY 16: Well past the 60-day target time, the construction and assembly of the pier off the Gaza coast and the causeway attached to the shoreline are finished after more than a week of weather and other delays.

MAY 17: The first trucks carrying aid for the Gaza Strip roll down the newly built pier and into the secure area on shore, where they will be unloaded and the cargo distributed to aid agencies for delivery by truck into Gaza.

May 18: Crowds of desperate Palestinians overrun a convoy of aid trucks coming from the pier, stripping the cargo from 11 of the 16 vehicles before they reach a U.N. warehouse for distribution.

May 19-20: The first food from the pier — a limited number of high-nutrition biscuits — reaches people in need in central Gaza, according to the World Food Program.

Aid organizations suspend deliveries from the pier for two days while the U.S. works with Israel to open alternate land routes from the pier and improve security.

MAY 24: So far, a bit more than 1,000 metric tons of aid has been delivered to Gaza via the U.S.-built pier, and USAID later says all of it has been distributed within Gaza.

MAY 25: High winds and heavy seas damage the pier and cause four U.S. Army vessels operating there to become beached, injuring three service members, including one who is in critical condition.

Two vessels went aground in Gaza near the base of the pier and two went aground near Ashkelon in Israel.

MAY 28: Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh says large portions of the causeway are being pulled from the beach and moved to an Israeli port for repairs. The base of the causeway remains at the Gaza shore.

She also says that aid in Cyprus is being loaded onto vessels and will be ready to unload onto the pier once it is back in place.

MAY 29: Two of the Army vessels that ran aground in the bad weather are now back at sea and the other two near the pier are being freed, with the aid of the Israeli navy.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the coming days, the sections of the causeway will be put back together, and by the middle of next week will be moved back to the Gaza shore, where the causeway will once again be attached to the beach, the Pentagon says.

"When we are able to re-anchor the pier back in, you'll be able to see that aid flow off in a pretty steady stream," Singh said Tuesday. "We're going to continue to operate this temporary pier for as long as we can."

## Papua New Guinea landslide survivors slow to move to safer ground after hundreds buried

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Traumatized survivors of the massive landslide estimated to have buried hundreds in Papua New Guinea have been slow to move to safer ground as the South Pacific island nation's authorities prepare to use heavy machinery to clear debris and risk triggering another landslide, officials said Thursday.

Government and army geotechnical experts on Thursday were examining the stability of the massive swath of rubble that crushed Yambali village when a mountainside collapsed last week, Enga provincial administrator Sandis Tsaka said. Australian and New Zealand experts were expected to arrive on Friday.

Two excavators and a bulldozer were ready to start digging on one side of the mass of debris more than 150 meters (500 feet) wide while another excavator and a bulldozer were also ready on the other side, Tsaka said. Villagers have been digging with spades, farming tools and their bare hands since the disaster in search of survivors or bodies.

"It's still very active. We're getting rocks and debris still moving so it's been unsafe for our first responders and our emergency team," Tsaka told The Associated Press.

The United Nations estimated 670 villagers died in the disaster that immediately displaced 1,650 survivors. Papua New Guinea's government has told the United Nations it thinks more than 2,000 people were buried. Only six bodies have been retrieved.

A hospital in the provincial capital Wabag on Thursday reported 17 patients had been injured by the disaster, that struck at 3 a.m. while the village slept.

Authorities say that up to 8,000 people might need to be evacuated as the mass of boulders, earth and splintered trees that crushed Yambali becomes increasingly unstable and threatens to tumble further downhill. There is also a growing disease risk for those downhill from water streams buried beneath rubble and decomposing corpses that continue to seep from the debris.

Tsaka said only 700 people had agreed to evacuate on Wednesday.

"They're emotionally scarred and it's their home and they're reluctant to move, but we're encouraging them to move," Tsaka said. "The villages at risk have been put on alert to move as and when required."

There were also cultural sensitivities surrounding displaced people intruding upon someone else's land in a volatile province that is almost always dealing with tribal warfare, officials said.

"That's a challenge, but with a tragedy the communities and the surrounding villages have come in to help and they're taking care of the villagers who have been impacted," Tsaka said.

Chris Jensen, country director for the children-focused charity World Vision, said moving vulnerable villagers onto neighbors' land was likely a short-term option.

"There's a concern that if you move people onto land that's not their land — it's other people's land — maybe in the short-term it could be OK, but in the long run, it's the sort of thing that could trigger challenges. It's a very sensitive issue," Jensen said.

But many from Yambali's surrounds are keen to relocate to somewhere safer, including Frida Yeahkal.

"The stones from the mountain still keep falling. The land, food gardens and houses have been destroyed, and we appeal to the government to help us relocate to a safe place, where we can settle," Yeahkal told U.N. Development Program officials when they visited the village on Wednesday.

"There is little food and water. We are hungry and asking for your help. We are not even sleeping at night. We are afraid that more of the mountain will slide down and it will kill us all," she said.

Authorities acknowledge there were many more people in the village than the almost 4,000 that official records suggest. But no one knows how many were present when the mountainside collapsed.

Tsaka said two of the six bodies recovered so far were visitors, which he said suggested many outsiders could be buried among locals.

The nearby Porgera Gold Mine has offered additional earth-moving equipment to the emergency response. The mine's manager Karo Lelai confirmed the offer had been made, but could not say what equipment would be provided or when it would arrive.

## The Latest | 2 soldiers are killed in a West Bank car-ramming attack, Israeli military says

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said Thursday that two soldiers were killed in a car-ramming attack in the occupied West Bank. Violence in the West Bank has surged throughout the war in Gaza as Israel raids Palestinian towns in the territory to crack down on militancy, with incursions resulting in the deaths of more than 500 Palestinians.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians in the border city of Rafah reported heavy fighting Wednesday, and Israel's military said it seized control of the entire length of Gaza's border with Egypt.

Fighting in Rafah has already spurred more than 1 million Palestinians to flee, most of whom had already been displaced in the war between Israel and Hamas. They now seek refuge in makeshift tent camps and other war-ravaged areas, where they lack shelter, food, water and other essentials for survival, the United Nations says. Chinese President Xi Jinping promised more humanitarian aid for people in Gaza as he opened a summit with leaders of Arab states Thursday in Beijing.

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:

- China leader Xi Jinping pledges more Gaza aid at a summit with Arab leaders.
- Brazil's president withdraws his country's ambassador to Israel after criticizing the war in Gaza.
- A string of problems battered the plan to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid to Gaza through a U.S. military-built pier.
- The U.S. calls Algeria's proposed United Nations resolution that demands Israel halt its offensive in Rafah not helpful.
- Israel says it's taken control of a key area of Gaza's border with Egypt that's awash in smuggling tunnels. Follow AP's coverage of the war in Gaza at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's the latest:

**POLICE CLEAR OUT A PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTER TENT CAMP AT A UNIVERSITY IN SWEDEN**  
COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Swedish police cleared out a tent camp Thursday outside a southern Sweden university where pro-Palestinian students have been camping since May 16.

Police say that some 40 people are suspected of disobeying law enforcement during the early morning action and video shows police carrying away people who refused to leave the area outside Lund University. Swedish broadcaster SVT said that there were about 100 people in the camp.

In a statement, police said everything has gone smoothly.

In recent weeks, there have been campus protests by pro-Palestinian activists across Europe and in the United States as some called for a break in academic ties with Israel over the war in Gaza.

**2 SOLDIERS KILLED IN CAR-RAMMING ATTACK IN THE WEST BANK, ISRAELI MILITARY SAYS**

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Thursday that two soldiers were killed in a car-ramming attack in the occupied West Bank.

The military said it received a report late Wednesday about the ramming near the Palestinian city of Nablus. The military said the attacker fled the scene and that soldiers had launched a search for him.

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On Thursday, the military said the soldiers who were struck had died and that top military officials conducted an initial inquiry into the attack.

Israeli Army Radio reported that the attacker had turned himself in to Palestinian security forces, which could not immediately be confirmed.

Violence in the West Bank has surged throughout the war in Gaza. Israel has been conducting raids into Palestinian cities and towns in the territory to crack down on militancy and the incursions have led to the deaths of more than 500 Palestinians. Most of those killed have been in clashes with the military. But people throwing stones as well as others not involved in the confrontations have also been killed.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis have also been on the rise in the territory.

## CHINA PLEDGES MORE GAZA AID DURING THE OPENING OF ITS SUMMIT WITH ARAB STATES

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and promised more humanitarian aid for people in Gaza as he opened a summit with leaders of Arab states Thursday in Beijing.

"Since last October, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has escalated drastically, throwing people into tremendous suffering," Xi said in a speech opening the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. "War should not continue indefinitely."

He restated China's backing of a two-state solution and pledged 500 million yuan (\$69 million) in humanitarian aid for Gaza. He also promised to donate \$3 million to a United Nations agency that provides assistance and relief to refugees of the Israel-Hamas war.

Beijing and the Arab states back Palestinians in the conflict, where Israel is facing growing international condemnation after its strike in the southern Gaza city of Rafah in which at least 45 people were killed over the weekend. The overall Palestinian death toll in the war exceeds 36,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Beijing has long backed Palestinians and denounced Israel over its settlements in the occupied territories. It has not criticized the initial Hamas attack on Oct. 7 — which killed about 1,200 people — while the United States and others have called it an act of terrorism. However, China has growing economic ties with Israel.

## IRAN OPENS REGISTRATION FOR PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS AHEAD OF JUNE 28 ELECTION

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran opened a five-day registration period Thursday for hopefuls wanting to run in the June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others.

The five-day period will see those between the ages of 40 to 75 with at least a master's degree register as potential candidates. All candidates ultimately must be approved by Iran's 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 85, who maintains final say over all matters of state.

The panel has never accepted a woman, nor anyone calling for radical change within the country's governance.

Who will run — and potentially be accepted — remains in question. The country's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, a previously behind-the-scenes bureaucrat, could be a front-runner, because he's already been seen meeting with Khamenei. Also discussed as possible aspirants are former hard-line President Mohammad Ahmadinejad and former reformist President Mohammad Khatami — but whether they'd be allowed to run is another question.

The five-day registration period will close on Tuesday. The Guardian Council is expected to issue its final list of candidates within 10 days afterwards. That will allow for a shortened two-week campaign before the vote in late June.

## 14 pro-democracy activists convicted, 2 acquitted in Hong Kong's biggest national security case

By KANIS LEUNG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Fourteen pro-democracy activists were convicted in Hong Kong's biggest national security case on Thursday by a court that said their plan to effect change through an unofficial primary election would have undermined the government's authority and created a constitutional crisis.

After a 2019 protest movement that filled the city's streets with demonstrators, authorities have all but silenced dissent in Hong Kong through reduced public choice in elections, crackdowns on media and the Beijing-imposed security law under which the activists were convicted.

Those found guilty of conspiracy to commit subversion included former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung, Lam Cheuk-ting, Helena Wong and Raymond Chan, and they could face up to life in prison when sentenced later. The two defendants acquitted were former district councilors Lee Yue-shun and Lawrence Lau. But the prosecution said it intends to appeal against the acquittals.

The activists were among 47 democracy advocates who were prosecuted in 2021 for their involvement in the primary. Prosecutors had accused them of attempting to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing the legislative majority necessary to indiscriminately veto budgets.

In a summary of the verdict distributed to media, the court said the election participants had declared they would "either actively use or use the power conferred on the (Legislative Council) by the (Basic Law) to veto the budgets."

Under the Basic Law, the chief executive can dissolve the legislature if a budget cannot be passed but the leader would have to step down if the budget is again vetoed in the newly formed legislature.

In the full, 319-page verdict, the court also said if the plan to veto bills would lead to the dissolution of the legislature, it meant "the implementation of any new government policies would be seriously hampered and essentially put to a halt."

"The power and authority of both the Government and the Chief Executive would be greatly undermined," the court said in the verdict. "In our view ... that would create a constitutional crisis for Hong Kong."

The judges concluded that "unlawful means" are not limited only to criminal acts, and that it was not necessary for the prosecution to prove the accused knew that the means to be used were "unlawful."

Lau, who was acquitted, told reporters that he should not be the focus at the moment as other defendants in the case warrant the public's concern and love.

He said if there's any "star" in the case, the judgment should be "the star" because it set out the logic and perspectives of the judges. "This is part of our rule of law," he said.

The court acquitted Lau after it found he had not mentioned vetoing the budget in his election campaign and the court was unable to conclude he had intended to subvert state power.

Lee, the other defendant found not guilty, thanked the public for caring about the case over the past few years.

"I feel calm, as I have always been," he said. In an earlier Facebook post, he said Thursday was like a special graduation ceremony for him, though graduation is usually about sharing happiness with families and friends.

"This perhaps best reflects the common helplessness of our generation," he had said in his post Wednesday.

Lee, like Lau, was acquitted after the court found no evidence he mentioned vetoing in an election forum, nor had he personally expressed his stance on using veto power to force the government to accede to protester demands.

While Lee — then a member of the now-defunct Civic Party — had adopted a similar political platform as other party members, the court took into account that he was a latecomer to the party's campaign for the primary and that he would have had little choice but to adopt the platform used by others. Thus, the court said in the verdict it could not be sure he had intended to subvert state power.

The two will be kept on bail, the court said.

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Observers said the subversion case illustrated how the security law is being used to crush the political opposition following huge anti-government protests in 2019. But the Beijing and Hong Kong governments insisted the law has helped bring back stability to the city and that judicial independence was being protected.

When Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997, Beijing promised to retain the city's Western-style civil liberties for 50 years. However, since the introduction of the 2020 law, Hong Kong authorities have severely limited free speech and assembly under the rubric of maintaining national security. Many activists were arrested, silenced or forced into self-exile. Dozens of civil society groups disbanded.

The activists prosecuted in the main case included legal scholar Benny Tai, former student leader Joshua Wong and a dozen former lawmakers including Leung and Claudia Mo.

Thirty-one of them, including Tai, Wong and Mo, pleaded guilty to the charge of conspiracy to commit subversion. They have a better chance at shorter jail terms and will be sentenced at a later date.

After Thursday's verdicts for the 16 others who pleaded not guilty and underwent a non-jury trial, the court tentatively scheduled a mitigation hearing on June 25.

On Thursday, prior to the court hearing, Chan Po-ying, leader of pro-democracy political party League of Social Democrats, as well as three other LSD members, were arrested at court, according to a Facebook post by party member Figo Chan. Chan Po-ying is also the wife of Leung.

Reports by local media such as the South China Morning Post said those arrested had attempted to raise a yellow banner in protest as they walked onto court grounds but were stopped by police and escorted away.

Diplomats from the United States, Australia and Britain, along with dozens of residents had waited outside the police-guarded court building to secure seats to hear the verdicts.

Former chairperson of the Democratic Party Emily Lau was among those who turned up in support. She told reporters she was sad that so many had been locked up for over three years, but declined to comment on the verdict.

Social worker Stanley Chang, a friend of one of the 16 defendants, said he arrived the site at 4 a.m. because he feared he could not get a seat. Chang said there were very few things supporters could do for them and that attending the hearing is a kind of company.

"I want to give some support for my friend and the faces I saw in news reports," he said.

Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch, said the convictions of 14 people "for their peaceful activism (show) utter contempt for both democratic political processes and the rule of law."

"All Hong Kong people wanted was a chance to freely elect their government. Democracy is not a crime, regardless of what the Chinese government and its handpicked Hong Kong court may say," Wang added.

Sarah Brooks of rights group Amnesty International described the mass convictions as "unprecedented" and said it was the "most ruthless illustration yet of how Hong Kong's National Security Law is weaponized to silence dissent."

"These convictions also send a chilling message to anyone else in Hong Kong who opposes the actions of the government, namely: stay quiet, or face jail," she said.

The unofficial primary in June 2020 was meant to shortlist pro-democracy candidates who would then run in the official election. It drew an unexpectedly high turnout of 610,000 voters, over 13% of the city's registered electorate.

The pro-democracy camp at that time hoped they could secure a legislative majority, which would allow them to press for the 2019 protest demands, including greater police accountability and democratic elections for the city leader.

But the government postponed the legislative election that would have followed the primary, citing public health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. The electoral laws were later overhauled, effectively increasing the number of pro-Beijing lawmakers in the legislature.

## At 100, this vet says the 'greatest generation' moniker fits 'because we saved the world.'

HELEN, Ga. (AP) — A profile of Andrew "Andy" Negra Jr., of Helen, Georgia, one of a dwindling number of veterans took part in the Allies' European war effort that led to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

BORN: May 28, 1924, near Avella, Pennsylvania.

SERVICE: Army's 128th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 6th Armored Division. Landed on Utah Beach in Normandy on July 18, 1944. Fought in the battle of Brest among other battles. Later served in the Occupation of Germany. He was honorably discharged on December 17, 1945.

"BECAUSE WE SAVED THE WORLD"

It was 1943, and Andrew "Andy" Negra Jr. had just finished high school. He was thinking of attending the University of Pittsburgh. "But Uncle Sam had that finger pointed at me. 'I need you.' And, I was drafted."

The third of four children born to immigrants from Austria-Hungary, Negra expressed no qualms about entering the service. "There was a war going on, so I went along with everybody else. I just went into the service with an open mind."

Now, he proudly lays claim to being part of "The Greatest Generation."

"Because we saved the world," he said.

He has made the trip back to France before but says his return this year for the 80th anniversary of D-Day is special for the people of Europe, and for himself.

"I'm talking about the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium. All of them are coming to this and there'll be 35 different countries," he told The Associated Press ahead of his trip. "So it's going to be a pretty big event. And at the same time, I'm saying to myself, they're going to celebrate my birthday," said Negra, who turned 100 on May 28.

He considers himself lucky to have survived uninjured. "I saw a lot of bad things. A lot of death," he said.

But he also recounts meeting his wife at a dance while he was deployed there. "Second song they played was "People Will Say We're in Love." And I told her, I said — at that time, I'm 19 — I told her, I said, this is going to be our song for the rest of our lives. And I only knew her ten minutes."

As the D-Day anniversary approached Negra was making plans to visit the scene of one of his life's most harrowing moments. He recalled being on the road with the 6th Armored Division, part of a push to retake the French port city of Brest, when his column was strafed by five German planes. He scrambled out of his half-track and hid behind a well.

"These five airplanes all dove for that well," Negra recalled. "And I was behind that well. So, when they strafed, fortunately it was a brick one, and solid."

His plans for his return to France include revisiting the scene. "They say the well's not there, but the location is there. So, if possible, we're going to we're going to go see that."

## A violent, polarized Mexico goes to the polls to choose between 2 women presidential candidates

By MARK STEVENSON and MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico goes into Sunday's election deeply divided: friends and relatives no longer talk politics for fear of worsening unbridgeable divides, while drug cartels have split the country into a patchwork quilt of warring fiefdoms. The atmosphere is literally heating up, amid a wave of unusual heat, drought, pollution and political violence.

It's unclear whether Mexico's next president will be able to rein in the underlying violence and polarization.

Soledad Echagoyen, a Mexico City doctor who supports President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party, says she can no longer talk about politics with her colleagues.

"In order to not lose friendships, we decided not to bring up politics starting six years ago, because we were arguing, and the attacks started to get personal," said Dr. Echagoyen.

Being a critic of the current administration does not appear to be easier.



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"There's too much hate," said Mexico City student Luis Ávalos, 21. He said some of his friends accuse him of "betraying the country" for not supporting López Obrador.

Opposition presidential candidate Xóchitl Gálvez has focused her ire on López Obrador's "hugs not bullets" policy of not confronting the drug cartels.

She faces former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, who is running for López Obrador's Morena party. Sheinbaum, who leads in the race, has promised to continue all of López Obrador's policies.

López Obrador himself likes to depict every issue as a struggle between the forces of the "good people" and shadowy conservative conspiracies, and he has done a lot to stoke the flames of division and anger.

"More than an election, this is a referendum to choose the kind of country we want," López Obrador said recently. And it really is a referendum on him: he — much like Donald Trump in the United States — is the central figure in the campaign.

In Mexico, just as across the globe, forces of angry, charismatic populism are fighting it out with an income-polarized liberal democracy. Issues of national identity, the influence of foreigners and economic exclusion have divided the country into warring camps.

"In this country, what's being built isn't a sense of citizenship, but rather of voter bases," said Gloria Alcocer, the director of the civic-minded magazine *Voz y Voto*, roughly "Voice and Vote." López Obrador is prohibited by law from running for reelection to another six-year term.

The battle lines are drawn: the ruling Morena Party already holds the governorships of 23 of the country's 32 states, and is going for them all. It already has a simple majority in both houses of Congress, and wants a two-thirds majority so it can amend the Constitution at will.

It is hard to describe how chilling that is for some Mexicans who spent more than four decades trying to build a formal democracy, with checks and balances, watchdog agencies and strict electoral rules, almost all of which Morena has said it would like to defund or eliminate if it gets the chance.

Like the old ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party — which held Mexico's presidency without interruption for a record 70 years — Morena hasn't hesitated to use the government's power to influence elections, hand out money or embark on big building schemes that may never be truly finished.

But it's also hard to describe how attractive López Obrador policies have been for many Mexicans who have felt excluded under 40 years of what he calls "neo-liberal," market-oriented administrations.

Under López Obrador, Mexico has more than doubled its still-tragically low minimum wage (now about \$15 per day, or about \$2 per hour). While that's not going to change anybody's life — a Big Mac now costs about \$5.19 in Mexico, compared to an average of \$5.69 in the U.S. — it is the underlying appeal of Morena's platform that draws many voters.

The implicit message for many Mexicans during market-oriented governments over the decades was that they were somehow wrong for not learning more English, working in manual labor and not in the tech economy, receiving government subsidies and living in a traditional, family-dominated culture.

López Obrador turned this narrative on its head: he intentionally mispronounces English phrases, glorifies manual labor, says subsidies are good, favors state-run companies and says Mexico is strong precisely because of its family values and Indigenous culture: he has even claimed those same values make Mexicans immune to drug addiction.

López Obrador says fighting the drug cartels — which have taken over large swaths of Mexico, extorting protection money from all walks of life — is a foreign idea, one imposed on Mexico by the United States. He has opted instead for a "hugs not bullets" approach and limiting cooperation with U.S. authorities in fighting the gangs.

Sheinbaum is an academic who lacks López Obrador's charisma, folksy style and mass appeal. She says her administration will follow the outgoing president's policies, but with more data to back up her decisions.

Gálvez, a woman who went from a poor Indigenous town to starting her own tech firm, has been the wild card in the race: her plain-spoken, folksy approach has produced both punchy phrases and monumental gaffes. Both women are 61. A third little-known male candidate from a small party has trailed far behind both women.

Sunday's elections — which will also decide congressional seats and thousands of local posts — are different from those of the past in other ways.

About 27 candidates — mostly running for mayor or town councils — have been killed so far this year. While that number is not much higher than in some past elections, what is unprecedented is the mass shootings: candidates used to be murdered in direct attacks that killed only them, but now criminals have taken to spraying whole campaign events with gunfire.

And, as international studies professor Carlos A. Pérez Ricart notes, "where there are no shootings, it's because (local government) institutions have already been taken over" by the cartels.

Mexico has also been baking under a heat wave so intense that howler monkeys have literally been dropping dead from the trees. Almost all of the country is suffering some level of water shortage and air pollution has been so bad in the capital, that a fifth of the cars have been banned from driving.

All of that is not exactly helping cool tempers or drawing people toward reconciliation. In the present scenario, perhaps the only positive thing is that it doesn't appear the election will be particularly tight.

"This country couldn't really handle a narrow margin of victory," said Pérez Ricart. "We are lacking true democrats on both sides."

## 'Star Trek' actor George Takei is determined to keep telling his Japanese American story

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans, including children, labeled enemies during World War II is an historical experience that has traumatized, and galvanized, the Japanese American community over the decades.

For George Takei, who portrayed Hikaru Sulu aboard the USS Enterprise in the "Star Trek" franchise, it's a story he is determined to keep telling every opportunity he has.

"I consider it my mission in life to educate Americans on this chapter of American history," he said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

He fears the lesson about the failure of U.S. democracy hasn't really been learned, even today, including among Japanese Americans.

"The shame of internment is the government's. They're the ones that did something unjust, cruel and inhuman. But so often the victims of the government actions take on the shame themselves," he said.

Takei, 87, has a new picture book out for children ages 6 to 9 and their parents, called "My Lost Freedom." It's illustrated in soft watercolors by Michelle Lee.

Takei was 4 years old when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, two months after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, declaring anyone of Japanese descent an enemy of the United States and forcibly removing them from their West Coast homes.

Takei spent the next three years behind barbed wires, guarded by soldiers with guns, in three camps: the Santa Anita racetrack, which stunk of manure; Camp Rohwer in a marshland; and, from 1943, Tule Lake, a high-security segregation center for the "disloyal."

"We were seen as different from other Americans. This was unfair. We were Americans, who had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor. Yet we were imprisoned behind barbed wires," Takei writes in the book.

Throughout it all, his parents are portrayed as enduring the hardships with a quiet dignity. His mother sewed clothes for the children. They made chairs out of scrap lumber. They played baseball. They danced to Benny Goodman. For Christmas, they got a Santa who looked Japanese.

Takei's is a remarkable story of resilience and a pursuit of justice, repeated throughout the Japanese American experience.

It's a story that's been told and retold, in books like the 1973 "Farewell to Manzanar" by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston; "Only What We Could Carry," edited by Lawson Fusao Inada more than 20 years ago; and "The Literature of Japanese American Incarceration," which just came out, compiled by Frank Abe and Floyd Cheung.

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David Inoue, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League, headquartered in Washington, D.C., believes the message of Takei's book remains relevant.

He said discrimination persists today, as seen in the anti-Asian attacks that flared with the COVID-19 pandemic. Inoue said his son has been taunted in school in the same way he was growing up.

"One of the important things about having books like this is that it humanizes us. It tells stories about us that show we're just like any other family. We like to play baseball. We have pets," Inoue said.

Takei and his family were sent to Tule Lake in northern California because his parents answered "No" to key questions in a so-called loyalty questionnaire.

Question No. 27 asked if they were willing to serve in the U.S. armed forces. Question No. 28 asked whether they swore allegiance to the U.S. and would forswear allegiance to the Japanese emperor. Both were controversial questions for people who had been stripped of their basic civil rights and labeled enemies.

"Daddy and Mama both thought that the two questions were stupid," Takei writes in "My Lost Freedom."

"The only honest answers were No and No."

Takei said the questions did not explain what would become of families with young children. The second question was also a no-win, he said, because his parents felt there was no loyalty to Japan to denounce.

Tule Lake was the largest of the 10 camps, holding 18,000 people.

Young men who answered "Yes" became part of the all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which fought in Europe while their families remained incarcerated. The 442, with their famous "Go for Broke" motto, is the most decorated unit of its size and length of service in U.S. military history.

"They were determined to prove themselves and get their families out of barbed wires," Takei said. "They are our heroes. I know I owe so much to them."

After Japan surrendered, Takei and his family, like all Japanese Americans freed from the camps, were each given \$25 and a one-way ticket to anywhere in the U.S. Takei's family chose to start all over again in Los Angeles.

In 1988, the Civil Liberties Act — after years of effort and testimonies by Japanese Americans, including Takei — granted redress of \$20,000 and a formal presidential apology to every surviving U.S. citizen or legal resident immigrant of Japanese ancestry incarcerated during World War II.

Takei's voice became choked when he recalled how his father did not live to see it.

He noted with pride the diversity depicted in "Star Trek," a TV series that started in the mid-1960s and developed a devout following. There, the crew that flew together through the galaxies was of various backgrounds.

"Star Trek" writer, creator and producer Gene Roddenberry wanted to portray the turbulent times and the civil rights movement on a TV show but had to do it metaphorically to make it acceptable, Takei said.

"Different people, different ideas, different taste, different food. He wanted to make that statement. Each of the characters was supposed to represent a part of this planet," Takei said.

Takei recalled how his father taught him how the government "of the people, by the people and for the people," as Abraham Lincoln put it in his Gettysburg Address, could also prove a weakness.

"All people are fallible, even a great president like Roosevelt. He got stampeded by the hysteria of the time, the racism of the time. And he signed Executive Order 9066," Takei said.

## **As Maduro shifts from migration denier to defender, Venezuelans consider leaving if he is reelected**

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

SABANA DE MENDOZA, Venezuela (AP) — One of the most influential politicians in Venezuela once deemed images of his fellow citizens abandoning their home country the result of a professionally scripted, "Hollywood-type blockbuster."

Migration, Diosdado Cabello said, was an issue conjured by a "media apparatus." Similarly, his boss, President Nicolás Maduro, denied for years, at least publicly, that millions of people were literally walking

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away from Venezuela.

Nothing, however, could have pushed them out of denial and into acceptance faster than the existential threat that their self-described socialist government is facing for the first time in years.

As Maduro works toward reelection with a divided, diminished and disappointed base, he has slowly transformed into a defender for migrants, challenging news reports linking some to criminal activities and accusing immigration authorities in other countries of abusing Venezuelans.

Maduro, like the chief opposition coalition, is promising job opportunities to lure people to return or not leave. But unlike the opposition's proposals, his no longer ring true for many voters, and they have already made up their minds: If Maduro wins on July 28, they will become migrants.

"I love Venezuela. I would like to pursue a medical career here, but one must think about the future," said Arnaldo Benitez, 18. "I want my family to have a decent life and not be thinking 'I can't afford this or that.' So, I have to plan for a better future even if it unfortunately means leaving Venezuela."

Benitez, who finished high school last year, plans to move to Colombia, which has received the largest share of the more than 7.7 million Venezuelans who have migrated since their country came undone last decade. He said other people in his rural community of Torococo are also waiting for the election outcome to decide whether to leave, but a group of 20 thought it best not to wait and left in early May.

A nationwide poll conducted last month by the Venezuela-based research firm Delphos showed that roughly a fourth of people are thinking about migrating, primarily for economic reasons. Of those thinking about leaving Venezuela, about 47% said an electoral win by the opposition would make them stay and roughly the same amount indicated that an improved economy would also keep them in their home country.

Migration decisions are dominating conversations at malls, high schools and political rallies. Some people are saving whatever money they can from various jobs and others are selling their belongings.

In the 11 years since Venezuelans learned that President Hugo Chávez was dead and his handpicked successor, Maduro, would take over, a drop in oil prices, corruption and government mismanagement sunk the country into a complex crisis, pushing people into poverty, hunger, poor health, crime, desperation and migration. Economic sanctions imposed last decade failed to topple Maduro, as the United States and other governments intended, but they contributed to the existing crisis.

In recent months, he accused media outlets, including The Associated Press, of carrying out a campaign against Venezuelan migrants, accusing them of "saying that all the crimes in the world today are committed by Venezuelans."

"To Venezuelan migrants: We love you and our love makes us say, 'Come back!' We are waiting for you here, this is your land," he said on state television in February. "Enough of xenophobia and persecution."

Maduro is seeking to extend his presidency for six more years. Last year, he entered into an agreement with the U.S.-backed Unitary Platform opposition coalition to work toward improving conditions for a free and fair election. But he has since changed course as the meteoric rise of opposition leader Maria Corina Machado turned into a real threat to his reelection prospects, and he has used his ruling party's control over all government institutions to tilt the balance.

The country's top court in January affirmed an administrative decision blocking Machado's candidacy. Her chosen substitute was barred from the ballot, too. She and the coalition are now backing former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia. Compared to Machado, who has campaigned for more than a year, few voters know González's name or background, but her endorsement is enough for many to want to vote for him.

González, during his first campaign rally in mid-May, asked supporters to imagine "a country in which our airports and borders would be filled with our children returning home" should he win.

A father of three, Miguel Montilla, 53, retired from the armed forces after 27 years of service, but he and his family cannot live off his roughly \$20 monthly pension. He said he will vote for González because he hopes the candidate will implement changes that spur economic development and convince two of his children to return to Venezuela, just as Machado has repeatedly promised on the campaign trail.

"I have lost my children because they dropped out of college and migrated. I want them to come back and have a family life and a better future," said Montilla, who has a small convenience store in Sabana

de Mendoza. His eyes swelled at the thought of a family reunion, but after a few hopeful seconds, he considered the other possibility after the election.

"I better encourage my other son to leave if Maduro wins again. He has to leave," Montilla said. "I might leave, too."

The Delphos poll showed that people between the ages of 18 and 34 were more likely to consider leaving Venezuela. The poll had a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

Colombia's migration chief, Fernando García, told Congress earlier this month the government "should expect a large influx of Venezuelan migrants" should Maduro win. The director of the Migration Colombia agency said Maduro's victory coupled with the recent decision of the U.S. government to end some sanctions relief for Venezuela create the conditions that can lead to migration.

Most Venezuelan migrants have settled in other countries in Latin America or the Caribbean, but after the pandemic eliminated millions of jobs across the region, they began setting their sights in the U.S.

Public employees these days earn a monthly minimum wage of \$3.60 plus \$130 in bonuses, while private-sector workers make on average \$210 a month. Neither monthly pay is enough for a family to buy a basic basket of goods, which costs about \$380.

At a government-organized rally earlier this month in the capital, Caracas, the low wages were the only reason cited by some high school students who acknowledged they are considering migrating later this year. They dream about becoming engineers, owning businesses and caring for the sick but all are willing to postpone or forget those goals.

Many students wore their uniforms, and some wore T-shirts backing the president, even though when asked, they did not want to verbally express support for him. High school senior Jaxael Rivera and other public school students from across Caracas were bused into the rally, which was eventually addressed by Maduro.

"I would need a good paying job to stay," said Rivera, who is planning to join his sister in Spain, where she has lived for two years.

## **From electric vehicles to deciding what to cook for dinner, John Podesta faces climate challenges**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — John Podesta was two months into his new role as President Joe Biden's global climate envoy when he faced his first international crisis — what to serve for dinner.

He had invited his Chinese counterpart, Liu Zhenmin, over to his house but learned that his guest — perhaps not surprisingly — only likes Chinese food. Although Podesta is well known for his culinary skills, he usually sticks to cooking Italian.

"I thought, OK, well, this is a diplomatic challenge," Podesta told The Associated Press in an interview.

So Podesta whipped up risotto with leeks and fennel, infusing a classic Italian dish with vegetables that can be found in Chinese recipes. It was a culinary compromise to smooth out an essential relationship between the world's two superpowers.

Few other problems will be solved as simply as switching around some ingredients. Although Podesta has worked on climate issues for years, the complications and obstacles have only multiplied as scientists warn that global warming is reaching critical levels.

In the interview, Podesta said he saw opportunities to work with China to limit greenhouse gas emissions that are even more potent than carbon dioxide. However, trade disagreements between the U.S. and China have led to what he described as "a period of some friction and competition," and Podesta said he would push China to contribute more money to the global fight against climate change.

International negotiations aren't Podesta's only responsibility. He's also keeping his previous job of implementing Biden's domestic clean energy initiatives. Podesta conceded that progress has been slower than expected on electric vehicles, but he believes there's still momentum despite efforts by the political right to "demonize" zero-emission vehicles.

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Looming over all of Podesta's efforts is this year's election and the threat that Donald Trump could be even more zealous in trying to undo climate progress if he returns to in the White House. Podesta warned of a "carte blanche to the polluters."

"Those things matter," he said. "Voters can make a judgment about whether they matter to them. They certainly matter to the planet."

It's high stakes for a 75-year-old veteran of Democratic politics who was recently considering retirement.

"I had one foot in the car on my way to California with my wife," he joked.

Taking on two — very big — roles

Podesta's plan to step away from public life changed when Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act two years ago, pumping \$375 billion into the fight against climate change. Podesta had helped lay the political groundwork for the law by working with advocacy groups, and Biden asked him to oversee the implementation of financial incentives for clean technologies.

"There's no one else in the United States that knows as many people in government and knows how to get as much done in government," said Christy Goldfuss, who previously worked at the Center for American Progress, a Democratic-aligned think tank that Podesta founded two decades ago.

Podesta's role expanded into international politics when John Kerry, Biden's first global climate envoy and a former U.S. secretary of state, retired earlier this year. Kerry was known for his close relationship with his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, who stepped down as well and was replaced by Liu.

Although neither Podesta nor Liu are new to climate diplomacy, "there's more uncertainty in the bilateral climate relationship than there has been for the last three years," said Li Shuo, an analyst at the Asia Society who previously worked with Greenpeace in Beijing.

Earlier this month, Podesta hosted Liu in Washington for their first official meeting since taking on their new roles.

"Personal relationships only go so far, but they are important in terms of building the level of trust that each side is telling the other what is possible," Podesta said. "And I think we ended up having a good outcome of the meeting."

Podesta described the conversations as a give and take: "He was pushing me, I was pushing him." The U.S. and China have opportunities to improve their reductions in emissions of methane and hydrofluorocarbons, he said, and "the world is looking to us to find ways where we can work together."

From billions to trillions of dollars for climate

However, a sticking point will be an area known as climate finance.

Under the Paris agreement reached in 2015, wealthy countries are supposed to collectively provide \$100 billion in annual assistance for developing nations to adopt clean technologies and cope with the impact of climate change. They reached the goal in 2022, two years behind schedule, according to a report released Wednesday by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Negotiators are supposed to set a new, more ambitious target during the November summit in Azerbaijan.

"We have a challenge where it's not just billions or even hundreds of billions of dollars of need that's out there," Podesta said. "We need to mobilize trillions of dollars to transform the global economy from one that's running on polluting fossil fuels to one that's running on clean energy."

China has resisted any requirements to put its own money into the pot, but Podesta emphasized that it's the world's top emitter of greenhouse gases "and it does have an obligation to the rest of the world to contribute."

The United States is under pressure to increase its own financial commitments, something that has been challenging with Republicans in control of the House.

Joe Thwaites, an expert on the issue at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Biden administration officials have made progress by scraping together funding from around the federal government and searching "behind the proverbial couch cushions."

Climate talks clouded by trade disputes

Trade concerns with China have become more prominent. Although China has boasted that its production capacity could help the world transition to a clean energy future, U.S. officials are worried about American

workers being displaced if cheap Chinese electric vehicles and other green products flood U.S. markets. "There's no question that we're now in a fierce competition, particularly in these clean technologies," Podesta said. He suggested that China is supercharging some of its industries and ramping up exports to compensate for its pandemic slump and the collapse of its housing sector, an approach that he described as "anti-competitive."

Biden recently announced higher tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, batteries and other technologies. He's also pushing U.S. automakers to increase production of zero-emission vehicles through regulations and financial incentives.

"We're seeing continued momentum," Podesta said. "It's maybe not as quite as fast as people anticipated. But it's very strong, very forward moving. And I think that companies are fully committed to that transition to electrification."

Trump has criticized the focus on electric vehicles, and partisanship has colored drivers' views of the issue, creating a political and cultural hurdle to lowering emissions from transportation.

"I think that the right has kind of demonized electric vehicles," Podesta said.

Dave Cooke, senior vehicles analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said that while the rules have been eased for the next few years, automakers need to increase their efforts now to ensure they hit stricter goals down the line.

"We've given them such a cushy first few years," he said. "If they don't use that time to figure out their long-term strategy, that would be extremely problematic."

Reports by independent analysts show that the U.S. is not on track to hit the emissions reduction target that Biden set for 2030, but Podesta said he was not concerned.

"I'm confident that we can do that," he said. "We've done an enormous amount already."

He added that clean energy policies tend to be more partisan in Washington than elsewhere in the country.

"The facts on the ground are changing," Podesta said. "As people go to work in these industries, as they take advantage of the investments that are coming to their communities and see the results of lowering pollution across the board, I think they're very hard to reverse."

## **Boeing reaches deadline for reporting how it will fix aircraft safety and quality problems**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing is due to tell federal regulators Thursday how it plans to fix the safety and quality problems that have plagued its aircraft-manufacturing work in recent years.

The Federal Aviation Administration required the company to produce a turnaround plan after one of its jetliners suffered a blowout of a fuselage panel during an Alaska Airlines flight in January.

Nobody was hurt during the midair incident. Accident investigators determined that bolts that helped secure the panel to the frame of the Boeing 737 Max 9 were missing before the piece blew off. The mishap has further battered Boeing's reputation and led to multiple civil and criminal investigations.

Whistleblowers have accused the company of taking shortcuts that endanger passengers, a claim that Boeing disputes. A panel convened by the FAA found shortcomings in the aircraft maker's safety culture.

In late February, FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker gave Boeing 90 days to come up with a plan to improve quality and ease the agency's safety concerns. Whitaker described the plan as the beginning, not the end, of a process to improve Boeing.

"It's going to be a long road to get Boeing back to where they need to be, making safe airplanes," he told ABC News last week.

The FAA limited Boeing production of the 737 Max, its best-selling plane, although analysts believe the number the company is making has fallen even lower than the FAA cap.

Boeing's recent problems could expose it to criminal prosecution related to the deadly crashes of two Max jetliners in 2018 and 2019. The Justice Department said two weeks ago that Boeing violated terms of a 2021 settlement that allowed it to avoid prosecution for fraud. The charge was based on the company

allegedly deceiving regulators about a flight-control system that was implicated in the crashes.

Most of the recent problems have been related to the Max, however Boeing and key supplier Spirit AeroSystems have also struggled with manufacturing flaws on a larger plane, the 787 Dreamliner. Boeing has suffered setbacks on other programs including its Starliner space capsule, a military refueling tanker, and new Air Force One presidential jets.

Boeing officials have vowed to regain the trust of regulators and the flying public. Boeing has fallen behind rival Airbus, and production setbacks have hurt the company's ability to generate cash.

The company says it is reducing "traveled work" — assembly tasks that are done out of their proper chronological order — and keeping closer tabs on Spirit AeroSystems.

## **AP interview: Divisions among the world's powerful nations are undermining UN efforts to end crises**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Deep divisions especially among the world's most powerful nations have significantly undermined what the United Nations can do to help nations move from conflict to peace, the U.N. peacekeeping chief said.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix told The Associated Press in an interview that these divisions — most notably between the U.S. and the West on one side and Russia and often China on the other -- don't only affect peacekeeping but everything the United Nations does in trying to promote peace and security.

The result is that in some cases the rivalry can lead to the presence of U.N. peacekeepers being questioned by the parties to the conflict -- or even asked to leave, as happened in Mali and is happening in Congo, he said.

Twenty years ago, Lacroix said, a united international community pushed in the same direction as the United Nations to restore peace to East Timor, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cambodia.

"But we don't have that anymore," he said ahead of the International Day of U.N. Peacekeepers on Wednesday.

"Yes, we still have a U.N. presence in many different crisis situations, but we don't have the same united, committed push of the membership to advance those political agreements between the parties," he said. "And sometimes, those agreements just unravel or they stagnate and create frustration."

Four years ago, the United Nations had approximately 110,000 peacekeepers deployed in 13 missions around the world. Today, there are about 80,000 military and civilians in 11 peacekeeping operations.

At the same time, as Switzerland's U.N. ambassador told the Security Council last week, there are over 120 armed conflicts around the world and millions of people are suffering.

What actions could really make a difference? "It's a million-dollar question," Lacroix said.

In many situations today, he said, multiple foreign countries are intervening on behalf of their own interests.

He pointed to the Central African Republic, Somalia, Sudan, Libya and Mali as examples, adding "the list is long and expanding."

Last July, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the post-Cold War period is over, and the world is moving toward a new multipolar era already marked by the highest level of geopolitical tensions and major power competition in decades.

He warned that these divisions are undermining the cornerstone of the United Nations — having all countries work together to solve global challenges. And he outlined his "New Agenda for Peace" to address the new threats facing the world, stressing the importance of multilateralism.

Lacroix said in many crises where peacekeepers are involved, the U.N. is seeing an increasing influence of the drivers of conflict that are not properly addressed -- inequality, poverty, the impact of climate change and transnational criminal activities.

The undersecretary-general for peace operations said much more needs to be done to address the drivers of conflict as well as terrorism, and this can only be done multilaterally with countries working together.



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"The more division we have, the more we're incapable to address crises, then the more challenging it is to deal effectively with those pressing global challenges," Lacroix said.

In outlining his "New Agenda for Peace" last year, Guterres said that while peacekeepers have saved millions of lives, "longstanding unresolved conflicts, driven by complex domestic, geopolitical and transnational factors, and a persistent mismatch between mandates and resources, have exposed its limitations."

Put bluntly, he said, "peacekeeping operations cannot succeed when there is no peace to keep."

The secretary-general's proposed peace agenda urges nations to move toward "nimble, adaptable" peacekeeping models with exit strategies, and to support "peace enforcement action by regional and sub-regional organizations" that are mandated by the Security Council, paid for by U.N. member states, and backed by political efforts to promote peace.

It will be high on the agenda at the "Summit of the Future" Guterres has invited world leaders to at September's annual gathering. The summit is aimed at trying to repair what Guterres has called "a great fracture" among nations and promote the United Nations' founding objective after World War II – to bring nations together and save future generations from war.

Lacroix said there seems to be a consensus that the drivers of conflict are global threats, but other challenges also need to be on the table as the U.N. contemplates peace operations in the future.

"How do we deal with the new technologies that can be enablers of conflict?" he said, pointing to digital technology and artificial intelligence that promote fake news and disinformation.

The United Nations has no standing military force, and its peacekeepers who wear distinctive blue berets or helmets are contributed by member nations.

"We will never have a mandate to do peace enforcement, which is another name for war," Lacroix said. "And we would never find troop contributing countries to do that because it's a very different proposition."

He stressed this doesn't mean U.N. peacekeeping is being replaced. Rather, it means there should be other models like the arrangement the U.N. now has with the African Union. In December, the Security Council adopted a resolution to consider African Union requests for U.N. member nations to fund African-led peace support operations – a key AU goal.

Richard Gowan, U.N. director for the International Crisis Group, his colleague Daniel Forti and African legal scholar Solomon Dersso presented an assessment of U.N. peace operations to a U.N. police retreat in February which concluded they are "in a period of change with no clear end in sight."

"In contrast to the early 2000s, when the Security Council treated blue helmet operations as a 'go to' response to many civil wars," they said, "we have entered a period in which the Security Council, regional organizations and individual states are turning to a wide range of alternative security options to deal with new crises."

The three analysts said the options range from regional peace enforcement missions, as the African Union has carried out in Somalia, to bilateral deployments by one country, like Russia in Mali, and mercenary forces such as Russia's Wagner Group which is reportedly still operating in Mali, the Central African Republic and elsewhere in Africa.

"We need to have a greater variety of options to address crises," Lacroix said.

## **Jurors in Trump's hush money trial zero in on testimony of key witnesses as deliberations resume**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, ERIC TUCKER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — The jury in Donald Trump's hush money trial is to resume deliberations Thursday after asking to rehear potentially crucial testimony about the alleged hush money scheme at the heart of the history-making case.

The 12-person jury deliberated for about 4 1/2 hours on Wednesday without reaching a verdict.

Besides asking to rehear testimony from a tabloid publisher and Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer, the jury also requested to revisit at least part of the judge's hourlong instructions that were meant to guide them on the law.

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It's unclear how long the deliberations will last. A guilty verdict would deliver a stunning legal reckoning for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as he seeks to reclaim the White House while an acquittal would represent a major win for Trump and embolden him on the campaign trail. Since verdicts must be unanimous, it's also possible the case ends in a mistrial if the jury can't reach a consensus after days of deliberations.

Trump struck a pessimistic tone after leaving the courtroom following the reading of jury instructions, repeating his assertions of a "very unfair trial" and saying: "Mother Teresa could not beat those charges, but we'll see. We'll see how we do."

He remained inside the courthouse during deliberations, where he posted on his social media network complaints about the trial and quoted legal and political commentators who view the case in his favor. He did not testify in his own defense, a fact the judge told jurors they could not take into account.

Trump is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records at his company in connection with an alleged scheme to hide potentially embarrassing stories about him during his 2016 Republican presidential election campaign.

The charge, a felony, arises from reimbursements paid to then-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen after he made a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to silence her claims that she and Trump had sex in 2006. Trump is accused of misrepresenting Cohen's reimbursements as legal expenses to hide that they were tied to a hush money payment.

Trump has pleaded not guilty and contends the Cohen payments were for legitimate legal services. He has also denied the alleged extramarital sexual encounter with Daniels.

To convict Trump, the jury would have to find unanimously that he created a fraudulent entry in his company's records, or caused someone else to do so, and that he did so with the intent of committing or concealing another crime.

The crime prosecutors say Trump committed or hid is a violation of a New York election law making it illegal for two or more conspirators "to promote or prevent the election of any person to a public office by unlawful means."

While the jury must unanimously agree that something unlawful was done to promote Trump's election campaign, they don't have to be unanimous on what that unlawful thing was.

The jurors — a diverse cross-section of Manhattan residents and professional backgrounds — often appeared riveted by testimony in the trial, including from Cohen and Daniels. Many took notes and watched intently as witnesses answered questions from Manhattan prosecutors and Trump's lawyers.

Jurors started deliberating after a marathon day of closing arguments in which a prosecutor spoke for more than five hours, underscoring the burden the district attorney's office faces in needing to establish Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Trump team need not establish his innocence to avoid a conviction but must instead bank on at least one juror finding that prosecutors have not sufficiently proved their case.

In their first burst of communication with the court, jurors asked to rehear testimony from Cohen and former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker about an August 2015 meeting with Trump at Trump Tower where the tabloid boss agreed to be the "eyes and ears" of his fledgling presidential campaign.

Pecker testified that the plan included identifying potentially damaging stories about Trump so they could be squashed before being published. That, prosecutors say, was the beginning of the catch-and-kill scheme at the heart of the case.

Jurors also want to hear Pecker's account of a phone call he said he received from Trump in which they discussed a rumor that another outlet had offered to buy former Playboy model Karen McDougal's alleged story that she had a yearlong affair with Trump in the mid-2000s. Trump has denied the affair.

Pecker testified that Trump told him, "Karen is a nice girl" and asked, "What do you think I should do?" Pecker said he replied: "I think you should buy the story and take it off the market." He added that Trump told him he doesn't buy stories because they always get out and that Cohen would be in touch.

The publisher said he came away from the conversation thinking Trump was aware of the specifics of

McDougal's claims. Pecker said he believed the story was true and would have been embarrassing to Trump and his campaign if it were made public.

The National Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., eventually paid McDougal \$150,000 for the rights to her story in an agreement that also included writing and other opportunities with its fitness magazine and other publications.

The fourth item jurors requested is Pecker's testimony about his decision in October 2016 to back out of an agreement to sell the rights to McDougal's story to Trump through a company Cohen had established for the transaction, known as an "assignment of rights."

"I called Michael Cohen, and I said to him that the agreement, the assignment deal is off. I am not going forward. It is a bad idea, and I want you to rip up the agreement," Pecker testified. "He was very, very, angry. Very upset. Screaming, basically, at me."

Pecker testified that he reiterated to Cohen that he wasn't going forward with the agreement. He said that Cohen told him: "The boss is going to be very angry at you."

## Violence clouds the last day of campaigning for Mexico's election

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico held the last day of campaigning Wednesday before Sunday's nationwide election, but the closing rallies were darkened by attacks on candidates and the country's persistently high homicide rate.

Opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez started her last campaign rallies early Wednesday on the outskirts of Mexico City, and she focused her ire on President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's "hugs not bullets" policy of not confronting the drug cartels.

Gálvez is facing the candidate of López Obrador's Morena party, former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum. Sheinbaum, who leads in the race, has promised to continue all of López Obrador's policies.

"Are we going to continue with hugs, or are we going to apply the law to criminals?" Gálvez asked a cheering crowd. "Mexico wants peace, wants tranquility."

López Obrador has withdrawn funding for police forces and directed it to the quasi-military National Guard, which critics say lacks the professional and investigative abilities needed to fight the drug gangs. Gálvez promised to return the funding to police forces and guarantee them wages of at least \$1,200 per month.

Gálvez also pledged to reconcile a country that has been highly polarized by the outgoing president's rhetoric, saying "enough division, enough hatred ... we are all Mexicans."

Sheinbaum held her final rally later Wednesday in Mexico City's vast, colonial-era central square. She delivered a strongly nationalistic speech to a large crowd.

"Mexico is respected in the world, it is a reference point," Sheinbaum said, claiming that López Obrador's government "has returned to us the pride of being Mexicans."

"Mexico has changed, and for the better," she said.

On the violence issue, Sheinbaum vowed to continue López Obrador's policy of offering apprenticeships to encourage youths not to join drug cartels.

"We will deepen the strategy of peace and security, and the progress that has been made," she said. "This is not an iron fist" policy, Sheinbaum said. "This is justice."

While López Obrador has increased the country's minimum wage and increased government benefit programs, he has been unable to significantly reduce the historically high homicide rate, which currently runs at more than 30,000 killings per year nationwide. That gang-fueled violence has also cast a shadow over the campaigns.

Late Wednesday, a mayoral candidate in the violent southern state of Guerrero was shot to death in the town of Coyuca de Benitez. Gov. Evelyn Salgado identified the dead candidate as Alfredo Cabrera, but gave no further details on his killing. Local media reported he was shot in the head at his closing campaign event.

A mayoral candidate in the western state of Jalisco was shot multiple times by intruders in his campaign offices late Tuesday. Two members of Gilberto Palomar's campaign staff were also wounded, and all three were hospitalized in serious condition, according to Jalisco state security coordinator Sánchez Beruben.

Mexicans will vote Sunday in an election 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. More than 20,000 congressional and local positions are up for grabs, according to the National Electoral Institute.

Gunmen killed an alternate mayoral candidate in Morelos state, just south of Mexico City on Tuesday, state prosecutors said.

Local media reported attackers on a motorcycle shot Ricardo Arizmendi five times in the head in the city of Cuautla in Morelos. Alternate candidates take office if the winner of a race is incapacitated or resigns.

About 27 candidates, mostly running for mayor or town councils, have been killed so far this year. While that is not much higher than in some past elections, what is unprecedented is the mass shootings: candidates used to be killed in targeted attacks, but now criminals have taken to spraying whole campaign events with gunfire.

## Israel says it's taken control of key area of Gaza's border with Egypt awash in smuggling tunnels

By TIA GOLDENBERG, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military said Wednesday it seized control of a strategic corridor along Gaza's border with Egypt to cut off smuggling tunnels as it tries to destroy the militant Hamas group in a war now in its eighth month.

The capture of the Philadelphi Corridor could complicate Israel's relations with Egypt, which has complained about Israel's advance toward its border. Israel says the corridor is awash in tunnels that have funneled weapons and other goods for Hamas — despite a yearslong blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt.

Israel also deepened its incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands have been seeking shelter from fighting, and where intensifying violence in recent days has killed dozens of Palestinians. The military said that a fifth brigade — up to several thousand soldiers — joined troops operating in the city on Tuesday.

Egypt says any increase in troops in the strategic border area would violate the countries' 1979 peace accord. It already has complained about Israel taking over the Rafah border crossing, the only crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

"The Philadelphi Corridor served as the oxygen line of Hamas through which Hamas carried out weapons smuggling into Gaza on a regular basis," said Israel's military chief spokesperson, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

An Israeli military official said Israel had notified Egypt of the takeover. Some 20 tunnels, including some previously unknown to Israel, were found, as well as 82 access points to the tunnels, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations. It was not clear if the tunnels were currently in use.

The corridor is part of a larger demilitarized zone along the entire Israel-Egypt border. Under the peace accord, each side is allowed to deploy only a small number of troops or border guards in the zone, though those numbers can be modified by mutual agreement. At the time of the accord, Israeli troops controlled Gaza, until Israel withdrew its forces and settlers in 2005.

Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News TV reported there were "no communications with the Israeli side" on the allegations of finding tunnels on the border. Egypt has repeatedly expressed concerns that the Israeli offensive could push Palestinians across the border — a scenario Egypt says is unacceptable.

The narrow corridor — about 100 meters (yards) wide in parts — runs the 14-kilometer (8.6-mile) length of the Gaza side of the border with Egypt and includes the Rafah crossing into Egypt.

Hamas has had free rein of the border since its 2007 takeover of Gaza.

Smuggling tunnels were dug under the Gaza-Egypt border to get around the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, imposed after Hamas took over. Some of the tunnels were large enough for vehicles. Hamas brought in weapons and supplies, and Gaza residents smuggled in commercial goods, from livestock to construction materials.

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That changed over the past decade, as Egypt battled Islamic militants in Sinai. The Egyptian military cracked down on the tunnels and destroyed hundreds of them.

The Israeli military official said Israel has also taken "tactical control" of Tel al-Sultan, a neighborhood on Rafah's northwest edge. But he said the incursion into the city remains a "limited scope and scale operation."

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said seizure of the Philadelphi Corridor would be consistent with the "limited" ground operation Israeli officials briefed President Joe Biden's team on for the city of Rafah.

"When they briefed us on their plans for Rafah it did include moving along that corridor and out of the city proper to put pressure on Hamas in the city," Kirby told reporters Wednesday.

Meanwhile, deadly violence continued. The Gaza Health Ministry said an apparent Israeli strike killed two ambulance crew members on their way to evacuate casualties in Tel al-Sultan.

Earlier Wednesday, a top Israeli official said the war was likely to last through the end of the year — a grim prediction for a conflict that has killed tens of thousands, deepened Israel's global isolation and brought the region to the brink of a wider conflagration.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Kan public radio he was "expecting another seven months of fighting" to destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group.

The army has said from the start the "war will be long," he said. "They have designated 2024 as a year of war."

Hanegbi's remarks raise questions about the future of Gaza and what role Israel will play in it. The United States, Israel's top ally, has demanded that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decide on a postwar vision for the Palestinian territory. Netanyahu's defense minister and a top governing partner have warned he must take steps to ensure that Israel isn't bogged down in Gaza indefinitely.

The war has already devastated Gaza's urban landscape, displaced most of its population and sparked a humanitarian catastrophe and widespread hunger. It has opened Israel up to international legal scrutiny, with world courts faulting it over its wartime conduct, sparked disagreements with the White House, and on Tuesday prompted three European nations to formally recognize a Palestinian state.

Israel says it must dismantle Hamas' last remaining battalions in Rafah and will seek indefinite security control over the Gaza Strip, even after the war ends. Still, it has yet to achieve its main goals of dismantling Hamas and returning scores of hostages captured in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

Beyond Rafah, Israeli forces were still battling militants in parts of Gaza the military said it wrested control of months ago — potential signs of a low-level insurgency that could keep Israeli troops engaged in the territory.

The fighting in Rafah has displaced 1 million people, the United Nations says, most of whom were already displaced from other parts of Gaza.

Residents said fighting was underway in the city center and on the outskirts of Tel al-Sultan, the same neighborhood where an Israeli strike over the weekend ignited a fire that swept through an encampment for displaced people, killing dozens. Israel said it was investigating and the blaze may have been caused by a secondary explosion.

A floating pier built by the U.S. to surge aid into the territory was damaged in bad weather, another setback to efforts to bring food to starving Palestinians. Gaza's land crossings are now entirely controlled by Israel.

The U.S. and other allies have warned against a full-fledged offensive in Rafah, with the Biden administration saying this would cross a "red line" and refusing to provide offensive arms for such an undertaking. But so far, it hasn't tried to stop Israel's advances.

Last week, the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to halt its Rafah offensive as part of South Africa's case accusing Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, a charge Israel denies.

The war began when militants burst into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and taking around 250 hostages. More than 100 were released during a November cease-

fire in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israel's offensive in response to the attack has killed at least 36,096 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians. Israel says it has killed 15,000 militants.

## Another US MQ-9 Reaper drone goes down in Yemen, images purportedly show

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Another U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone went down in Yemen, images purported to show Wednesday, as Yemen's Houthi rebels continued attacks on shipping around the Red Sea over the Israel-Hamas war.

The Houthis released footage they said showed the aircraft being targeted with a surface-to-air missile in a desert region of Yemen's central Marib province. It marked the third-such downing this month alone.

Images analyzed by The Associated Press showed the MQ-9 on its belly in the barren desert, its tail assembly disconnected from their rest of its body. At least one hatch on the drone appeared to have been opened after it landed there, though the drone remained broadly intact without any clear blast damage. One image included Wednesday's date.

Noticeably, the drone did not appear to carry any markings on it.

Authorities in Marib, which remains held by allies of Yemen's exiled government, did not acknowledge the drone.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, told the AP that "the U.S. Air Force has not lost any aircraft operating within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility." The official declined to elaborate.

The CIA also is believed to have flown Reaper drones over Yemen, both to monitor the war and in its campaign against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen's local affiliate of the militant group. The CIA declined to comment when reached by the AP.

Located 120 kilometers (75 miles) east of Sanaa, Marib sits on the edge of the Arabian Peninsula's Empty Quarter Desert at the foot of the Sarawat Mountains running along the Red Sea. The province has seen U.S. drones previously brought down there, in part because the region remains crucial for the outcome of Yemen's yearslong war.

Since Yemen's civil war started in 2014, when the Houthis seized most of the country's north and its capital of Sanaa, the U.S. military has lost at least five drones to the rebels. This month alone, there's been two others suspected shootdowns of Reapers that the American military hasn't confirmed.

Reapers cost around \$30 million apiece. They can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet (about 15,000 meters) and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land.

The Houthis in recent months have stepped up attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, demanding that Israel end the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration.

Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has declined because of the threat.

On Wednesday, Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree acknowledged the rebels attacked the bulk carrier *Laax* on Tuesday. Saree also claimed a number of other attacks on vessels that have not reported assaults without offering any evidence to support his claim. Saree in the past has exaggerated Houthi attacks.

Early Thursday, Central Command said over the last day, it destroyed two missile launchers in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen, as well as destroyed two drones over the Red Sea. The Houthis separately launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles that splashed into the Red Sea, causing no injuries or damage, Central Command said.

## When South Africa's election results are expected and why the president will be chosen later

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — South Africa held a national election Wednesday that could be the country's most hotly contested in 30 years, with the long-ruling African National Congress party facing a stern test to hold onto its majority.

The ANC has been the majority party and in government ever since the end of South Africa's apartheid system of white minority rule and the establishment of democracy in 1994 and has held the presidency since then.

Under the South African political system, people vote for parties and not directly for the president in their national elections. The two processes are separate, even though they are linked: Voters choose parties to decide the makeup of Parliament and lawmakers then elect the president.

Here's a guide to the main election in Africa's most advanced country and why it might be complicated this time for Parliament to choose the president.

### ELECTION

The election took place on just one day, with polls opening at 7 a.m. and closing at 9 p.m. across the country of 62 million people, which has nine provinces. Nearly 28 million South Africans were registered to vote to decide the makeup of their national as well as provincial legislatures.

South Africans can choose parties, or for the first time independent candidates, to go to Parliament. Parties get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote.

Counting starts immediately after the polls close and the final results are expected by Sunday, according to the independent electoral commission that runs the election.

### CHOOSING A PRESIDENT

The president is elected in Parliament after the national vote's results are announced. South Africa's Parliament has two houses and it's the lower house, or National Assembly, that chooses the president.

There, the 400 lawmakers vote for one of them to be the head of state and it needs a simple majority of 201. Because the ANC has always had a parliamentary majority since 1994, every president since then has been from the ANC, starting with Nelson Mandela.

### WHY THIS YEAR COULD BE HISTORIC

It has been almost procedural over the last three decades for the ANC to use its parliamentary majority to elect its leader as president of the country. This year may not be so simple.

Several polls have the ANC's support at less than 50% ahead of the election, raising the possibility that it might not have a parliamentary majority. It is still widely expected to be the biggest party, but if it goes below 50% it would then need an agreement or coalition with another party or parties to stay in government and get the 201 votes it needs from lawmakers to reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final five-year term.

The new Parliament must meet for its first session within 14 days of the election results being announced to choose the president. Should the ANC lose its majority, there would likely be a feverish period of bargaining between it and other parties to form some sort of coalition before Parliament sits.

It's possible that several opposition parties could join together to oust the ANC completely from government and Ramaphosa as president if they don't have a majority. That's a very remote possibility, though, considering the two biggest opposition parties — the centrist Democratic Alliance and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters — are as critical of each other as they are of the ANC and are seen as unlikely to work together. The DA is part of a pre-election agreement to join forces with other smaller parties, excluding the EFF, in a coalition but they would all have to increase their vote considerably to overtake the ANC.

The ANC has given no indication of who it might work with if South Africa needs an unprecedented national coalition government. Ramaphosa said Wednesday after voting that he was confident the ANC would win an outright majority.

## Harvey Weinstein may face new charges as more accusers come forward, New York prosecutors say

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Manhattan prosecutors told a judge Wednesday they are evaluating more claims of sexual misconduct made against Harvey Weinstein and could potentially seek a new indictment against him before his scheduled retrial on rape and sexual assault charges.

Assistant District Attorney Nicole Blumberg said during a court hearing that additional people have come forward with assault claims and prosecutors are currently assessing which fall under the statute of limitations.

She said some potential survivors that were not ready to step forward during Weinstein's first New York trial may now be willing to testify.

When asked by Judge Curtis Farber whether there was a possibility of prosecutors filing a new indictment, Blumberg replied: "Yes, your honor."

Blumberg said prosecutors would be in a better position to update the court on the direction of the case at the end of June.

Farber set the next hearing date for July 9. The retrial on the rape charge is tentatively scheduled for some time after Labor Day.

Weinstein's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, told reporters outside the courthouse after the hearing that his client was confident no additional accusers would be found to bolster the prosecution's case.

"He knows he's never done anything like this," Aidala said of Weinstein.

Weinstein, appearing in the same New York City courthouse where former President Donald Trump is on trial, entered the court in a wheelchair, as he has during other recent court hearings since his 2020 conviction was tossed out.

Weinstein has suffered from medical problems throughout his time in jail, his lawyers have said. He is currently at the city's Rikers Island jail complex.

Earlier in the hearing, Farber addressed a letter from prosecutors last week requesting the court to remind Weinstein's lawyers not to discuss or disparage potential witnesses in public ahead of the retrial.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office argues that Aidala made statements earlier this month that were meant to intimidate Miriam Haley, a former TV and film production assistant who Weinstein was convicted of sexually assaulting.

Aidala, Weinstein's lawyer, apologized to the judge, saying he didn't intend to intimidate anyone.

But he said his client is also entitled to a "vigorous defense," and that it is the defense's position that "lies were told at the last trial, and will be told at this one."

Aidala argued lawyers for Weinstein's accusers have been holding press conferences criticizing Weinstein throughout his legal ordeal.

"Who gets to stand up for Harvey Weinstein?" he asked in court. "Who gets to be his voice?"

Farber, in response, directed both sides to "refrain from pandering to the press," saying the case will "not be decided in the court of public opinion" but in the court of justice.

Haley didn't attend Wednesday's hearing and has expressed reluctance about going through the trauma of testifying again.

Her lawyer Gloria Allred said outside the courthouse that her client hasn't made a decision yet about whether she'll participate in the retrial.

But Allred called on Aidala to apologize to Haley for the "unwarranted, vicious and false" attack on her, made in the courtroom earlier Wednesday. Aidala declined, speaking to reporters later.

Speaking outside of court on May 1, Aidala said Haley lied to the jury about her motive in coming forward and that his team planned an aggressive cross-examination on the issue "if she dares to come and show her face here."

Weinstein's original trial was held in the same courtroom where Trump is on trial now, but the two men were unlikely to bump into each other. Weinstein is in custody and was brought to and from the courtroom



under guard. He appeared in a courtroom on a different floor than where Trump is currently on trial.

At his 2020 trial, Weinstein was convicted of raping Jessica Mann, an aspiring actor, and of sexually assaulting Haley. But last month New York's highest court threw out those convictions after determining that the trial judge unfairly allowed testimony against him based on allegations from other women that weren't part of the case. Weinstein, 72, has maintained that any sexual activity was consensual.

The Associated Press does not generally identify people alleging sexual assault unless they consent to be named, as both Haley and Mann have.

The New York ruling reopened a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures. The #MeToo era began in 2017 with a flood of allegations against Weinstein.

Weinstein, who had been serving a 23-year sentence in New York, was also convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape and is still sentenced to 16 years in prison in California.

## **Jurors in Trump hush money trial end 1st day of deliberations after asking to rehear testimony**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, ERIC TUCKER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — The jury in Donald Trump's hush money trial ended its first day of deliberations without a verdict Wednesday but asked to rehear testimony from key witnesses about the alleged hush money scheme at the heart of the history-making case.

The 12-person jury was sent home around 4 p.m. after about 4 1/2 hours of deliberations. The process is to resume Thursday, when jurors are expected to rehear the requested testimony and at least part of the judge's legal instructions meant to guide them on the law.

The notes sent to the judge with the requests were the first burst of communication with the court after the panel of seven men and five women was sent to a private room just before 11:30 a.m. to begin weighing a verdict.

"It is not my responsibility to judge the evidence here. It is yours," Judge Juan M. Merchan told jurors before dispatching them to begin deliberations, reminding them of their vow during the selection process to judge the case fairly and impartially.

It's unclear how long the deliberations will last. A guilty verdict would deliver a stunning legal reckoning for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as he seeks to reclaim the White House while an acquittal would represent a major win for Trump and embolden him on the campaign trail. Since verdicts must be unanimous, it's also possible that the case ends in a mistrial if the jury cannot reach a consensus after days of deliberations.

Trump struck a pessimistic tone after leaving the courtroom following the reading of jury instructions, repeating his assertions of a "very unfair trial" and saying: "Mother Teresa could not beat those charges, but we'll see. We'll see how we do."

He remained inside the courthouse during deliberations, where he posted on his social media network complaints about the trial and quoted legal and political commentators who view the case in his favor. In one all-capital-letters post, he proclaimed that he didn't even "know what the charges are in this rigged case," even though he was present in the courtroom as the judge detailed them to jurors.

He did not testify in his own defense, something the judge told jurors they could not take into account. Trump is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records at his company in connection with an alleged scheme to hide potentially embarrassing stories about him during his 2016 Republican presidential campaign.

The charge, a felony, arises from reimbursements paid to then-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen after he made a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to silence her claims that she and Trump had sex in 2006. Trump is accused of misrepresenting Cohen's reimbursements as legal expenses to hide that they were tied to a hush money payment.

Trump has pleaded not guilty and contends the Cohen payments were for legitimate legal services. He has also denied the alleged extramarital sexual encounter with Daniels.

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To convict Trump, the jury would have to find unanimously that he created a fraudulent entry in his company's records, or caused someone else to do so, and that he did so with the intent of committing or concealing another crime.

The crime prosecutors say Trump committed or hid is a violation of a New York election law making it illegal for two or more conspirators "to promote or prevent the election of any person to a public office by unlawful means."

While the jury must unanimously agree that something unlawful was done to promote Trump's election campaign, they don't have to be unanimous on what that unlawful thing was.

The jurors — a diverse cross section of Manhattan residents and professional backgrounds — often appeared riveted by testimony, including from Cohen and Daniels. Many took notes and watched intently as witnesses answered questions from prosecutors and Trump's lawyers.

Jurors started deliberating after a marathon day of closing arguments Tuesday. A prosecutor spoke for more than five hours, underscoring the burden the district attorney's office faces in needing to establish Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Trump team need not establish his innocence to avoid a conviction but must instead bank on at least one juror finding that prosecutors have not sufficiently proved their case.

While giving the jury instructions in the law Wednesday morning, Merchan offered some guidance on factors the panel can use to assess witness testimony, including its plausibility, its consistency with other testimony, the witness' manner on the stand and whether the person has a motive to lie.

But, the judge said, "there is no particular formula for evaluating the truthfulness and accuracy of another person's statement."

The principles he outlined are standard but perhaps all the more relevant after Trump's defense leaned heavily on questioning the credibility of key prosecution witnesses, including Cohen.

Jurors asked in the afternoon to rehear at least part of those instructions. They also asked to revisit select key episodes in the trial, though it was not clear why.

The requests covered testimony from Cohen and former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker about an August 2015 meeting with Trump at Trump Tower where the tabloid boss pledged to be the "eyes and ears" of his fledgling presidential campaign.

Pecker testified that the plan included identifying potentially damaging stories about Trump so they could be squashed before being published. That, prosecutors say, was the beginning of the "catch-and-kill" scheme at the heart of the case.

Jurors also want to hear Pecker's account of a phone call he said he received from Trump in which they discussed a rumor that another outlet had offered to buy former Playboy model Karen McDougal's story alleging that she had a yearlong affair with Trump in the mid-2000s. Trump has denied the affair.

Pecker testified that Trump told him, "Karen is a nice girl" and asked, "What do you think I should do?" Pecker said he replied: "I think you should buy the story and take it off the market." He added that Trump told him he doesn't buy stories because they always get out and that Cohen would be in touch.

The publisher said he came away from the conversation thinking Trump was aware of the specifics of McDougal's claims. Pecker said he believed the story was true and would have been embarrassing to Trump and his campaign if it were made public.

The National Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., eventually paid McDougal \$150,000 for the rights to her story in an agreement that also included writing and other opportunities with its fitness magazine and other publications.

The fourth item jurors requested is Pecker's testimony about his decision in October 2016 to back out of an agreement to sell the rights to McDougal's story to Trump through a company Cohen had established for the transaction. Such an agreement is known as an "assignment of rights."

"I called Michael Cohen, and I said to him that the agreement, the assignment deal, is off. I am not going forward. It is a bad idea, and I want you to rip up the agreement," Pecker testified. "He was very, very, angry. Very upset. Screaming, basically, at me."

Pecker testified that he reiterated to Cohen that he wasn't going forward with the agreement.

He said that Cohen told him: "The boss is going to be very angry at you."

## Major leaguers praise inclusion of Negro Leagues statistics into major league records

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Buck Leonard. Charlie “Chino” Smith. Turkey Stearnes.

Baseball players and fans alike are learning more about the Negro Leagues after the statistics for more than 2,300 players — historic figures like Josh Gibson, Oscar Charleston, Satchel Paige and Mule Suttles — were incorporated into the major league record book following a three-year research project.

“You get to learn about a lot of names and a lot of people that we may not have heard about,” Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder Andrew McCutchen said Wednesday. “Now that Josh Gibson is at the top of OPS and batting average and a few other categories, it’s great news. But it’s more than just that and the numbers. It’s great that you now get to learn about the players in the Negro Leagues. ... I’ll be able to do some more deep diving into some names that I may not have heard of.”

A 17-person committee chaired by John Thorn, Major League Baseball’s official historian, met six times as part of the meticulous process of examining statistics from seven Negro Leagues from 1920-1948. Nearly 75% of the available records have been included, according to MLB, and additional research could lead to more changes to the major league leaderboards.

“It is really exciting,” Cincinnati Reds pitcher Hunter Greene said. “I’m going to have to do a little bit more research and understand some of the history to kind of rewire my brain on some of the best players.”

Gibson became the majors’ career leader with a .372 batting average, surpassing Ty Cobb’s .367. Gibson’s .466 average for the 1943 Homestead Grays became the season record, followed by Smith’s .451 for the 1929 New York Lincoln Giants.

The mighty Gibson also became the career leader in slugging percentage (.718) and OPS (1.177), moving ahead of Babe Ruth (.690 and 1.164).

“Baseball history is a part of U.S. history, and I think (the) major leagues acknowledging and incorporating the Negro Leagues is a huge step in kind of bringing all the parts of baseball history together,” said Tyrus Cobb, Ty Cobb’s great grandson. “And I think it’s actually pretty exciting that there’s a new statistical batting average leader.”

After he saw the news, Tyrus Cobb, 32, of San Jose, California, said he took a closer look at Gibson’s career.

“I made sure to look up him and Oscar Charleston and some of the other guys who finished up near the top of the list,” said Cobb, who works in commercial real estate. “So I think it’s a really exciting thing for baseball history.”

The incorporation of Negro League statistics also changed the numbers of handful of players known more for their major league career.

Willie Mays added 10 hits from the 1948 Birmingham Black Barons, increasing his total to 3,293. Minnie Minoso was credited with 150 hits for the New York Cubans from 1946-1948, boosting his total to 2,113. Jackie Robinson, who broke the majors’ color barrier with the 1947 Dodgers, was credited with 49 hits with the 1945 Kansas City Monarchs that increased his total to 1,567.

“It is a good thing for the game,” Washington Nationals pitcher Josiah Gray said. “For the Negro League players in the past who were exceptional for what they did, it is good to be drawn into the light. It is really cool to see Josh Gibson, Oscar Charleston and a lot of other names that baseball fans can learn about and for them to see there was more than major league baseball back then.”

The change comes with the majors experiencing a decline in Black players. A study by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at Central Florida found Black or African American players represented 6.2% of players on opening-day rosters in 2023, down from 7.2% in 2022. Both figures were the lowest since the study began in 1991, when 18% of MLB players were Black.

The St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants play a tribute game to the Negro Leagues on June 20 at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama.

“I think it’s a pretty cool thing that you show recognition,” Giants pitcher Jordan Hicks said. “It was two

different leagues, but it's still baseball at the end of the day, and then whenever they came together, you saw the guys that stood out in the Negro Leagues really performed in MLB. So I think it's fair that if they were still the same guy in the Negro Leagues as they were in MLB, those stats should match up, especially if it was in the same era."

Brett Tinker, 56, of Nyack, New York, heard stories about the Negro Leagues from his grandfather, Harold "Hooks" Tinker, a Birmingham, Alabama, native, who played for the Pittsburgh Crawfords. Harold Tinker shared his love for the sport. He told his grandson about how they often had to stay on the team bus because they couldn't go into a hotel, and he also showed off his memorabilia collection.

When Brett Tinker heard about the incorporation of the Negro League statistics, he was moved to tears. "It's an honor. It's overdue, not just for my grandfather, but a lot of those players who never had that chance to have that recognition," he said.

## **New Louisiana law will criminalize approaching police under certain circumstances**

By SARA CLINE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Critics of a new Louisiana law, which makes it a crime to approach within 25 feet (7.6 meters) of a police officer under certain circumstances, fear that the measure could hinder the public's ability to film officers — a tool that has increasingly been used to hold police accountable.

Under the law, anyone who is convicted of "knowingly or intentionally" approaching an officer, who is "lawfully engaged in the execution of his official duties," and after being ordered to "stop approaching or retreat" faces up to a \$500 fine, up to 60 days in jail or both. The law was signed by Gov. Jeff Landry, a Republican, Tuesday and goes into effect Aug. 1.

While the legislation's language does not specifically mention filming, critics say that by default it would limit how close a person can be to observe police. Opponents have also gone further to question the law's constitutionality, saying it could impede on a person's First Amendment rights.

Proponents argue the new law will create a buffer-zone to help ensure the safety of officers and that bystanders would still be close enough to film police interactions.

Bystander cellphone videos are largely credited with revealing police misconduct — such as with the 2020 killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis officers — and reshaping the conversation around police transparency.

An attempt to establish a specific range at which onlookers can record officers actively engaged in law enforcement duties has occurred elsewhere.

In 2022, lawmakers in Arizona passed a law that would have made it illegal to knowingly film police officers 8 feet (2.5 meters) or closer if the officer tells the person to stop. A coalition of media groups and the American Civil Liberties Union successfully sued to block Arizona's law, with a federal judge ruling it unconstitutional, citing infringement against a clearly established right to film police doing their jobs.

In similar cases, half of the U.S. appeals courts across the nation have ruled on the side of allowing people to record police without restriction.

The Louisiana measure's author, state Rep. Bryan Fontenot, said the legislation was drafted to provide officers "peace of mind and safe distance to do their job."

"At 25 feet, that person can't spit in my face when I'm making an arrest," Fontenot said while presenting his bill in a committee earlier this year. "The chances of him hitting me in the back of the head with a beer bottle at 25 feet — it sure is a lot more difficult than if he's sitting right here."

A nearly identical bill was vetoed last year by then-Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat. Edwards called the measure "unnecessary" and said it could be used "to chill exercise of First Amendment rights."

"Each of us has a constitutional right to freely observe public servants as they function in public and within the course and scope of their official duties," Edwards, who served in the U.S. Army and was the son of a sheriff, said in last year's veto message. "Observations of law enforcement, whether by witnesses to an incident with officers, individuals interacting with officers, or members of the press, are invaluable

in promoting transparency.”

However, with a new conservative governor in office and the GOP continuing to hold a supermajority in the Louisiana Legislature, the bill had a clear path forward.

Language in the measure appears to put in some safety nets, stating that an acceptable “defense to this crime” includes establishing that the “lawful order or command was neither received nor understood by the defendant.”

## On spelling’s saddest day, hyped National Spelling Bee competitors see their hopes dashed

By BEN NUCKOLS Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — When Achyut Ethiraj’s final appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee ended far earlier than he anticipated, the 14-year-old grimaced at the microphone, walked off the stage quietly and exited the ballroom with his mother’s arm draped around his back.

Achyut had plenty of company among the 140 spellers eliminated on Wednesday, spelling’s saddest day.

“I didn’t expect to get out, but I did, and I guess I have to accept the truth now,” said Achyut, an eighth-grader from Fort Wayne, Indiana. “I’m happy to do high school and do other things, but I’m kind of confused what to do now that I’m done with spelling.”

“It’s my last year, and I expected to do better, but I guess it is what it is,” he said. “And I have to move on.”

The structure of the spelling bee has undergone plenty of changes over time, but over the past three years under executive director Corrie Loeffler, the competition has gotten very hard, very fast for spellers who make it past the preliminary rounds.

The morning began with 148 spellers. By the end of the first quarterfinal round, there were 59 left, and 46 of those got through a vocabulary round to reach the semifinals. By the end of the day, eight finalists remained. They will return Thursday night, when the winner will receive a trophy and more than \$50,000 in cash and prizes.

The champion won’t be Shradha Rachamreddy, who finished third last year and was a consensus favorite to go all the way. She was eliminated on exactly the sort of “super short, tricky word” she said she concentrated on studying after misspelling “orle” last year. This year it was “varan,” a type of lizard. She added an extra “r,” and former spellers in the audience gasped at her mistake.

“I am in shock and despair,” said Dev Shah, the 2023 champion.

“We all thought she was going to win,” added Charlotte Walsh, last year’s runner-up.

Starting in the quarterfinals, the bee’s word panel can use any of the more than half a million words in Webster’s Unabridged dictionary, plus some geographical names that aren’t even listed in that volume. While the panel tries to maintain a consistent level of difficulty in each round, it can vary from word to word.

That’s when luck comes into play.

Achyut was asked to spell the word “sistine.” Derived from the Sistine Chapel, it’s an adjective meaning “a light blue color.” He went with “cistine,” and his coach, Grace Walters, was second-guessing herself.

“I’m sure when I was making my lists, I just assumed, ‘Oh, everybody knows the Sistine Chapel.’ But the reality is these kids are like 10 to 14. They might not have the ... cultural knowledge that us older people have,” said the 22-year-old Walters, a former speller. “So that’s definitely something I feel like I overlooked in helping him prepare.”

Two years ago, Achyut finished in a tie for 14th place, and last year he tied for 23rd. This year, he tied for 60th place alongside the 88 others eliminated in the round.

“My rank has been going lower. But the reality is my preparation has been increasing a lot,” Achyut said. “And I don’t know how that matches up, but I know that I know the words and I deserve a good break.”

He has plenty of company. Rare is a speller like Vanya Shivashankar, who came in with enormous buzz in 2015 after years of strong finishes and ended up winning. Even Shivashankar had a setback the previous year when a written spelling and vocabulary test kept her out of the finals.

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Naysa Modi, the 2018 runner-up, didn't make the finals the following year. Ishika Varipilli, who hoped to make a run at the trophy this year in her third and final attempt, bowed out in a tie for 47th after missing a vocabulary word, "swanky," and said afterward she was "trying to keep it together."

In the semifinals, Shradha was followed to the exit by two more top-ten finishers from 2023: Aryan Khedkar and Sarah Fernandes. Aryan got a long hug from fellow competitor Faizan Zaki before leaving the stage.

"These kids put a lot of pressure on themselves. I think they get nervous. They get worried. They get more focused on, 'What if I don't make it? What if this happens? What if that happens?'" Walters said. "The kids feel it around them that, you know, they're being looked up to as previous finalists, previous semifinalists, and they internalize that people expect something from them."

Aliyah Alpert, who finished ninth in 2022, missed the bee entirely last year because she flubbed the word "recoup" in the Yavapai County spelling bee in her home state of Arizona.

"It was on-list, I totally knew the word, but I blanked. Choked," said 13-year-old Aliyah, who returned this year and was ousted in the semifinals.

Matthew Bader came in knowing he might not improve upon his finish last year, a tie for 57th.

"The farther you make it in the competition one year, that's the more chance you'll do worse next year," said Matthew, a 14-year-old from Peachtree City, Georgia. "Actually, I didn't really mind getting out. Win or lose, to be here, it's a pretty big accomplishment."

Ananth Chopuri of Bradenton, Florida, thought his daughter, 11-year-old Amara, was eliminated by one of the most difficult words ("ephectic") of what he called an inconsistent round.

"It's been brutal," Chopuri said. "The first kid, I felt so sorry for him. This was a bloodbath!"

## 'Are you with me?' Biden and Harris launch Black voter outreach and warn of a second Trump term

By AAMER MADHANI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Joe Biden renewed his election-year pitch to Black voters on Wednesday, lashing out at Donald Trump's "MAGA lies" and saying the winner of this year's White House race will make crucial decisions, including on nominees for the Supreme Court, that could affect the country for decades.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, in a joint appearance at a Philadelphia boarding school, thanked Black voters in Pennsylvania and beyond for being the lynchpin to their 2020 victory and they made the case that their agenda has had an enormous impact on improving lives for Black voters.

The Democratic president also argued that an "unhinged" Trump is peddling misinformation in an effort to win back the White House.

"I'll be damned if I'm going to let Donald Trump turn America into a place of anger, resentment and hate," Biden said, calling on the crowd to help him and Harris win a second term. "My question is a simple one: Are you with me?"

At Girard College, which has a predominantly Black student body, Biden warned about the threat he said a second Trump presidency would pose and cited some of the racial controversies fanned by the presumptive Republican nominee during his life.

"This is the same guy who wanted to tear gas you as you peacefully protested George Floyd's murder. The same guy who still calls the Central Park Five guilty, even though they were exonerated," Biden told the crowd. "He's that landlord who denies housing applications because of the color of your skin."

The Philadelphia visit was the start of what the Biden campaign describes as a summerlong effort to engage Black student organizations, community groups and faith centers. It reflects in part how much of their support of him has frayed as Trump aims to make inroads into the longtime Democratic constituency.

The issue of abortion rights and the judiciary also featured in the remarks from Biden and Harris. Biden pledged to codify the protections of Roe vs. Wade, the now-nullified Supreme Court decision that had legalized the right to an abortion, if he and enough Democratic lawmakers are elected, while Harris noted that Trump dramatically shaped the Supreme Court as she invoked the name of Thurgood Marshall, the

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high court's first Black justice.

Trump, she said, "handpicked three members of the Supreme Court — the court of Thurgood — with the intention that they would overturn Roe vs. Wade," the landmark abortion rights ruling. "And as he intended, they did."

"Who sits in the White House matters," she said.

Underscoring that point later, Biden said the next president is "going to be able to appoint a couple justices." With some vacancies on the Supreme Court, Biden said he could "put in really progressive judges, like we've always had."

"Tell me that won't change your life," he said.

Among Black adults, Biden's approval has dropped from 94% when he started his term to just 55%, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll published in March.

The economy has been a particular thorn in Biden's side since 2022, when inflation hit a 40-year high. But there have also been signs of discontent in the Black community more recently over Biden's handling of the seven-month Israel-Hamas war.

Turning out Black voters could prove pivotal for Biden's chances in what's expected to be among the most closely contested states — Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Biden beat Trump in all six states in 2020, but he could face a more difficult climb this year.

Trump has been offering himself as a better president for Black voters than Biden. At a rally last week in the Bronx, he railed against Biden on immigration and said "the biggest negative impact" of the influx of migrants in New York is "against our Black population and our Hispanic population who are losing their jobs, losing their housing, losing everything they can lose."

The Republican National Committee zeroed in on gas prices and food costs under Biden's presidency as it attacked his stop in Pennsylvania.

"No matter how much Biden lies, he cannot gaslight Pennsylvanians into supporting him — his approval ratings are abysmal," RNC Chair Michael Whatley said. "President Trump continues to lead in polls in Pennsylvania and across the country. Pennsylvanians are ready to Make America Great Again, and they will vote for President Donald J. Trump in November."

The Biden campaign wants to use the new engagement effort in part to remind Black voters of some of the Democratic administration's achievements during his term. On Wednesday, Biden repeated the refrain "because you voted" as he rattled off a litany of his accomplishments for Black Americans, including record funding for historically Black colleges and universities, forgiveness of federal student loan debt and pardons for simple possession of marijuana.

"Black voters placed enormous faith in me," Biden said. "I've tried to do my best to honor that trust."

Biden later visited with Black business owners at SouthSide, an event space, and greeted supporters there while continuing to tout his accomplishments for Black voters and, in particular, the economic gains under his presidency. In the more intimate gathering, jointly hosted by the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, he also stressed to the crowd that "there's not a damn thing that a white man can do that a Black man can't do, or do better."

The Black unemployment rate sits at 5.6%, according to the latest federal government data, compared with an average of about 8% from 2016 to 2020 and 11% from 2000 to 2015. Black household wealth has surged, and Biden's effort to cancel billions in student loan debt has disproportionately affected Black borrowers.

Biden also points to his appointment of Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court and his pick of Harris as the first Black woman to serve as vice president.

The president's visit to Philadelphia follows a series of engagements with Black community members in recent weeks, including hosting plaintiffs in the 1954 Supreme Court decision that struck down institutionalized racial segregation in public schools, a commencement address at Morehouse College in Atlanta, and a virtual address to the Rev. Al Sharpton's racial justice conference.

## Less than 2% of philanthropic giving goes to women and girls. Can Melinda French Gates change that?

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

Melinda French Gates has a long history of supporting the women's movement, but it's her new eye-popping funding commitments that could finally change women's groups' long-running lament that less than 2% of philanthropic giving in the United States directly benefits women and girls.

That 2% ceiling could be broken thanks to French Gates' \$1 billion commitment announced Tuesday and the momentum generated if others join her, said Jacqueline Ackerman, interim director of the Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. The institute has researched giving to women and girls since 2019 and found that while the overall amount has increased over the years, it's never exceeded 2% of overall charitable dollars. In 2020, the most recent year of WPI's analysis, women and girls received \$8.8 billion out of a total \$471.4 billion given to charities overall.

"One donor does have the potential to make a difference," Ackerman said. "But for that to be sustained long term, for that to change the numbers for more than just 1 or 2 years, you really do have to inspire others and be part of a movement."

French Gates has been a philanthropist for decades, as a co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation twenty years ago and then, with the organization she founded in 2015, Pivotal Ventures. Ackerman said her philanthropy follows many trends of the way women give in that they are more likely to use all of their resources, including philanthropic giving, building a strong network, advocating for the causes they care about publicly, and, in French Gates' case, for-profit investments.

"Melinda French Gates has used tools like collaborative giving in the past, has used her voice and her network, and her platform to advocate for women and girls," Ackerman said. "And so, there's every indication that she knows this and that she does intend to use her platform to spur more giving by others."

Earlier this month, French Gates announced she would leave the Gates Foundation and as part of that departure, received \$12 billion from Bill Gates, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft and her ex-husband, for her philanthropy going forward.

The Associated Press receives financial support for news coverage in Africa from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and for news coverage of women in the workforce and state governments from Pivotal Ventures. The Gates Foundation also provides funding to the Women's Philanthropy Institute.

French Gates' latest pledge to spend \$1 billion by the end of 2026 builds on previous major commitments and now years of funding organizations who work across a range of issues related to women and girls. French Gates has funded the organization Crystal Echo Hawk founded, IllumiNative, which supports the power of Native Americans through movement building and research.

Earlier this month, Echo Hawk said she received an email directly from French Gates asking her to be one of 12 people who receive \$20 million and donate it however they choose.

As part of that, Echo Hawk will have the support of the National Philanthropic Trust, who will hold and disperse the funds, to research the landscape of opportunities to support Native women and girls. She sees that research as one of the critical and important outcomes of French Gates' commitment, in addition to the direct financial support to her community.

"This is just such an important learning opportunity," Echo Hawk said. "It's not just about money. It's about building partnerships and understanding."

French Gates has experience collaborating with other donors as she did in 2020 in a competition that gave away \$40 million to four organizations to accelerate progress toward gender equality in the United States. That funding was pooled from author and billionaire Mackenzie Scott and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. She also committed more than \$5 million to a matching program run by the organization, Women Moving Millions, to encourage its members to, again, give to advance women's power and influence.

"What is different is the size of actually the amount of resources she's talking about moving," said Sarah Haacke Byrd, CEO of Women Moving Millions. She pointed to the small percentage of funding that goes



towards women's and girls as hampering the ability of organizations and the movement to respond quickly and to enact long term strategies.

Grantee organizations declined to disclose the size of the grants they received from French Gates. But across fields, from the National Domestic Workers Alliance to the Ms. Foundation for Women, the grantees described the funding as coming at a moment of great threat to the rights and power of women, but also, when activism, momentum and awareness for their movement is surging.

"In our fight to protect free and fair elections, we're up against a well-funded, well-coordinated, anti-democracy machine that's spewing disinformation and running dangerous candidates for office," said Joanna Lydgate, co-founder and CEO of the States United Democracy Center, another recipient of new funding from Pivotal Ventures.

Ai-jen Poo president, National Domestic Workers Alliance, said she thinks it will be her generation that ushers in a new social safety net that provides paid leave to allow workers to take care of family members, creates affordable child care and pays domestic workers living wages. She sees French Gates' commitment as a call to action and an inspiration for others to follow.

"I would not be surprised, in fact I expect to see many, many more women come forward and in whatever capacity they have, rise to this moment courageously," she said.

## **A nurse honored for compassion is fired after referring to Gaza 'genocide' in speech**

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A nurse was fired by a New York City hospital after she referred to Israel's war in Gaza as a "genocide" during a speech accepting an award.

Labor and delivery nurse Hesen Jabr, who is Palestinian American, was being honored by NYU Langone Health for her compassion in caring for mothers who had lost babies when she drew a link between her work and the suffering of mothers in Gaza.

"It pains me to see the women from my country going through unimaginable losses themselves during the current genocide in Gaza," Jabr said, according to a video of the May 7 speech that she posted on social media. "This award is deeply personal to me for those reasons."

Jabr wrote on Instagram that she arrived at work on May 22 for her first shift back after receiving the award when she was summoned to a meeting with the hospital's president and vice president of nursing "to discuss how I 'put others at risk' and 'ruined the ceremony' and 'offended people' because a small part of my speech was a tribute towards the grieving mothers in my country."

She wrote that after working most of her shift she was "dragged once again to an office" where she was read her termination letter and then escorted out of the building.

A spokesperson for NYU Langone, Steve Ritea, confirmed that Jabr was fired following her speech and said there had been "a previous incident as well."

"Hesen Jabr was warned in December, following a previous incident, not to bring her views on this divisive and charged issue into the workplace," Mr. Ritea said in a statement. "She instead chose not to heed that at a recent employee recognition event that was widely attended by her colleagues, some of whom were upset after her comments. As a result, Jabr is no longer an NYU Langone employee."

Ritea did not provide any details of the previous incident.

Jabr defended her speech in an interview with The New York Times and said talking about the war "was so relevant" given the nature of the award she had won.

"It was an award for bereavement; it was for grieving mothers," she said.

Gaza's Ministry of Health says that more than 36,000 people have been killed in the territory during the war that started with the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel. Around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million has been displaced and U.N. officials say parts of the territory are experiencing famine.

Critics say Israel's military campaign amounts to genocide, and the government of South Africa formally

accused the country of genocide in January when it asked the United Nations' top court to order a halt to Israeli military operations in Gaza.

Israel has denied the genocide charge and told the International Court of Justice it is doing everything it can to protect Gaza's civilian population.

Jabr is not the first employee at the hospital, which was renamed from NYU Medical Center after a major donation from Republican Party donor and billionaire Kenneth Langone, to be fired over comments about the Mideast conflict.

A prominent researcher who directed the hospital's cancer center was fired after he posted anti-Hamas political cartoons including caricatures of Arab people. That researcher, biologist Benjamin Neel, has since filed suit against the hospital.

Jabr's firing also was not her first time in the spotlight. When she was an 11-year-old in Louisiana, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on her behalf after she was forced to accept a Bible from the principal of her public school.

"This is not my first rodeo," she told the Times.

## To recuse or refuse? A look at Supreme Court justices' decisions on whether to step aside in cases

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In declining to step aside from two high-profile Supreme Court cases, Justice Samuel Alito on Wednesday provided a rare window on the opaque process by which justices decide to step aside from cases.

Alito faced calls from Democrats to recuse from two cases involving former President Donald Trump and Jan. 6 defendants because of the controversy over flags that flew over his homes.

Both flags were like those carried by rioters who violently stormed the Capitol in January 2021 while echoing Trump's false claims of election fraud.

Revelations about the flags came as the court is considering cases related to the Jan. 6 riot, including charges faced by the rioters and whether Trump has immunity from prosecution on election interference charges.

In letters to members of Congress, Alito said he had no involvement in flying an upside-down flag over his home in 2021 and an "Appeal to Heaven" flag at his New Jersey beach house last year. He said his wife, Martha-Ann, was responsible for both flags. His impartiality, he said, could not reasonably be questioned.

The explanation is unlikely to satisfy Democratic critics, but they have little recourse.

A look at the Supreme Court's recusal process:

THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW

There is, as well as a recently adopted Supreme Court ethics code to guide the justices, though there's really no means of enforcing either.

A law that applies to Supreme Court justices and all other federal judges lays out several criteria that require recusal.

The language most relevant in Alito's case reads, "Any justice, judge, or magistrate judge of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned."

The court's code of conduct says a justice ordinarily has a duty to take part in cases since justices, unlike lower-court judges, can't be replaced when there's a conflict. The code differs from the federal law by saying a justice "should," rather than "shall," disqualify himself or herself. It also says that only an impartial and reasonable person who is "aware of all relevant circumstances" can validly call for recusal.

WHO DECIDES?

Supreme Court justices decide for themselves whether and when to recuse from a case. On rare occasions, a party to a case will ask a justice to recuse.

In one notable example, the Sierra Club asked Justice Antonin Scalia to recuse from a 2004 case about an energy task force convened by then-Vice President Dick Cheney after reports that Scalia and Cheney,

old friends, went duck-hunting together.

Scalia spent 21 pages explaining his decision not to recuse, acknowledging that he accepted an invitation to fly to a Louisiana hunting camp on Cheney's government plane, but denying that they actually hunted or spent any significant time together.

"If it is reasonable to think that a Supreme Court justice can be bought so cheap, the nation is in deeper trouble than I had imagined," Scalia wrote.

"Since I do not believe my impartiality can reasonably be questioned, I do not think it would be proper for me to recuse," he wrote.

Ultimately, the only consequence for a justice's refusal to recuse is also a highly unlikely one: impeachment by the House of Representatives and removal from office by the Senate. That's never happened.

#### ALITO'S EXPLANATION

Alito pointed to the Supreme Court's ethics code to explain that justices have an obligation to take part in a case unless their impartiality might reasonably be questioned. In this instance, he said, anyone "not motivated by political or ideological considerations or a desire to affect the outcome of Supreme Court cases" would see that recusal is not required.

The justice wrote that in both instances, the flags were flown by his wife and were not hoisted to identify with Capitol rioters or the "Stop the Steal Movement." Alito said he was unaware of the "Appeal to Heaven" flag's association with the effort to undo the 2020 election results. In 2021, he said he urged his wife to take down the inverted U.S. flag, but she refused for several days.

Alito defended his wife's right to express herself and also detailed some of the sacrifices she has made because of his Supreme Court service, "including the insult of having to endure numerous, loud, obscene, and personally insulting protests in front of our home that continue to this day and now threaten to escalate."

#### DO JUSTICES EVER RECUSE?

Yes, it happens all the time. Most recently, Justice Brett Kavanaugh noted his recusal from the court's rejection Tuesday of lawyer Michael Avenatti's appeal of his criminal conviction for attempting to extort up to \$25 million from Nike. Although Kavanaugh didn't say why, it seems likely that he sat out the case because Avenatti represented one of the women who accused Kavanaugh, during his Supreme Court confirmation hearings, of sexual misconduct. Kavanaugh has denied any impropriety.

Other examples are when justices, including Alito, hold even a tiny investment in a company with a case before the court. Last year, Alito didn't take part in an appeal involving Phillips 66. He didn't explain his decision, but his financial disclosure showed he owns between \$15,000 and \$50,000 in company stock.

One other common reason for recusal is when justices have dealt with cases in previous jobs, either in the executive branch or as lower-court judges. Last week, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and Kavanaugh recused from a case involving former Guantanamo detainee Omar Khadr, whose case had previously been before the federal appeals court in Washington on which Jackson and Kavanaugh both served. Jackson noted the reason for her recusal, but Kavanaugh didn't.

## Alito rejects calls to quit Supreme Court cases on Trump and Jan. 6 because of flag controversies

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Samuel Alito is rejecting calls to step aside from Supreme Court cases involving former President Donald Trump and Jan. 6 defendants, saying his wife hoisted the two controversial flags that flew above their homes.

"My wife is fond of flying flags. I am not," Alito wrote Wednesday.

In letters to members of Congress, Alito said his wife, Martha-Ann, was responsible for flying both an upside-down flag over their home in 2021 and an "Appeal to Heaven" flag at their New Jersey beach house last year. Both flags were like those carried by rioters who violently stormed the Capitol in January 2021 while echoing Trump's false claims of election fraud.

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Neither incident at Alito's homes merited his recusal, wrote the justice, who has rejected calls from Democrats in the past to recuse on other issues.

"I am confident that a reasonable person who is not motivated by political or ideological considerations or a desire to affect the outcome of Supreme Court cases would conclude that the events ... do not meet the applicable standard for recusal," he wrote. "I am therefore required to reject your request."

Supreme Court justices decide for themselves whether to sit out a case and the only potential consequence for refusing to step aside is impeachment by the House of Representatives and removal from office by the Senate. That has never happened in American history.

Trump, who was in New York while jurors deliberated in his hush money criminal trial, congratulated Alito for "showing the INTELLIGENCE, COURAGE, and 'GUTS'" in refusing to step aside. "All U.S. Judges, Justices, and Leaders should have such GRIT," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

Some Senate Republicans also quickly took to social media Wednesday to praise Alito for staying involved in the cases.

The court is considering two major cases related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack by a mob of Trump supporters on the Capitol, including charges faced by the rioters and whether Trump has immunity from prosecution on election interference charges.

The New York Times reported that an inverted American flag was seen at Alito's home in Alexandria, Virginia, less than two weeks after the attack on the Capitol. The paper also reported that an "Appeal to Heaven" flag was flown outside the justice's beach home in New Jersey last summer.

The "Appeal to Heaven" flag has in recent years come to symbolize sympathies with the Christian nationalist movement and the false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Trump. According to Americanflags.com, the pine tree on the flag symbolized strength and resilience in the New England colonies while the words "Appeal to Heaven" stemmed from the belief that God would deliver the colonists from tyranny.

An upside-down American flag has come to be a symbol associated with Trump's bogus fraud claims. Dozens of the pro-Trump rioters were carrying similarly inverted flags and chanting slogans like "Stop the Steal" on Jan. 6, 2021. The U.S. Flag Code states that the American flag is not to be flown upside down "except as a signal of dire distress in instance of extreme danger to life or property." The inverted flag has been used as a protest symbol on both the left and the right on a range of issues over the decades.

Alito said he was unaware that the upside-down flag was flying above his house until it was called to his attention. "As soon as I saw it, I asked my wife to take it down, but for several days, she refused," he wrote in nearly identical letters to Democrats in the House and the Senate.

He had previously explained to the newspaper that his wife put up the flag as part of a nasty neighborhood dispute.

The flag at his beach house was also hoisted by his wife, Alito wrote, noting that the house is in her name and was bought with money she inherited from her parents.

Alito said he was unfamiliar with the "Appeal to Heaven" flag when it was flown, but he noted it dates back to the American Revolution. "I was not aware of any connection between this historic flag and the 'Stop the Steal Movement' and neither was my wife," Alito wrote.

He said Martha-Ann Alito did not fly that flag to associate herself with the rioters or the effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which Trump, a Republican, lost to Joe Biden, a Democrat.

Calling her an independently-minded private citizen, Alito wrote, "She makes her own decisions and I honor her right to do so."

Alito also described the sacrifices his wife has made because of her husband's service on the Supreme Court, including "the insult of having to endure numerous, loud, obscene and personally insulting protests in front of our home that continue to this day and now threaten to escalate."

Protests began in 2022 after a draft of Alito's majority opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade* and allowing states to ban abortions was leaked in early May. The court formally issued the decision in late June.

Democrats in the House and the Senate sent a total of three letters last week to Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts seeking Alito's disqualification from the cases. Senators asked for a meeting with Roberts.

Alito said it was better that he respond directly.

Judicial ethics codes focus on the need for judges to be independent, avoiding political statements or opinions on matters they could be called on to decide. The Supreme Court had long gone without its own code of ethics, but it adopted one in November 2023 in the face of sustained criticism over undisclosed trips and gifts from wealthy benefactors to some justices.

The code lacks a means of enforcement, though, and the Senate Judiciary Committee approved legislation last year that would set stricter standards. But Republicans have been staunchly opposed to any efforts to tell the court what to do.

## **Brazil's president withdraws his country's ambassador to Israel after criticizing the war in Gaza**

By ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil withdrew its ambassador to Israel on Wednesday after months of tensions between the two countries over the war in Gaza, the latest repercussion from a South American nation over Israel's military campaign in the Palestinian territory.

The move was announced in Brazil's official gazette.

Israel's foreign ministry said no official message has yet been received from the Brazilian government on the matter. However, following the media reports, the Brazilian chargé d'affaires was summoned to appear at the ministry on Thursday for a meeting.

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been a frequent critic of Israel's offensive in Gaza, which he compared to the Holocaust earlier this year. That led Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz to summon the Brazilian ambassador, Frederico Meyer, to the national Holocaust museum in Jerusalem for a public reprimand.

At the time, Lula called Meyer home. However, Wednesday's action represented an escalation and a diplomatic downgrade, with the Brazilian Embassy in Israel still in place but without an ambassador in the post.

According to an official at Brazil's foreign ministry, Wednesday's removal comes in response to Meyer's humiliation by Israel's top diplomat. The official, who has knowledge of the situation, spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

"Any appointment of a new Brazilian ambassador to Israel will be announced in due course in a press release. For the time being, the Brazilian Embassy in Tel Aviv continues to function under the leadership of the chargé d'affaires," Brazil's foreign ministry said.

Meyer has been transferred to Geneva and will join Brazil's permanent mission to the United Nations and other international organizations.

A pro-Israel group in the country, the Israeli Confederation of Brazil, said on social media that it "regretted" the move.

"The Brazilian government's unilateral measure moves us away from the Brazilian diplomatic tradition of balance and seeking dialogue and prevents Brazil from exercising its desired role as mediator and protagonist in the Middle East," it said.

The war in Gaza, now in its eighth month, began when the Palestinian militant Hamas group burst into southern Israel in a surprise attack on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 civilians and taking around 250 hostage.

Israel's offensive in response to that attack has killed at least 36,096 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its count. Israel says it has killed 15,000 militants.

In February, Brazil's Lula said that "what is happening in the Gaza Strip and to the Palestinian people hasn't been seen in any other moment in history. Actually, it did when Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

Danielle Ayres, an international relations professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil, said Wednesday's action was "symbolic" and that by stopping short of severing diplomatic ties, Lula indicated he wants to maintain relations while strengthening the Brazilian government's position of

"vehemently criticizing the way Israel is responding" to the Oct. 7 attack.

Separately, Brazil's foreign ministry welcomed this week's formal recognition of a Palestinian state by Ireland, Norway and Spain. Brazil recognized a Palestinian state in 2010. Tuesday's coordinated effort by the three Western European nations added to international pressure on Israel, which condemned the diplomatic move.

"By urging all other countries that have not yet done so to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, Brazil reaffirms its defense of the two-state solution, with an independent and viable state of Palestine living side by side with Israel, in peace and security," the ministry said in a statement.

Israel says its war in Gaza is a defensive action triggered by Hamas' unprecedented assault and rejects any comparisons of its offensive to the Holocaust.

Earlier this month, Colombia broke diplomatic relations with Israel. Colombia's President Gustavo Petro had previously suspended purchases of weapons from Israel and had also compared Israel's actions in Gaza to those of Nazi Germany.

Also in the region, Bolivia and Belize have also severed diplomatic relations with Israel over the Israel-Hamas war.

## **Josh Gibson becomes MLB career and season batting leader as Negro Leagues statistics incorporated**

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Josh Gibson became Major League Baseball's career leader with a .372 batting average, surpassing Ty Cobb's .367, when Negro Leagues records for more than 2,300 players were incorporated Tuesday after a three-year research project.

Gibson's .466 average for the 1943 Homestead Grays became the season standard, followed by Charlie "Chino" Smith's .451 for the 1929 New York Lincoln Giants. They overtook the .440 by Hugh Duffy for the National League's Boston team in 1894.

Gibson also became the career leader in slugging percentage (.718) and OPS (1.177), moving ahead of Babe Ruth (.690 and 1.164).

"It's a show of respect for great players who performed in the Negro Leagues due to circumstances beyond their control and once those circumstances changed demonstrated that they were truly major leaguers," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press. "Maybe the single biggest factor was the success of players who played in the Negro Leagues and then came to the big leagues."

A special committee on baseball records decided in 1969 to recognize six major leagues dating to 1876: the National (which launched in 1876), the American (1901), the American Association (1882-1891), Union Association (1884), Players' League (1890) and Federal League (1914-1915). It excluded the National Association (1871-75), citing an "erratic schedule and procedures."

MLB announced in December 2020 that it would be "correcting a longtime oversight" and would add the Negro Leagues. John Thorn, MLB's official historian, chaired a 17-person committee that included Negro Leagues experts and statisticians.

"The condensed 60-game season for the 2020 calendar year for the National League and American League prompted us to think that maybe the shortened Negro League seasons could come under the MLB umbrella, after all," Thorn said.

An updated version of MLB's database will become public before the St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants play a tribute game to the Negro Leagues on June 20 at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama.

Baseball Hall of Fame President Josh Rawitch said statistics on Cooperstown plaques will remain the same because they reflect the information available at the time of a player's induction.

Standards for season leaders is the same for Negro Leagues as the other leagues: 3.1 plate appearances or one inning for each game played by a player's team.

Gibson's .974 slugging percentage in 1937 becomes the season record, and Barry Bonds' .863 in 2001

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dropped to fifth, also trailing Mules Suttles' .877 in 1926, Gibson's .871 in 1943 and Smith's .870 in 1929. Bond's prior OPS record of 1.421 in 2004 dropped to third behind Gibson's 1.474 in 1937 and 1.435 in 1943. Willie Mays gained 10 hits from the 1948 Birmingham Black Barons, increasing his total to 3,293. Minnie Minoso surpassed 2,000 hits, credited with 150 for the New York Cubans from 1946-1948 that boosted his total to 2,113.

Jackie Robinson, who broke MLB's color barrier with the 1947 Dodgers, was credited with 49 hits with the 1945 Kansas City Monarchs that increased his total to 1,567.

Among pitchers, Satchel Paige gained 28 wins that raised his total to 125.

The committee met six times and dealt with issues such as when compiled league statistics didn't make sense, such as a league having more wins than losses and walks that were missing. Researchers had to identify whether players with the same name were one person or separate, tracking dates of birth, and identify people listed by nicknames. Documenting transactions and identifying ballparks in a time when neutral sites often were used is ongoing, along with uncovering statistics for independent teams.

"We made the decision at a point in time that we became convinced that it was possible to get accurate statistics that could be appropriately integrated into our record books," Manfred said.

Kevin Johnson and Gary Ashwill, researchers who had spent nearly two decades helping assemble the Seamheads Negro Leagues Database, were included in the project.

Thorn estimated 72% of Negro Leagues records from 1920-1948 are included and additional research might lead to future modifications. Thorn said a four-homer game by Gibson in 1938 and a home run by Mays in August 1948 could not be included because complete game accounts have not been found.

"Without a box score, we can't really balance the statistics," Johnson said. "Those games are kind of in limbo at the moment."

Records include the first Negro National League (1920-31), Eastern Colored League (1923-28), American Negro League (1929), East-West League (1932), Negro Southern League (1932), second Negro National League (1933-48) and Negro American League (1937-48). Barnstorming exhibition games are not included.

Some game details were obtained from newspapers that covered the Black communities. Johnson said while complete accounts were found for about 95% of games in the 1920s, coverage dropped off during the Great Depression in the 1930s and never fully recovered.

## Polls close and South Africa counts votes in election framed as its most important since apartheid

By GERALD IMRAY, MOGOMOTSI MAGOME and FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africans voted Wednesday at schools, community centers, and in large white tents set up in open fields in an election seen as their country's most important since apartheid ended 30 years ago. It could put the young democracy into unknown territory.

At stake is the three-decade dominance of the African National Congress party, which led South Africa out of apartheid's brutal white minority rule and to democracy in 1994. It is now the target of a new generation of discontent in a country of 62 million people — half of whom are estimated to be living in poverty.

After casting his vote, President Cyril Ramaphosa said that he had no doubt his ANC would win again with "a firm majority."

The main opposition leader, John Steenhuisen, countered: "For the first time in 30 years, there is now a path to victory for the opposition."

The election was held on one day and polls closed after 14 hours of voting at more than 23,000 stations across South Africa's nine provinces. Counting will start but final results are not expected for days. The independent electoral commission that runs the election said they would be announced by Sunday.

The ANC has seen its support slide in previous elections as Africa's most advanced economy faces some of the world's deepest socioeconomic problems. It has one of the worst unemployment rates at 32% and the lingering inequality, with poverty disproportionately affecting the Black majority, now threatens to unseat the party that promised to end it by bringing down apartheid under the slogan of a better life for all.

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"Our main issue here in our community is the lack of jobs," said Samuel Ratshalingwa, who was near the front of the line at the same school in the Johannesburg township of Soweto where Ramaphosa voted. He came out well before polls opened at 7 a.m. on a chilly winter morning.

"We have to use the vote to make our voices heard about this problem," Ratshalingwa said.

After winning six successive national elections, several opinion polls have put the ANC's support at less than 50% before this vote, an unprecedented drop. It might lose its majority in Parliament for the first time, although it's widely expected to hold the most seats.

The ANC won 57.5% of the vote in the last national election in 2019, its worst result to date and down from a high of nearly 70% in 2004. That loss of support has been attributed to the widespread poverty, but also ANC corruption scandals, high crime rates and a failure of basic government services that see many communities go without running water, electricity or proper housing. Some voting stations were even impacted by electricity blackouts, officials said.

Ramaphosa, the leader of the ANC, has promised to "do better."

The 71-year-old Ramaphosa sat alongside other voters in Soweto, where he was born and which was once the center of the resistance to apartheid. He shook hands with two smiling officials who registered him before voting.

"I have no doubt whatsoever in my heart of hearts that the people will once again invest confidence in the African National Congress to continue to lead this country," Ramaphosa said.

Any change in the ANC's hold on power could be monumental for South Africa. If it does lose its majority, the ANC will likely face the prospect of a coalition with others to stay in government and keep Ramaphosa as president for a second term. The ANC having to co-govern has never happened before.

South Africans vote for parties, not directly for their president. The parties then get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote and lawmakers elect the president. Nearly 28 million people were registered to vote and the electoral commission said early indications were that it was a high turnout. Long queues remained into the night at some voting stations — people would be allowed to vote if they were in the queue before the closing time of 9 p.m.

The opposition to the ANC is fierce, but fragmented. The two biggest opposition parties, the centrist Democratic Alliance and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters, are not expected to increase their vote by anything near enough to overtake the ANC.

That's largely because disgruntled South Africans are moving to an array of opposition parties; more than 50 will contest the national election, many of them new. One is led by South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma, who has turned against his former ANC allies.

Steenhuisen, the leader of the main opposition Democratic Alliance, said South Africa was now heading to "coalition country." He conceded his party probably wouldn't gain a majority, but put faith in a preelection agreement with other smaller parties to combine their vote to remove the ANC.

"I don't think we're going to solve the problems of South Africa by keeping the same people around the same table making the same bad decisions for the same bad results," Steenhuisen said.

The ANC says it's confident of retaining its majority and analysts haven't ruled that out, given the party's unmatched grassroots campaigning machine. It still has wide support.

"I woke up at 4 a.m. this morning, took a bath and made my way," said 68-year-old Velaphi Banda, adding that he has voted for the ANC since 1994 and would do so again. "I was never undecided about which party I will vote for. I have always known."

Ramaphosa has pointed out how South Africa is a far better country now than under apartheid, when Black people were barred from voting, weren't allowed to move around freely, had to live in certain areas and were oppressed in every way. This election is only South Africa's seventh national vote in which people of all races are allowed to take part.

Memories of that era of apartheid, and the defining election that ended it in 1994, still frame much of everyday South Africa. But fewer remember it as time goes on, and this election might give voice to a new generation.

"I feel like there are just no opportunities for young people in this area," said 27-year-old Innocentia



Zitha of her neighborhood.

While 80% of South Africans are Black, it's a multiracial country with significant populations of white people, those of Indian descent, those with biracial heritage and others. There are 12 official languages.

The vote will also showcase the country's contradictions, from the economic hub of Johannesburg — labeled Africa's richest city — to the picturesque tourist destination of Cape Town, to the informal settlements of shacks in their outskirts, and the more remote rural areas. In one of those in the eastern KwaZulu-Natal province, 72-year-old grandmother Thembekile Ngema and others walked 20 minutes over rolling hills to get to their polling station.

South Africa has held peaceful and credible elections since a violent buildup to the pivotal 1994 election but nearly 3,000 soldiers were deployed across the country to ensure everything is orderly, authorities said.

## Key Republican calls for 'generational' increase in defense spending to counter US adversaries

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top-ranking Republican on a Senate committee that oversees the military is calling for a "generational investment" in America's defense, saying aggressive and significant spending increases are necessary to deter coordinated threats from U.S. adversaries such as Russia, Iran and China.

Sen. Roger Wicker told The Associated Press that he will seek an additional \$55 billion in defense spending over the limits that were forged in the deal to suspend the nation's debt limit a year ago. Wicker explained his position in global terms, saying there has "never been such a level of cooperation and coordination among an axis of aggressors" that aims to challenge U.S. dominance.

The plan lays down a significant marker for Senate Republicans as they enter into a new round of budget fights with Democrats in the heat of a closely fought election year. The White House has proposed \$850 billion in defense spending, adhering to the debt limit deal by proposing a 1% increase from the previous year. That plan is unlikely to keep pace with inflation and would seek to reduce the military's costs by retiring older ships and aircraft.

Wicker acknowledged it would be "a hill to climb" to convince Congress to break from the spending caps at a time of deep political upheaval. Washington is still grappling with divisions over support for Ukraine, the aftershocks of two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a presidential election between two presumptive candidates — Biden and Republican Donald Trump — who espouse vastly different visions of America's role abroad.

But Wicker, R-Miss., said the U.S. has no choice. "We would be very foolish on a national survival basis to adhere to that when it comes to national defense," said Wicker, the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

While GOP defense hawks have long advocated for robust defense spending, Wicker's plan goes a step further, calling for a broad shift in the U.S. defense posture that would amount to a reshuffling of national priorities. Under his proposal, the military would eventually consume 5% of America's gross domestic product, or total economic output.

Defense spending when measured as a portion of GDP is currently about 3% and has been declining since the height of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has not reached above 5% since the early 1990s.

Back in the 1980s and early 1990s, Wicker said, "nobody took a chance against the United States because we were powerful enough to keep the peace. We are simply not anywhere near that right now."

"I think that the fact that we're in a new Cold War is self-evident," he said.

Wicker's full plan is laid out in a 52-page paper he has been working on for the past year. In it, he makes the case for a new generation of weapons, pointing to an aging American arsenal as Russia moves to expand its territory in Europe and China tries to show increasing dominance in parts of the Pacific.

Closer ties between China and Russia were underscored earlier this month by a visit between leaders Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. The two-day visit — Putin's first trip abroad after being inaugurated to a fifth term in office — reflected a growing partnership between the two nations, an alliance grounded in

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support for authoritarian regimes and dominance in their respective regions.

China has given diplomatic support to Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine and emerged as a top export market for Russian oil and gas, helping fill the Kremlin's war coffers for the ongoing offensive.

Wicker said the high-level meeting between Putin and Xi "ought to be a wake up call."

He said in his proposal that the U.S. faces "the most dangerous threat environment since World War II" and urges a national war footing appropriate for a long, drawn-out conflict with a major world power. For Wicker, that encompasses everything from addressing deferred maintenance on U.S. military facilities that don't have the right voltage on power outlets to preparing for nuclear weaponry in space.

Still, the spending increases are likely to be viewed skeptically by lawmakers wary of growing the defense budget, which already dominates annual discretionary funding. The legislation to suspend the nation's debt limit passed Congress with strong bipartisan support and aimed to limit federal budget growth to 1% for the next six years, although the spending caps were only mandatory through this year's budget.

The House Armed Services Committee this month approved with near-unanimous support an \$884 billion proposal for the annual defense authorization bill, keeping within the spending caps but shifting funding towards specific military programs. Yet Senate Democrats are likely to resist further spending cuts to other government programs.

The Senate committee is set to craft the annual military authorization bill next month, but the chairman, Democratic Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, has not publicly released the spending amount that he will propose. Wicker said that he had been in contact with Reed, as well as top Democratic appropriators, about the plan, but their level of support was not clear.

At the same time, defense hawks like Wicker are navigating the shifting politics of defense spending in their own party under Trump's "America First" brand of foreign policy. Earlier this year, a \$95 billion package of foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan faced heavy resistance from a large portion of congressional Republicans, even though much of the funds would be spent buying equipment and ammunition from U.S.-based defense manufacturers.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has been vocal about countering those within his party who want to push the U.S. towards a more isolationist stance. And Wicker said there was "an opportunity" to win broad support for redoubling U.S. efforts in the Pacific because congressional Republicans are still supportive of countering China.

As he works to convince Congress to rethink defense spending, Wicker said he was modeling his effort on the push that former Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, made in 2017 as he tried to dramatically increase defense spending. That effort was mostly unsuccessful.

But Wicker expressed confidence that this time can be different.

With China's military strength dramatically growing and Russia launching the largest land invasion in Europe since World War II, the difference between 2017 and now is "the reality on the ground," he said.

## **Inflation pressures lingering from pandemic are keeping Fed rate cuts on pause**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hopes for interest rate cuts this year by the Federal Reserve are steadily fading, with a stream of recent remarks by Fed officials underscoring their intention to keep borrowing costs high as long as needed to curb persistently elevated inflation.

A key reason for the delay in rate cuts is that the inflation pressures that are bedeviling the economy are being driven largely by lingering forces from the pandemic — for items ranging from apartment rents to auto insurance to hospital prices. Though Fed officials say they expect inflation in those areas to eventually cool, they've signaled that they're prepared to wait as long as it takes.

Yet the policymakers' willingness to keep their key rate at a two-decade peak — thereby keeping costs painfully high for mortgages, auto loans and other forms of consumer borrowing — carries its own risks.

The Fed's mandate is to strike a balance between keeping rates high enough to control inflation yet not

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so high as to damage the job market. While most measures show that growth and hiring remain healthy, some gauges of the economy have begun to reveal signs of weakness. The longer the Fed keeps its benchmark rate elevated, the greater the risk of causing a downturn.

At the same time, with polls showing that costlier rents, groceries and gasoline are angering voters as the presidential campaign intensifies, Donald Trump has sought to pin the blame for higher prices squarely on President Joe Biden.

The Fed, led by Chair Jerome Powell, raised its benchmark rate by 5 percentage points from March 2022 through June 2023 — the fastest such increase in four decades — to try to drive inflation back down to its 2% target. According to the Fed's preferred measure, inflation has tumbled from 7.1% in June 2022 to 2.7% in March.

That same gauge showed, though, that prices accelerated in the first three months of 2024, disrupting last year's steady slowdown. On Friday, economists expect the government to report that this measure rose 2.7% in April from a year earlier.

A separate inflation indicator that the government reported this month suggested that prices cooled slightly in April. But with inflation remaining stubbornly above the Fed's target level, Wall Street traders now expect just one rate cut this year, in November. And even that is hardly a slam-dunk, with investors placing the likelihood of a cut in November at 63%, down from 77% a week ago.

Last week, economists at Goldman Sachs became the latest analysts to give up on a rate cut in July, pushing back their forecast for the first of two cuts they expect this year to September. Oxford Economics made a similar call last month. Bank of America foresees just one Fed rate cut this year, in December. Just months ago, many economists had forecast the first rate cut for March of this year.

"We will need to accumulate further data over the coming months to have a clearer picture of the inflation outlook," Loretta Mester, president of Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, said this month. "I now believe that it will take longer to reach our 2% goal than I previously thought." (Mester is among 12 officials who are voting on the Fed's rate policy this year.)

As further data accumulates, so do some signs that the economy is cooling a bit. More Americans, particularly younger adults, are falling behind on their credit card bills, for example, with the share of card debt 90 days or more overdue reaching 10.7% in the first quarter, according to the Fed's New York branch. That's the highest proportion in 14 years.

Hiring is also slowing, with businesses posting fewer open jobs, though job advertisements remain high.

And more companies, including Target, McDonalds and Burger King, are highlighting price cuts or cheaper deals to try to attract financially squeezed consumers. Their actions could help lower inflation in the coming months. But they also underscore the struggles that lower-income Americans face.

"There's a lot of signs that consumers are kind of losing some steam and hiring demand is cooling," said Julia Coronado, a former Fed economist who is president of MacroPolicy Perspectives. "You could see more of a slowdown."

But Coronado and other economists also regard the latest trends as a sign that the economy may simply be normalizing after a period of rapid growth. Companies are still hiring, though at a more modest pace than at the start of the year. And data suggests that Americans traveled in record numbers over the Memorial Day weekend, a sign they're confident in their finances.

The Fed's reluctance to cut rates is likely to set it apart from some of its counterparts overseas in the coming months. Central bankers in Europe and the United Kingdom are expected to reduce borrowing costs as soon as next month, largely because inflation has fallen further in those areas than in the United States. Rising prices in Europe and the U.K. were driven mostly by spiking energy costs stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and those costs have largely receded.

The U.K. and European economies have also fared much worse than the U.S. economy since the pandemic, so inflation has not been as serious a threat. The economies of the U.K. and the 20 countries that use the euro currency actually shrank in the second half of last year before recording mild growth in the first three months of 2024. The U.K. economy has barely grown in the past 12 months.

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In the U.S., a big reason why inflation remains above the Fed's target is that distortions stemming from the pandemic are still keeping prices elevated in several areas even as much of the rest of the economy has moved past the pandemic.

Housing costs, led by apartment rents, jumped two years ago after many Americans sought additional living space during the pandemic. Rental costs are now slowing: They rose 5.4% in April on an annual basis, down from 8.8% a year earlier. But they're still rising faster than before the pandemic.

Last month, rent and homeownership, along with hotel prices, accounted for two-thirds of the annual rise in "core" inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy costs. Powell and other Fed officials have acknowledged that they had expected rents to fall more quickly than they have.

The cost of a new lease, though, has tumbled since mid-2022. A gauge of newly leased apartment rents calculated by the government shows that they rose just 0.4% in the first three months of 2024 compared with a year earlier. Yet it takes time for newer, lower-priced rents to feed into the government's inflation measure.

"Market rents adjust more quickly to economic conditions than what landlords charge their existing tenants," Philip Jefferson, the Fed's vice chair and a top lieutenant to Powell, said last week. "This lag suggests that the large increase in market rents during the pandemic is still being passed through to existing rents and may keep housing services inflation elevated for a while longer."

The cost of auto insurance has soared nearly 23% from a year earlier, a huge jump that reflects the surge in prices of new and used cars during the pandemic. Insurance companies now must pay more to replace totaled cars and as a result are charging their customers more.

"This is about stuff that happened in 2021," said Claudia Sahm, chief economist at New Century Advisors and a former Fed economist. "You cannot go back and change that."

## **ConocoPhillips buying Marathon Oil for \$17.1 billion in all-stock deal as energy prices rise**

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

ConocoPhillips is buying Marathon Oil in an all-stock deal valued at approximately \$17.1 billion as energy prices rise and big oil companies reap massive profits.

The deal is valued at \$22.5 billion when including \$5.4 billion in debt.

Crude prices have jumped more than 12% this year and the cost for a barrel rose above \$80 this week. Oil majors put up record profits after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and while those numbers have slipped, there has been a surge in mergers between energy companies flush with cash.

Chevron said last year that it was buying Hess in a \$53 billion acquisition, though that deal faces headwinds. The company warned the buyout may be in jeopardy because it will require the approval of Exxon Mobil and a Chinese national oil company, which both hold rights to development of an oil field off the coast of the South American nation Guyana where Hess is a big player.

In July of last year, Exxon Mobil said that it would pay \$4.9 billion for Denbury Resources, an oil and gas producer that has entered the business of capturing and storing carbon and stands to benefit from changes in U.S. climate policy. Three months later, Exxon announced the proposed acquisition of shale operator Pioneer Natural Resources for \$60 billion.

All of the proposed acquisitions could face pushback from the U.S. which, under the Biden administration, has stepped up antitrust reviews for energy companies and other sectors as well, such as tech.

Federal Trade Commission, which enforces federal antitrust law, asked for additional information from Exxon and Pioneer about their proposed deal. The request is a step the agency takes when reviewing whether a merger could be anticompetitive under U.S. law. Pioneer disclosed the request in a filing in January.

As part of the ConocoPhillips transaction, Marathon Oil shareholders will receive 0.2550 shares of ConocoPhillips common stock for each share of Marathon Oil common stock that they own, the companies said

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Wednesday.

ConocoPhillips said Wednesday that the transaction will add highly desired acreage to its existing U.S. onshore portfolio.

"This acquisition of Marathon Oil further deepens our portfolio and fits within our financial framework, adding high-quality, low cost of supply inventory adjacent to our leading U.S. unconventional position," ConocoPhillips Chairman and CEO Ryan Lance said in a prepared statement.

The deal is expected to close in the fourth quarter. It still needs approval from Marathon Oil stockholders.

Separate from the transaction, ConocoPhillips said that it anticipates raising its ordinary dividend by 34% to 78 cents per share starting in the fourth quarter. The company said that once the Marathon Oil deal closes and assuming recent commodity prices, ConocoPhillips plans to buy back more than \$7 billion in shares in the first full year. It plans to repurchase more than \$20 billion in shares in the first three years.

Shares of ConocoPhillips declined 3.3% before the market open, while Marathon Oil Corp.'s stock rose more than 7%.

## What you will and won't see from June's planetary parade

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Six planets will link up before dawn on June 3 in what's known as a planetary parade. But the spectacle won't be as eye-catching as expected: Only two planets will be visible to the naked eye.

Here's what to know about this fairly common celestial event.

WHAT IS A PARADE OF PLANETS?

Our solar system's planets zip around the sun at an angle. Every once in a while, several align on the right side of the sun to be visible across a narrow band of Earth's sky.

How common the phenomenon is depends on how many planets align and whether or not they are visible without binoculars or a telescope. A handful of planets are usually in the night sky at any given time, though they can be obscured below the horizon or blocked out by the sun's light.

WHAT WILL BE VISIBLE DURING THE PLANET PARADE?

Unfortunately, this planetary parade of Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune won't offer much of a view.

"The sun's going to be photobombing the parade," said Ronald Gamble, a theoretical astrophysicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center.

Mercury and Jupiter will be too close to the horizon to be visible, blotted out by the rising sun. Uranus and Neptune can be glimpsed only with a telescope, though Uranus may be too close to the sun to be visible.

Early risers can still look to the east to spot a waning crescent moon on the lower left, followed by a faintly red Mars and pale yellow dot of Saturn. Both planets are already visible in the early mornings and will be for much of the summer.

WHAT ELSE CAN I SPOT IN THE SKY THIS SUMMER?

While June's planetary parade may not dazzle, the night sky still offers wonders to spot.

The summer offers great weather to explore the night sky with a star or planet-viewing app, said Michelle Nichols at Chicago's Adler Planetarium.

And the annual Perseid meteor shower is expected to peak in mid-August with quick streaks of light. Nichols recommends observing the shower away from city lights and allowing your eyes to adjust to the dark for prime viewing.

## Netanyahu frequently makes claims of antisemitism. Critics say he's deflecting from his own problems

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — After the International Criminal Court's top prosecutor sought arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his defense minister and top Hamas officials, the Israeli

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leader accused him of being one of "the great antisemites in modern times."

As protests roiled college campuses across the United States over the Gaza war, Netanyahu said they were awash with "antisemitic mobs."

These are just two of the many instances during the war in which Netanyahu has accused critics of Israel or his policies of antisemitism, using fiery rhetoric to compare them to the Jewish people's worst persecutors. But his detractors say he is overusing the label to further his political agenda and try to stifle even legitimate criticism, and that doing so risks diluting the term's meaning at a time when antisemitism is surging worldwide.

"Not every criticism against Israel is antisemitic," said Tom Segev, an Israeli historian. "The moment you say it is antisemitic hate ... you take away all legitimacy from the criticism and try to crush the debate."

There has been a spike in antisemitic incidents since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, according to researchers. And many Jews in North America and Europe have said they feel unsafe, citing threats to Jewish schools and synagogues and the pro-Palestinian campus demonstrations in the U.S., although organizers deny that antisemitism drives the protests.

The war has reignited the long debate about the definition of antisemitism and whether any criticism of Israel — from its military's killing of thousands of Palestinian children to questions over Israel's very right to exist — amounts to anti-Jewish hate speech.

Netanyahu, the son of a scholar of medieval Jewish persecution, has long used the travails of the Jewish people to color his political rhetoric. And he certainly isn't the first world leader accused of using national trauma to advance political goals.

Netanyahu's supporters say he is honestly worried for the safety of Jews around the world.

But his accusations of antisemitism come as he has repeatedly sidestepped accountability for not preventing Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. Hamas killed roughly 1,200 people and took 250 hostage, which many in Israel's defense establishment acknowledge they shoulder the blame for.

Netanyahu has continued to face criticism at home and abroad throughout the war, which has killed 35,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between fighters and noncombatants. The fighting has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe, and ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan has accused Netanyahu and his defense minister of using starvation as a "method of warfare," among other crimes.

Segev, the historian, acknowledged there is a rise in "violent hate" toward Israel and, speaking from Vienna, said he wasn't sure if speaking Hebrew in public was safe. But he said Netanyahu has long used Jewish crises to his political benefit, including invoking the Jewish people's deepest trauma, the Holocaust, to further his goals.

At the height of the campus protests, Netanyahu released a video statement condemning their "unconscionable" antisemitism and comparing the mushrooming encampments on college greens to Nazi Germany of the 1930s.

"What's happening in America's college campuses is horrific," he said.

In response to Khan seeking the arrest warrants, he said the ICC prosecutor was "callously pouring gasoline on the fires of antisemitism that are raging across the world," comparing him to German judges who approved of the Nazis' race laws against Jews.

Those comments drew a rebuke from the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell. "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."

Netanyahu has compared accusations that Israel's war is causing starvation in Gaza or that the war is genocidal to blood libels — unfounded centuries-old accusations that Jews sacrificed Christian children and used their blood to make unleavened bread for Passover.

"These false accusations are not levelled against us because of the things we do, but because of the simple fact that we exist," he said at a ceremony marking Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day earlier

this month.

Netanyahu previously made repeated allusions to the Holocaust while trying to galvanize the world against Iran's nuclear program.

Israeli leaders and the country's media also made such comparisons about Oct. 7, describing the Hamas attackers as Nazis, comparing their rampage to the historic violence inflicted on Eastern European Jews, and referring to the images of Jewish victims' burned bodies as a Shoah — the Hebrew word for Holocaust.

Israelis have been jarred by the global rise in antisemitism, and many view the swell of criticism against Israel as part of the rise. They see hypocrisy in the world's intense focus on Israel's war with Hamas while other conflicts get much less attention.

Moshe Klughaft, a former advisor to Netanyahu, said he believes the Israeli leader is genuinely concerned over rising antisemitism.

"It is his duty to condemn antisemitism as prime minister of Israel and as head of a country that sees itself as responsible for world Jewry," he said.

Many Israelis view the war in Gaza as a just act of self-defense and are befuddled by what many think should be criticism directed at Hamas — blaming the group for starting the war, using Palestinian civilians as human shields and refusing to free the hostages. The ICC warrant requests have likely bolstered such feelings.

When Netanyahu leans on accusations of antisemitism, he is doing so with the Israeli public in mind, said Reuven Hazan, a political scientist at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Hazan said Netanyahu has leveraged the campus protests, for example, to get Israelis to rally around him at a time when his public support has plummeted and Israelis are growing impatient with the war. He said Netanyahu has also used the protests as a scapegoat for his failure so far to achieve the war's two goals: destroying Hamas and freeing the hostages.

"He deflects blame from himself, attributing any shortcomings not to his foreign policies or policies in the (Palestinian) territories, but rather to antisemitism. This narrative benefits him greatly, absolving him of responsibility," Hazan said.

Shmuel Rosner, a senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank, rejects the notion that Netanyahu stifles criticism by calling it antisemitic, pointing to just how much criticism the country receives. But he said using the antisemitic label to achieve political ends could cheapen it.

"I'd be more selective than the government of Israel in choosing the people and bodies they tag 'anti-semitic,'" he said.

## **Palestinian prime minister visits Madrid after Spain, Norway and Ireland recognize Palestinian state**

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez met with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and leading officials from several Middle Eastern countries in Madrid on Wednesday after Spain, Ireland and Norway recognized a Palestinian state.

The diplomatic move by the three western European nations on Tuesday was slammed by Israel and will have little immediate impact on its grinding war in Gaza, but it was a victory for the Palestinians and could encourage other Western powers to follow suit.

"On behalf of President (Mahmoud) Abbas and the government of Palestine, the people of Palestine, we warmly welcome Spain's recognition of the state of Palestine," Mustafa said afterward. "This recognition strengthens our resolve to continue our struggle for a just and lasting peace."

Mustafa was joined by Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Organization of Islamic Cooperation chairman Hussain Ibrahim Taha, and the foreign ministers for Turkey and Jordan, members of the group called the Foreign Ministerial Committee of Arabic and Islamic countries for Gaza. They also met with Spanish Foreign Minister

José Manuel Albares.

More than 140 countries recognize a Palestinian state — more than two-thirds of the United Nations. With Spain and Ireland, there are now nine members of the 27-nation European Union that officially recognize a Palestinian state. Norway is not an EU member but its foreign policy is usually aligned with the bloc.

Slovenia, an EU member, will decide on the recognition of a Palestinian state on Thursday and forward its decision to parliament for final approval.

"We salute Spain, and we salute Norway, Ireland and Slovenia for doing the right thing. We urge other European partners to do the same thing," said Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi.

The move to recognize a Palestinian state has caused relations between the EU and Israel to nosedive. Madrid and Dublin are pushing for the EU to take measures against Israel for its continued attacks on southern Gaza's city of Rafah.

The decision by Spain, Ireland and Norway comes more than seven months into an assault waged by Israel following the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack in which militants stormed across the Gaza border into Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostage. Israel's air and land attacks have since killed 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians.

## **A woman will likely be Mexico's next president. But in some Indigenous villages, men hold the power**

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

PLAN DE AYALA, Mexico (AP) — At 4:30 a.m., the girls and women begin to appear in the dark streets of this rural village of Tojolabal people in southern Mexico. They walk in silence. Some are headed to grind corn to make their family's tortillas. Others fetch firewood to carry home, on their backs or with the help of a donkey. The youngest hurry to finish chores before running to school.

Hours later, it's still morning, and it's time to talk. A group of young women and men gathers in a classroom at the Plan de Ayala high school. They've come to discuss gender equality and reflect on the role of women in this remote Indigenous community in Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state.

Jeydi Hernández, 17, wants to be a veterinarian and play basketball, though her first attempt to form a team failed: "There were 12 of us, but my friends got married, and there were only four of us left." Madaí Gómez, 18, complains that she can't express opinions in her town: "They think women don't know anything."

Two Indigenous women lead the workshop, and dozens attend. Years ago, such an initiative would not have been so well-received, they say. But change is coming — albeit slowly.

Seventy years ago, Mexican women won the right to vote, and today the country is on the verge of electing its first woman president. Yet some of the Indigenous women who will vote in Sunday's national election still don't have a voice in their own homes and communities.

In Plan de Ayala and other corners of Mexico, women can't participate in local government. Men set priorities. They decide how to spend resources: repair the school or the park? Plan de Ayala's women aren't even registered residents, even though they are on voter rolls, so its 1,200 men can only guess at the true population.

With no official data, it's unclear how many communities operate this way. But it's one of many contradictions for a part of the Mexican population that for centuries has been marginalized. Now, Indigenous women are pushing for change — little by little — with the younger generation often leading the charge.

### **PATH TO ACTIVISM**

Of more than 23 million Indigenous people in Mexico — nearly 20% of the population — well over half live in poverty, according to government data from 2022. And women face the worst of it, with the lowest rates of literacy in their communities and little, if any, rights to own land.

Neither of the two women candidates for president — Claudia Sheinbaum for the governing Morena party and the opposition's Xóchitl Gálvez — have spoken much about Indigenous issues. Still, women in



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this region can't hide some hope that a woman president could better address some of their most pressing needs: health care and education access, and protection from domestic violence.

The status of Mexico's Indigenous peoples leaped onto the international stage in 1994 in Chiapas, when Zapatista guerrilla fighters declared war against the government. They aimed not to take power, but demanded that the government address racism and marginalization suffered by Indigenous peoples. The movement had unusually high participation from women.

Twelve days of fighting and years of negotiation culminated in 2001 with a constitutional amendment that recognized the right of Indigenous people to autonomous government; to preserve their languages, land and cultural identity; and to have access to basic rights such as health care and education.

This allowed many small Indigenous communities to govern themselves and choose their leaders without national political influence. It also meant that the federal government frequently looked the other way when those local customs contradicted basic rights like gender equality.

After the uprising, Indigenous women felt encouraged to fight for their rights in their communities. In some places they succeeded. But poverty and inequality persist in many Indigenous communities.

Juana Cruz, 51, is one of the women on a crusade to bring change. She grew up listening to stories of the abuses suffered by four generations of her family forced to work on an estate where they had to speak Spanish rather than their native Tojolabal, a Mayan-family language. She remembers being beaten in school for not speaking Spanish well.

Today she is one of the most veteran social activists in Las Margaritas, the municipality that includes Plan de Ayala, and director of Tzome Ixuk, which means "organized woman" in Tojolabal. Her collective accompanies victims of domestic violence to report crimes, organizes talks to hear communities' needs, hosts workshops for men and women about gender rights, and teaches children Tojolabal. Political parties have approached her, she said, but she rejected their recruitment efforts — she wants to focus on organizing and educating in a politically independent environment.

"The ability that we have to decide is because we are not (affiliated) with any authority," Cruz said.

Six years ago, the Zapatistas and other Indigenous groups elected María de Jesus Patricio, better known as Marichuy, to run for president as their first independent candidate. She faced intense racism and didn't make it onto the ballot. "But she gave us strength," Cruz said.

Cruz's own activism stretches back to the Zapatista uprising, when she first heard about "organizing" for rights. In the mid-1990s, she demanded water, electricity, sewer and schools for an Indigenous neighborhood in Las Margaritas — demands that prompted dozens of men to attack her, she said.

She described politicians finding her demands unacceptable — they believed Indigenous people didn't need such things.

## 'GENERATION OF CHANGE'

Since Cruz and others made those basic demands, there's been progress in places like Las Margaritas, a sprawling township of some 140,000 people spread across about 400 mostly Indigenous communities, including Plan de Ayala. Some people here were born on hugemassive estates where Indigenous workers were treated like slaves. Today, many get by with money sent from relatives who've made it to the United States.

Unwritten rules still govern much of life in the villages. Mexican law prohibits marriage until age 18, but many teens leave home years earlier and live as couples until they can legally wed. The community considers them married.

For some girls, it's the only way to escape abusive homes — one 15-year-old described to The Associated Press how a relative beat her almost daily.

"I wanted to get married as soon as I could," she said, even though she knew it meant giving up her dreams of continued education. "I would love to study again, but I still can't because that's the way the rules are here."

"When you marry, you leave school, you leave everything that you have," said the girl, whose name AP is withholding because she's a victim of abuse.

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Increasingly, girls and young women are rejecting such norms. That's part of what's discussed in the workshops at Plan de Ayala high school.

About a third of those gathered said they would like to continue studying, according to María Leticia Santiz, 28, and Liz Vázquez, 33, who lead the discussion.

"You all have the ability to make decisions in your communities, in your schools, in your families," Vázquez tells the group. "You are a generation of change." Santiz translates to Tojolabal.

A buzz spreads through the group. Using the native language generates confidence and shows the youths they can be proud of it, Santiz said: "There are still young people, women who are ashamed of the language, of being Indigenous."

Vázquez and Santiz are from a collective called Ch'ieltik, which means "we are those who grow" in the Indigenous language Tzeltal. The group's goal is to encourage conversation and reflection among young people in some of Chiapas' most closed communities, learn the realities of people there, and provide tools to improve their lives.

Santiz says that in Plan de Ayala, where women have never held positions of authority, some women do want to participate in local civic life.

But "they don't dare because they feel they are going to be punished," Santiz said. "The social compacts that the people have sown in them are very ingrained."

## LOOKING AHEAD

In Plan de Ayala, like most rural corners of Las Margaritas, there is little evidence of the coming national election. Posters of Sheinbaum are seen in some places. The face of Gálvez — who has Indigenous roots, with an Otomi father — is not.

Vázquez says that personally, she has not connected with either candidate. But in the workshop, she tells the group that a woman becoming president proves nothing is impossible.

Santiz is wary of politicians. "I haven't seen a change, attention toward the Indigenous," she said.

She said she wishes politicians would be authentic in their outreach to Indigenous communities and not simply use their people to sell an inclusive image: "Being Indigenous isn't just coming from an Indigenous community," she said. "It's returning and doing things for your community."

Experts say politicians have long looked down on Indigenous people and have wrongly explained away chauvinistic behavior as the carrying on of ancestral practices. Examples of Indigenous women rising to power — for example, in leading the fight against controversial infrastructure projects like dams — have been minimized.

The campaigns of the two leading female presidential candidates are notable for what's lacking: any prioritization of gender issues or detailed plans to address issues in Indigenous communities.

Sheinbaum insists she will try to reach agreements to compensate for past injustices against some Indigenous peoples. Gálvez has only gone so far as to remind voters of projects she pushed when she was in charge of Indigenous development under a previous administration, two decades ago.

In Plan de Ayala, Vázquez and Santiz leave the workshop at the high school encouraged. The young men seemed receptive to speaking about equality, and they see signs of change: fathers supporting their daughters' dreams, young women carving out spaces for themselves.

After the workshop, Madaí Gómez, the 18-year-old, heads home to finish helping her mother. She's not yet sure about continuing school — she wants to be economically independent and considers herself a strong woman who doesn't take "no" for an answer. Maybe she'll stay here and find work. Maybe she'll try making it to the U.S.

That afternoon, she puts on her soccer uniform and heads to the local field, optimistic that more girls want to join. On the dirt track, teens pass older women wearing traditional embroidered blouses and shiny satin skirts returning from the fields, their bodies stooped by huge bundles of grass hoisted on their backs.

Gómez said she believes in the potential of women in her community and thinks Mexico's first woman president could show they can do more even than men.

"I want gender equality to come, for them to give us that chance to raise our voices, for our voice to be valued the same as a man's," she said.

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## Today in History: May 30, Joan of Arc burned at the stake

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 30, the 151st day of 2024. There are 215 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 30, 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen (roo-AHN'), France.

On this date:

In 1922, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

In 1935, Babe Ruth played in his last major league baseball game for the Boston Braves, leaving after the first inning of the first of a double-header against the Philadelphia Phillies, who won both games (Ruth announced his retirement three days later).

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1958, unidentified American service members killed in World War II and the Korean War were interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1968, the Beatles began recording their "White Album" at EMI Recording Studios in London, starting with the original version of "Revolution 1."

In 1971, the American space probe Mariner 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a journey to Mars.

In 1972, three members of the Japanese Red Army opened fire at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, killing 26 people. Two attackers died; the third was captured.

In 1989, student protesters in Beijing erected a "Goddess of Democracy" statue in Tiananmen Square (the statue was destroyed in the Chinese government's crackdown).

In 1994, Mormon Church president Ezra Taft Benson died in Salt Lake City at age 94.

In 2002, a solemn, wordless ceremony marked the end of the agonizing cleanup at ground zero in New York, 8 1/2 months after 9/11.

In 2015, Vice President Joe Biden's son, former Delaware attorney general Beau Biden, died at age 46 of brain cancer.

In 2018, Gaza's Hamas rulers said they had agreed to a cease-fire with Israel to end the largest flare-up of violence between the two sides since a 2014 war.

In 2020, tense protests over the death of George Floyd and other police killings of Black people grew across the country; racially diverse crowds held mostly peaceful demonstrations in dozens of cities, though many later descended into violence, with police cars set ablaze.

In 2022, after the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas that killed 19 elementary school students and two teachers, President Joe Biden said the "Second Amendment was never absolute" and that there may be some bipartisan support to tighten restrictions on the kind of high-powered weapons used by the gunman.

In 2023, disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes was taken into custody at the Texas prison where she was sentenced to spend the next 11 years for overseeing an infamous blood-testing hoax.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ruta Lee is 89. Actor Keir Dullea is 88. Rock musician Lenny Davidson (The Dave Clark Five) is 80. Actor Stephen Tobolowsky is 73. Actor Colm Meaney is 71. Actor Ted McGinley is 66. Actor Ralph Carter is 63. Actor Tonya Pinkins is 62. Country singer Wynonna Judd is 60. Rock musician Tom Morello (Audioslave; Rage Against The Machine) is 60. Actor Mark Sheppard is 60. Movie director Antoine Fuqua is 59. Actor John Ross Bowie is 53. Rock musician Patrick Doherty (Live) is 53. Actor Idina Menzel is 53. Rapper Cee Lo Green is 49. Rapper Remy Ma is 44. Actor Blake Bashoff is 43. Actor Javicia Leslie is 37. Actor Jake Short is 27. Actor Sean Giambrone is 25. Actor Jared Gilmore is 24.