

Groton Daily Independent

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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

Remember there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end

-Scott Adams



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**[™]

A New York jury yesterday found former President Donald Trump guilty of all 34 counts related to falsifying business records in the hush-money trial against him. The news makes him the first former US president convicted of a crime.

The US Supreme Court voted unanimously yesterday to reinstate the National Rifle Association's free speech case against a New York state regulator who allegedly used her authority to suppress the group's gun-promotion advocacy. The 2018 case was dismissed by a lower court in 2022 and will now resume proceedings.

A Hong Kong court yesterday found 14 pro-democracy activists guilty of conspiring to subvert the government, following the Chinese territory's biggest trial under a China-drafted 2020 national security law.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Dallas Mavericks top Minnesota Timberwolves 124-103 to win Western Conference Finals 4-1 and advance to NBA Finals for first time since 2011. New 3-on-3 women's basketball league, Unrivaled, to launch in January with initial 30 players receiving equity in the league.

Rock band Queen in talks with Sony Music to sell entire music catalog for a reported \$1B. TV series based on the video game "Minecraft" in the works at Netflix. Florida 12-year-old Bruhat Soma wins 96th Scripps National Spelling Bee.

The 2024 NCAA baseball tournament kicks off today; see preview for all 16 regional sites.

Science & Technology

Leaked Google documents reveal details on data the company collects to inform search engine results; critics argue company's algorithm has outsized influence on the internet landscape.

Michigan farmworker tests positive for H5N1 avian influenza; marks the third human patient and first to experience respiratory symptoms, no sign of person-to-person transmission.

Scientists fully map both sex chromosomes for five great ape species and the siamang (a lesser ape species); study sheds light on the genetic evolution of reproduction, cognition, and more in humans and primates.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.6%, Dow -0.9%, Nasdaq -1.1%); markets dragged down by Salesforce, which closed down nearly 20% and logged its worst day since 2004 after missing revenue expectations a day earlier.

Saudi Arabia's government to sell new shares in state oil giant Aramco to domestic and international investors, could raise up to \$13B from the sale. Skydance Media submits revised offer to buy Paramount Global; terms appear to be more favorable to nonvoting shareholders.

Gap shares rise over 20% in after-hours trading after reporting better-than-expected earnings and revenue. Kohl's shares close down 23% after retailer posts surprise loss per share and lower-than-expected revenue.

Politics & World Affairs

Israeli war cabinet member Benny Gantz's centrist party submits bill to dissolve parliament, could force early elections and potentially oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; unclear if bill will garner enough support. Israel lifts ban on food sales to Gaza for first time since Oct. 7.

Biden administration reportedly allowing Ukraine to use some US-supplied weapons for defense inside Russian borders near the Kharkiv region; move partially lifts ban on Ukraine's use of US-supplied weapons.

South Africa's early election results show current ruling party African National Congress leading with 43% of the votes, followed by Democratic Alliance with 24% of the votes; results come from 43% of voting districts counted so far.



LAST DAY!

**620 West Third Avenue
Open 10-6**

**All annuals are 30 percent
off. Excludes trees,
perennials, and planters**

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Groton Post 39 Defeat Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion On Multiple Hit Performance By Braxton Imrie

Braxton Imrie collected three hits in four at bats, as Groton Post 39 defeated Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion 9-0 on Thursday. Imrie singled in the fifth inning, singled in the second inning, and singled in the fourth inning. Groton Post 39 won thanks in part to five runs in the fifth inning. Karsten Flihs was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Imrie singled, scoring one run, Teylor Diegel was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Brevin Flihs singled, scoring one run, and Bradin Althoff grounded out, scoring one run. Groton Post 39 got on the board in the top of the fourth inning after Diegel doubled, and Flihs tripled, each scoring one run. Dillon Abeln earned the win for Groton Post 39. They gave up eight hits and zero runs over seven innings, striking out eight and walking one. Ashton Remily took the loss for Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion. The starting pitcher went four innings, surrendering two runs on seven hits, striking out six and walking one. Groton Post 39 collected 12 hits in the game. Imrie and Flihs each collected three hits for Groton Post 39. Flihs led Groton Post 39 with three runs batted in. The leadoff hitter went 3-for-5 on the day. Colby Dunker collected two hits for Groton Post 39 in five at bats. Samuel Vetter led Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion with two hits in three at bats. Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. L Fischbach had the most chances in the field with 7 chances.



MANHART

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 1

Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

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



Visit the Campaign Site
ManhartForHouse.com or
facebook.com/ManhartLogan

Paid for by Manhart for State House

Primary Election: *Vote Now Through June 4th*

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Groton Post 39 **9 - 0** Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion

📍 Away 📅 Thursday May 30, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	2	5	2	0	9	12	1
WRNR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0

BATTING

Groton Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (SS)	5	0	3	3	0	1
R Groeblichhoff (...)	4	0	0	1	0	1
B Althoff (1B)	4	0	1	0	1	0
C Dunker (LF)	5	1	2	0	0	1
G Englund (DH)	3	2	1	0	2	2
C Simon (3B)	4	1	0	0	1	2
K Flihs (C)	3	0	1	1	0	1
L Krause (C)	0	2	0	0	0	0
B Imrie (RF)	4	2	3	1	0	0
T Diegel (CF)	2	1	1	2	1	0
Totals	34	9	12	8	5	8

2B: B Althoff, K Flihs, T Diegel, **3B:** B Flihs, **TB:** G Englund, B Flihs 5, B Althoff 2, C Dunker 2, K Flihs 2, T Diegel 2, B Imrie 3, **HBP:** K Flihs, R Groeblichhoff, T Diegel, **SB:** B Flihs, C Dunker, B Imrie, **LOB:** 12

PITCHING

Groton Post 39	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
D Abeln	7.0	8	0	0	1	8	0
Totals	7.0	8	0	0	1	8	0

W: D Abeln, **P-S:** D Abeln 88-67, **BF:** D Abeln 29

Warner-Ipswich-N	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
D Fischbach (SS)	3	0	1	0	1	0
X Kadlec (CF)	4	0	0	0	0	3
S Vetter (3B, P, LF)	3	0	2	0	0	1
A Remily (P, 1B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
A Mikkelson (2B,...)	3	0	1	0	0	1
Q Fischbach (1B,...)	3	0	1	0	0	0
L Fischbach (C)	3	0	0	0	0	0
D Ward (LF, P, LF)	3	0	1	0	0	1
Bakeburg (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
N Fischbach (RF)	3	0	1	0	0	2
Totals	28	0	8	0	1	8

2B: D Fischbach, **TB:** N Fischbach, Q Fischbach, S Vetter 2, A Remily, D Ward, D Fischbach 2, A Mikkelson, **LOB:** 8

Warner-Ipswi	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Remily	4.0	7	2	2	1	6	0
S Vetter	0.0	2	5	5	2	0	0
D Ward	2.0	3	2	2	2	0	0
Bakeburg	1.0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Totals	7.0	12	9	9	5	8	0

L: A Remily, **P-S:** S Vetter 18-7, A Remily 74-50, D Ward 34-18, Bakeburg 11-9, **HBP:** S Vetter 2, D Ward, **BF:** S Vetter 6, A Remily 21, D Ward 12, Bakeburg 3

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Northern State Spring 2024 Dean's List and President List

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University proudly announces the students who have earned recognition on the President's List and Dean's List for the spring semester of 2024. The President's List honors full-time students who achieved a perfect 4.00 GPA, while the Dean's List acknowledges those with GPAs ranging from 3.50 to 3.99. Congratulations on your outstanding accomplishments!

PRESIDENT'S LIST (4.0 GPA)

Tyler Althoff (Watertown, S.D.)
Sidney Anderson (Milnor, N.D.)
Jackson Bahr (Houghton, S.D.)
Kamdyn Barrientos (Grand Island, N.E.)
Parker Bauer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Emma Beavers (Redwood Falls, M.N.)
Michael Benevides (Vacaville, C.A.)
Richard Berndt (Brandt, S.D.)
Luis Berrones (Milbank, S.D.)
Jessica Bertsch (Cando, N.D.)
Hailey Bierman (Ipswich, S.D.)
Reagan Bierschenk (Minneota, M.N.)
Elana Bishop (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Audra Bland (Pierre, S.D.)
Avery Blasdel (Omaha, N.E.)
Wyatt Block (Mankato, M.N.)
Hayden Bohl (Northville, S.D.)
Zoe Boughton (Inver Grove, M.N.)
Emily Breske (Webster, S.D.)
Sage Bultje (Brandon, S.D.)
Marsha Bultje (Montrose, S.D.)
Jonathan Burkhalter (Prairie City, S.D.)
William Campbell (Tea, S.D.)
Erica Carda (Bath, S.D.)
Brooke Carlson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Dante Casanova (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Chase (Chatfield, M.N.)
Winifred Chibuko (Ogudu, Nigeria)
Vanessa Christensen (Rosholt, S.D.)
Blake Clay (Whittier, C.A.)
Aunna Cloos (Big Stone City, S.D.)
Carrie Cole (Groton, S.D.)
Taylor Coleman (Lincoln, N.E.)
Taye Cundiff (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ally Cunningham (Faulkton, S.D.)
Reegan Cvanara (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Zachary Daggett (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ellie Diffely (Mandan, N.D.)
Gabriella Dimatteo (Maple Grove, M.N.)
Tayla Dobrenski (Brookings, S.D.)
Megan Dockter (Watertown, S.D.)
Kayleigh Dueis (Pierre, S.D.)
Jolie Dugan (Draper, S.D.)

Jacob Ebeling (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Paw Hser Eh (Huron, S.D.)
Gracie Eisenbraun (Kadoka, S.D.)
Eathen Erck (Tea, S.D.)
Jenna Evans (Huron, S.D.)
Megan Fastenau (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samantha Ferguson (Bath, S.D.)
Morgan Fiedler (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rylee Fischer (Edgeley, N.D.)
Mary Fites (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alyssa Fordham (Groton, S.D.)
Micheal Frohling (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Bridget Fuhrmann (Roscoe, S.D.)
Samuel Garner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hannah Gasperich (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Cameron Gauger (Mitchell, S.D.)
Alicia Gedge (Valley Springs, S.D.)
Jazlynn Geditz (Faulkton, S.D.)
Abiah George (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kristi Gilbert (Ellendale, N.D.)
Anabelle Gillen (Mitchell, N.E.)
Makenna Glanzer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Luke Gunderson (Buffalo, M.N.)
Therese Haberman (Bottineau, N.D.)
Evan Halbe (Watertown, S.D.)
Colby Hanson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Hanten (Groton, S.D.)
Abby Hartman (Watertown, S.D.)
Ashlyn Haselhorst (Mansfield, S.D.)
Makala Hauge (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Elias Heier (Tea, S.D.)
Halle Heinz (Ipswich, S.D.)
Jenna Helms (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Paige Henningsen (Monango, N.D.)
Kayleen Hermans (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Abigail Himmerich (Watertown, S.D.)
Logan Hinman (Groton, S.D.)
Mia Hinsz (Bismarck, N.D.)
Ryan Hirschhorn (Harrisburg, S.D.)
Abigail Holmes (Algona, I.A.)
Cole Holmes (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Madysen Hudson (Pierre, S.D.)
Ruth Hulscher (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Grace Humann (Bismarck, N.D.)

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Jayda Hunstad (Mina, S.D.)
Ryleigh Huppler (Florence, S.D.)
Abigail Huska (Brandon, S.D.)
Melissa Jacobson (Brandon, S.D.)
Destiny Jensen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kennedy Johnson (Webster, S.D.)
Jalyssa Johnson (Watertown, S.D.)
Isaac Johnson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alison Jones (Lawrence, K.S.)
Ella Kasuske (Milbank, S.D.)
Avery Kautz (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Alyssa Keough (Claremont, S.D.)
Karli Klein (Garrison, N.D.)
Bryce Knapek (Kimball, M.N.)
Kyra Knudtson (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Calista Kocmick (Brandon, S.D.)
Kyle Konechne (Hartford, S.D.)
Delaney Kouf (Huron, S.D.)
Mya Krause (Spicer, M.N.)
Samuel Kruse (Huron, S.D.)
Alexis LaFave (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kolby Lacher (Watertown, S.D.)
Gunnar Larson (Leeds, N.D.)
Alec Larson (Glenwood, M.N.)
Paige Larson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Eva Larson (Minneapolis, M.N.)
Rachel LeMair (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Triston Leidholdt (Bath, S.D.)
Landon Leidholt (Warner, S.D.)
Hannah Lemieux (Pierre, S.D.)
Erin Lemke (Dupree, S.D.)
Chasity Lewis (Raymond, S.D.)
Tyson Lien (Huron, S.D.)
Gabriel Lindeman (Dell Rapids, S.D.)
Tiffany Lutz (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Christian Malsom (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Maria Martens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Martin (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rickkie Martinmaas (New Underwood, S.D.)
Autumn McDonnel (Marshall, M.N.)
Hope Mehlhoff Schaar (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jerrit Mehling (Wessington, S.D.)
Abby Meister (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Margaret Meland (Watertown, S.D.)
Peyton Melius (Faulkton, S.D.)
Prancine Mendoza (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Natalie Miles (Spearfish, S.D.)
Gabrielle Mischke (Bruce, S.D.)
Sara Moberg (Champlin, M.N.)
Hailey Moeller (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kayla Natoli (Winner, S.D.)
Mattilyn Nehlich (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Grace Nelson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Noelle Nemmers (Huron, S.D.)
Brooke Niederbaumer (Wecota, S.D.)
Courtney Olson (Ellendale, N.D.)
Julia Orr (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Haley Osborne (Boise, I.D.)
Maximillian Otto (Delano, M.N.)
Emily Palmer (Langford, S.D.)
Madison Park (Watertown, S.D.)
Ann Sarah Paul (Ernakulam, India)
Marcus Pollard (Sherwood Park, A.B.)
Daria Poor (Watertown, S.D.)
Paris Prissel (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ashley Ptacek (Ipswich, S.D.)
Morgan Rathjen (Huron, S.D.)
Elizabeth Rawlings (Orem, U.T.)
Taylor Reese (Grand Forks, N.D.)
Levi Reis (Ellendale, N.D.)
Brittney Reiter (Brandon, S.D.)
Fionualla Rigg (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jake Robel (Watertown, S.D.)
Jacob Romero (Reno, N.V.)
Alexa Rossman (Mina, S.D.)
Jastyn Rousseau (Eagle Butte, S.D.)
Chloe Rush (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Mitchell Rux (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Abigail Rux (Hawley, M.N.)
Noah Salem (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brenden Salfrank (Mina, S.D.)
Elinor Sayers (Lakeville, M.N.)
Nathan Schauer (Ashley, N.D.)
Randi Schuster (Roslyn, S.D.)
John Schwab (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Daniel Sedlacek (Custer, S.D.)
Casside Seezs (Milbank, S.D.)
Kelsey Selden (Prairie du Sac, W.I.)
Jaeden Shaving (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Trent Shuey (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Josie Shurb (Louisburg, M.N.)
Connor Siemonsma (Humboldt, S.D.)
Cody Smidt (Buffalo Ctr, I.A.)
Hannah Smith (Chelmsford, U.K.)
Hannah Smith (Clive, I.A.)
Chit Snow (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Reagan Spomer (Bismarck, N.D.)
Ryan Stark (Watertown, S.D.)

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Joshua Steinwandt (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Paige Stevens (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Blake Stoks (Porter, M.N.)
Miah Stone (Bemidji, M.N.)
Kinze Stradtman (Fairmont, M.N.)
Sierra Sweeney (Porters Lake, N.S.)
Tia Swiontek (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Natalia Szybinska (Poznan, Poland)
Sophie Taylor (Aberdeenshire, U.K.)
Renea Taylor (Malott, W.A.)
Katelyn Thares (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alison Theis (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Lily Tobin (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samuel Tremelling (Chelmsford, U.K.)
MacKenzie Turner (Belgrade, M.T.)
Ksenia Unser (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ayden Viox (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Arin Wagner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Joshua Wakefield (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tatum Waldrop (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Christena Walker (Ellendale, N.D.)
Kayla Waltman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kara Weiss (Pierre, S.D.)
Karly Wellman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jorja Whempner (Wilmot, S.D.)
Shannon Wiley (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Skylinn Williams (Bath, S.D.)
Jesse Williams (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Allie Windjue (Jamestown, N.D.)
Sheridyn Winter (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Angelica Winters (Batesland, S.D.)
Carlie Wolf (Alexandria, M.N.)
Marlana Wollman (Huron, S.D.)
Emily Jo Wollschlager (Reville, S.D.)
Jaquelyn Yang (St Paul, M.N.)
Mia Zagorski (Lakeville, M.N.)
Phillip Zens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kayla Zubke (Warner, S.D.)

DEAN'S LIST (3.50 – 3.99 GPA)

Faith Acevedo (Valley Stream, N.Y.)
Stephen Achen (Frederick, S.D.)
Jazmine Ackerman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Benjamin Althoff (Watertown, S.D.)
Nathan Alto (Gonvick, M.N.)
Blake Arnesen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Chandler Ashland (Eau Claire, W.I.)
Whitney Axtell (Mitchell, S.D.)

Carter Ban (Ramsey, M.N.)
Riley Batta (Rockwell City, I.A.)
Brady Bauer (Mobridge, S.D.)
James Beilke (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alayna Benike (Castlewood, S.D.)
Drew Benson (Chaska, M.N.)
Trevor Beyers (Roscoe, S.D.)
Simon Bickford (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Madisen Bjerke (Groton, S.D.)
Trevin Black Bear (Pierre, S.D.)
Dylan Blair (Summerset, S.D.)
Ella Blake (Lone Tree, C.O.)
Teagan Block (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Kaden Boettcher (Ipswich, S.D.)
Haylee Bohnet (Volga, S.D.)
Sara Bokelheide (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kiara Bokinskie (Clark, S.D.)
Hailey Bonn (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brady Brau (Elkhorn, N.E.)
Andrew Brennan (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Abigail Brooks (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tevan Bryant (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Estella Bullis (Mitchell, S.D.)
Drew Burkholder (Lanark, I.L.)
Dirk Buszkohl (Henry, S.D.)
Treyton Cacek (Ruthven, I.A.)
Anastasia Cardinal (Winsted, M.N.)
Summer Carlson (Moorhead, M.N.)
Zachary Carolin (Grand Forks, N.D.)
Ashlyn Casey (Hecla, S.D.)
EmmahLeigh Cass (Sturgis, S.D.)
Kalid Castillo (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Marisa Christensen (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Hailey Clarke (Wessington, S.D.)
Kyanna Collymore (Bridgetown, Barbados)
Ella Cozad (Watertown, S.D.)
Addison Cumbow (Pierre, S.D.)
Cara Cyr (Maple Grove, M.N.)
Mckenzee Danielson (Harrisburg, S.D.)
Erin Day (Bartlett, I.L.)
Carter Dingman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hsa Law Eh (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brent Ekanger (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Sara Evenson (Benson, M.N.)
Ashley Fauske (Kaukauna, W.I.)
Jaden Feterl (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Mason Fey (Ashton, S.D.)
Suzanne Fitterer (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Jacie-Aspen Flockhart (Boone, I.A.)

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Jameson Ford (Mobridge, S.D.)
Eden Ford (Omaha, N.E.)
Megan Fowler (Melbourne, F.L.)
Nicholas Friedges (Cottage Grove, M.N.)
Bree Ann Friesen (Huron, S.D.)
Mia Fursedonne (Essex, U.K.)
Nathalia Garcia (Groton, S.D.)
Ember Geist (Roscoe, S.D.)
Gavin Giesler (Mantorville, M.N.)
Madelyn Gonzales (Northglenn, C.O.)
Michael Grebner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Lillian Grebner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Anizye Grode (Streeter, N.D.)
Brooklyn Gronau (Watertown, S.D.)
Jaron Gross (Hillman, M.N.)
Hannah Gruhn (Vermillion, S.D.)
Grant Gubrud (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Solomon Haile (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Brooklinn Halvorson (Mellette, S.D.)
Emmaline Hamerla (Huron, S.D.)
Brody Hampl (Hastings, M.N.)
Michelle Hansen (Redfield, S.D.)
Olivia Hanson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaitlynn Harmon (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samantha Hegge (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Nile Hesson (Mesa, A.Z.)
Sydney Hofer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tate Hoffman (Highmore, S.D.)
Brent Hokeness (Rushmore, M.N.)
Eli Houdyshell (Pierre, S.D.)
Eh Kwa Lar Htoo (Huron, S.D.)
Kwae ka Nyaw Htoo (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Trey Huber (Conde, S.D.)
Emmalyn Hunt (Murdo, S.D.)
Michael Hurlbert (Clancy, M.T.)
Alli Jackson (Allen, N.E.)
Aspen Johnson (Groton, S.D.)
Kristin Johnson (Menoken, N.D.)
Laura Johnson (Milbank, S.D.)
Reese Johnson (Denver, I.A.)
Madison Jones (Falls City, N.E.)
Elijah Jopp (Mayer, M.N.)
Zachary Jorgensen (Fairmont, M.N.)
Ty Kadlec (Ipswich, S.D.)
Ella Kaufman (Webster, S.D.)
Ashlee Kaup (Hoven, S.D.)
Kendall Kelly (Springfield, M.N.)
Jade Kenny (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tarynn Kleffman (Ipswich, S.D.)
Connor Knigge (Rapid City, S.D.)
Ross Kortenbusch (Vining, M.N.)
Zachary Kraft (Le Mars, I.A.)
Hannah Kraft (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hans Lapka (Leola, S.D.)
Charles Larson (Rapid City, S.D.)
Walker Larson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Melana Lewis (Wahpeton, N.D.)
Tayla Liddle (Idaho Falls, I.D.)
Isaac Ligon (Aberdeen, S.D.)
BriAnna Linn (Letcher, S.D.)
Cameryn Logan (Gettysburg, S.D.)
Cooper Logan (Gettysburg, S.D.)
Treyson Longstreet (Waverly, M.N.)
Alexis Madsen (Edgemont, S.D.)
Kaeley Malm (Fort Pierre, S.D.)
Hannah Malsom (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Seth Martens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Mackenzi Matson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Maggie McDermott (Brookings, S.D.)
Ellen McDonnell (Martin, S.D.)
Hannah McLeod (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Abigail Meads (Aitkin, M.N.)
Kaylee Mehlhaff (Black Hawk, S.D.)
Joshua Mehlhoff (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Josie Mehling (Wessington, S.D.)
Stella Meier (Groton, S.D.)
Joseph Merchlewitz (Woodbury, M.N.)
Amelia Mertz (Deer River, M.N.)
Nevaeh Meyer (Watertown, S.D.)
Louise Meyer (Rock Rapids, I.A.)
Jack Miller (Minnetonka, M.N.)
Braydon Mogle (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kegan Mountain (Omaha, N.E.)
James Muirhead (Presho, S.D.)
Christian Mundt (Crystal, M.N.)
Hannah Murchie (Jamestown, N.D.)
Miranda Myers (Hartford, S.D.)
Shelby Nash (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kierra Navurskis (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Margaret Neeley (Herreid, S.D.)
Cody Neumann (Brant Lake, S.D.)
Alexander Newsam (Fort Pierre, S.D.)
Brady Neys (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Asten Nichols (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Jordan Nohre (Evansville, M.N.)
April Olson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jameson Palmer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jamie Parsons (Aberdeen, S.D.)

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Hunter Patton (Brandon, S.D.)
Steven Paulson (Andover, S.D.)
Alailah Perry (Algona, I.A.)
Bryce Peterson (Bristol, S.D.)
Ava Pickard (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Brayden Prokop (Watertown, S.D.)
Faith Ragels (Mitchell, S.D.)
Madeline Ramsey (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Clayton Randall (Herreid, S.D.)
Emma Reck (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Tanner Reddan (Castle Rock, C.O.)
Ashlyn Reimer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Meadow Remily (Brentford, S.D.)
Easton Rerick (Fargo, N.D.)
Emily Richie (Bristol, S.D.)
Mikayla Riesberg (Templeton, I.A.)
Mason Riley (Milbank, S.D.)
Keith Rittenhouse (Rochester, M.N.)
Damon Roggenbuck (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Brady Rohrbach (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Angela Rowse (Ft Pierre, S.D.)
Samuel Ryan (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ryan Salzer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Dylan Schimke (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jonah Schmidt (Mitchell, S.D.)
Miranda Schmidt (Brookings, S.D.)
Joselyn Schroeder (Mount Vernon, S.D.)
Faith Schulte (Orient, S.D.)
Avery Schut (Madison, S.D.)
Kamryn Schwartz (Volga, S.D.)
Veronica Scott (Bath, S.D.)
Landon Seaman (Warner, S.D.)
Kaylee Senger (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Meghan Sheets (Belle Plaine, M.N.)
Bridget Shishnia (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tarynn Shot-Gunn (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Savannah Shrake (Pierre, S.D.)
Cole Simon (Groton, S.D.)
Hilary Sonnabend (Brillion, W.I.)

Jessica Splichal (Mitchell, N.E.)
Cory St. Martin (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Mason Stanford (Madison, S.D.)
Elijah Steele (Custer, S.D.)
Mackenzie Stoltenberg (Stratford, S.D.)
Elizabeth Storms (Watertown, S.D.)
Matthew Streier (Watertown, S.D.)
Darius Swanson (Langford, S.D.)
Alex Tanner (Gettysburg, S.D.)
Hanna Thompson (Victoria, M.N.)
Maxamillion Thomson (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Taylor Thorson (Mina, S.D.)
Turner Thorson (Mina, S.D.)
Gracie Traphagen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kebbeh Travers (Fargo, N.D.)
Cadance Tullis (Groton, S.D.)
Kaisha Van Engen (Melvin, I.A.)
Maxwell Van Landingham (Franklin, T.N.)
Kinsey VanDerWerff (Tulare, S.D.)
Tyler Voorhees (Rapid City, S.D.)
Chloe Voss (Andover, M.N.)
Alexis Wald (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Heidi Waldner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rebekah Walz (Hawick, M.N.)
Elizabeth Wanous (Mansfield, S.D.)
Jackson Warren (La Crosse, W.I.)
Cassandra Webb (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kenna Webb (Timber Lake, S.D.)
Andrew Wedwick (Viroqua, W.I.)
Hannah Welch (Letcher, S.D.)
Avery West (Langford, S.D.)
Captain Whitlock (Honolulu, H.I.)
Colton Wicks (Nunda, S.D.)
Laney Widener (Langford, S.D.)
Brooke Wilcox (Tea, S.D.)
Katelyn Witte (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brooke Wolf (Sturgis, S.D.)
Joshua Zaccanti (Sugar Grove, I.L.)
Claire Zbylut (Aberdeen, S.D.)

Secretary of State emphasized safeguards built into South Dakota's Election Processes

(Pierre, S.D.) – Ahead of the June 4th Primary Election, Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson would like to remind voters of the safeguards and security built into South Dakota's election processes.

In order to ensure the integrity of its elections, South Dakota does NOT have online voter registration. When a person registers to vote, local county auditors review the information provided before their registration is official. A person MUST be a U.S. citizen to register to vote. All voters go through numerous checks to ensure they are actually eligible to vote.

South Dakota has strong voter ID laws to ensure the integrity of its elections. Voters must be verified BEFORE casting a ballot. South Dakota requires a photo ID at the polls and on absentee ballot request forms. Voters must present one of the following IDs: a South Dakota driver's license or nondriver ID card, a U.S. government photo ID (e.g., a passport), a tribal ID, or a student ID card issued by a high school or college in South Dakota. If a voter does not have an acceptable ID, they must be given the opportunity to sign a personal affidavit in which they state under the penalty of perjury that they are the person they have declared they are.

ONLY paper ballots are used in South Dakota. South Dakota does NOT allow ballot drop boxes. Marked ballots are placed into a sealed and secure locked ballot box that is delivered by two poll workers of different political parties to the county auditor's office after the polls are closed. All ballots are removed from the ballot box in public view and put into the tabulating machine, which is NOT connected to the internet. All machines are publicly tested prior to election day.

"By using only paper ballots, not connecting tabulating machines to the internet, requiring photo ID, conducting post-election audits, and encouraging South Dakota citizens to volunteer as poll watchers and work as election workers helps to ensure that South Dakota has safe and secure elections," stated Secretary Johnson.

South Dakota will also be conducting post-election audits. State law calls for an audit that reviews voted ballots in five percent of voting precincts, comparing the paper record to the results produced by the voting system. The post-election audit in South Dakota will be conducted manually by HAND-COUNTING. The post-election audit process will thoroughly review procedures performed before, during, and after the conduct of an election. "Post-election audits promote election transparency and provide verification of election results," said Secretary Johnson.

More information on election integrity in South Dakota can be found on the Secretary of State's website: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/election-resources/Election-Truth-and-Transparency-Page/default.aspx>.

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Land O'Lakes Donates 40,000 Pounds of Macaroni & Cheese to Feeding South Dakota

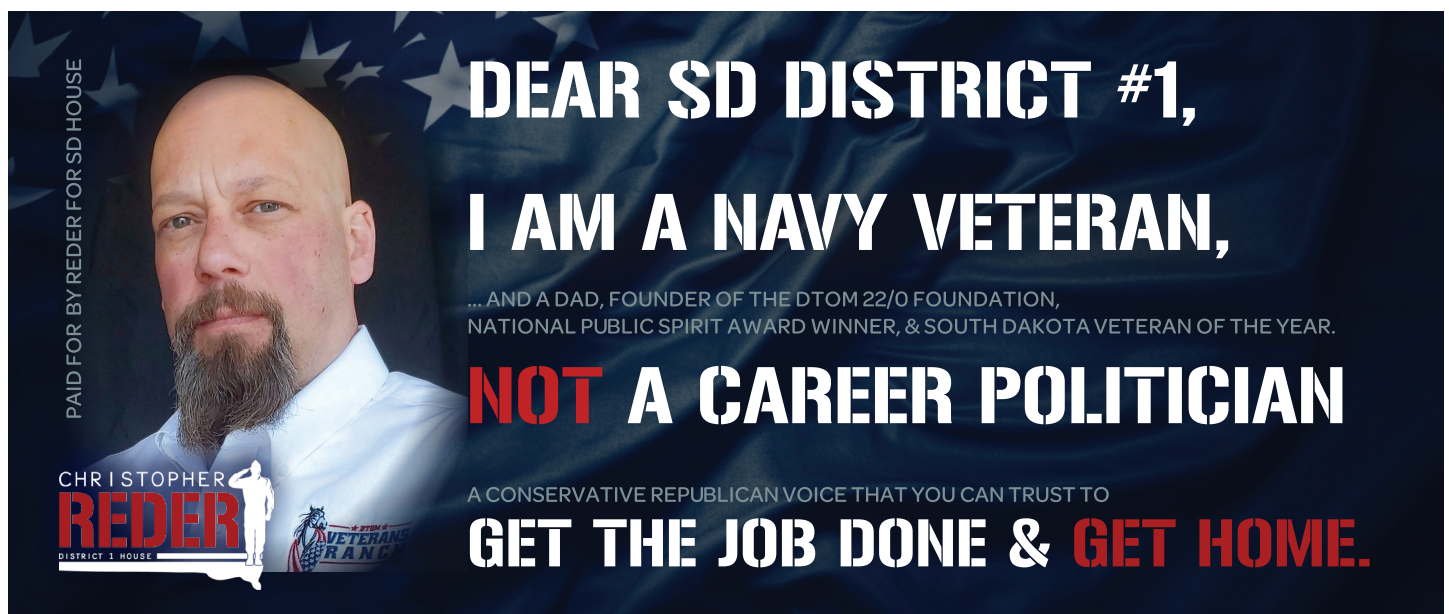
Sioux Falls, South Dakota (May 30, 2024) Feeding South Dakota, the state's largest hunger-relief organization, has received nearly 40,000 pounds of LAND O LAKES® Macaroni & Cheese as a donation through the Land O'Lakes First Run Program.

The First Run Program has donated nearly 7 million pounds of product since it was established in 2010. The program is committed to donating truckloads of fresh product year-round, made specifically for food banks to help alleviate hunger across the United States.

"As a farmer-owned cooperative, Land O'Lakes, Inc is deeply committed to hunger relief. This effort begins locally in the communities that our members and employees call home, many of them rural." said Sheilah Stewart, SVP & General Counsel, Land O'Lakes, Inc. "We are honored to help our Feeding America food bank partners get fresh, nutritious food directly to the families who need it most."

Feeding South Dakota will distribute the macaroni & cheese through its Mobile Food Distribution Program and agency partners across the state.

"We are incredibly grateful to Land O'Lakes for their continued commitment to fighting hunger. This donation will make a significant impact and arrived just in time to help families while kids are out of school for the summer," expressed Lori Dykstra, CEO of Feeding South Dakota.



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GET THE JOB DONE & GET HOME.

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NEW VETERANS RANGERS

We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

Historic Trump Trial and Early Importance of the Right to a Jury Trial

On May 29, 2024, at 11:28 EST, a New York jury of seven men and five women filed out of a Manhattan courtroom to begin deliberations on the 34 felony counts against Donald Trump for falsifying business records in the first criminal trial of an American president. The implications of this constitutional process for the former president are impossible to ignore. His immediate fate—whether he will be an exonerated defendant or a convicted felon—is in the hands of a jury of his peers.

This landmark, five-week trial has generated intense international interest, evoked broad discussion about the Constitution and the rule of law and provided a refresher course on the historic importance of the right to a jury trial to those who launched the American Revolution and drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. To our nation's founders, the right to trial by jury was central to democracy and self-government.

Massachusetts was the first colony to safeguard what were regarded as traditional rights enjoyed by Englishmen. The Body of Liberties, a statute adopted in 1641 and essentially a comprehensive bill of rights, aimed to limit the power of magistrates, in whom all power had been concentrated. John Winthrop, the first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, said the goal was to frame limitations "in remarkable resemblance to Magna Charta, which should be received for fundamental laws." A right to a jury trial was considered a fundamental right, one inherited, or so it was believed, from The Great Charter itself.

Magna Charta, written in 1215, stood for the principle of the rule of law and equal protection, and it was invoked by advocates of liberties and freedoms in England and the colonies as unassailable authority. Disputes about the existence of liberties were resolved through rhetorical, logical and emotional appeals to The Great Charter, marking the emergence and claims of rights and freedoms through mere assertion which, if backed by popular and reputable supporters, gained a foothold in statutes, charters and constitutions. Trial by jury, the colonists believed, was such a right. It was instrumental to their protection from English tyranny which, they believed was trampled by the Stamp Act of 1765. John Adams described the statute as "wicked," for it created a "vast" number of new crimes that were to be tried by a judge rather than a jury. Consequently, the Stamp Act violated the colonists' rights under English law and Magna Charta.

To Adams, the principal author of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, the world's oldest written constitution, and a legal scholar devoted to separation of powers devices, the essential reason behind the right to a jury trial lay in the fact that the common people, in the broader sense, democracy, should share in the execution of the laws. The institution of a jury trial brought a mixture of "popular power," so that "the subject is guarded in the execution of the laws." Defendants, he explained, should be protected from the executive bringing the charges and the judges, whose independence was questionable. Defendants must be "perfectly free from then influence of others" and subject to the judgment of their peers.

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Americans were a free people and, as Edmund Burke, the lone parliamentary defender of the American Revolution, observed, a free people can sniff tyranny in a far-off breeze. Colonists who believed with Adams and the Continental Congress that the Stamp Act would reduce them to state of "slavery," resorted to arms in 1775 to defend old rights, including the right to a jury trial. The Declaration of Independence condemned King George III in its list of grievances for his denial to the colonists of their ancient right to a jury trial. Early state charters followed suit, celebrated the right to a jury trial as "ancient" and "sacred" and "inviolable" and "great," and wrote into law the guarantee of a right to trial by jury. Virginia, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia and Vermont, in accord with the "Spirit of '76," were among the first to guarantee a jury trial as one of "the greatest Securities of their Lives." At bottom, as the Northwest Ordinance affirmed, the right to trial by jury meant that a man's right not to deprived of his liberty or property in absence of "the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land."

Jury trials, like all institutions, are not free from flaws and errors, but as Adams observed, they provide security against "the possibility of corruption."

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.



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An obscure drug discount program stifles use of federal lifeline by rural hospitals

A disconnect between two federal programs meant to help keep hospitals afloat discourages struggling rural facilities from accepting the aid

BY: SARAH JANE TRIBBLE, KFF HEALTH NEWS - MAY 31, 2024 6:00 AM

Facing ongoing concerns about rural hospital closures, Capitol Hill lawmakers have introduced a spate of proposals to fix a federal program created to keep lifesaving services in small towns nationwide.

In Anamosa, Iowa — a town of fewer than 6,000 residents located more than 900 miles from the nation's capital — rural hospital leader Eric Briesemeister is watching for Congress' next move. The 22-bed hospital Briesemeister runs averages about seven inpatients each night, and its most recent federal filings show it earned just \$95,445 in annual net income from serving patients.

Yet Briesemeister isn't interested in converting the facility into a rural emergency hospital, which would mean getting millions of extra dollars each year from federal payments. In exchange for that financial support, hospitals that join the program keep their emergency departments open and give up inpatient beds.

"It wasn't for us," said Briesemeister, chief executive of UnityPoint Health-Jones Regional Medical Center. "I think that program is a little bit more designed for hospitals that might not be around without it."

Nationwide, only about two dozen of the more than 1,500 eligible hospitals have become rural emergency hospitals since the program launched last year. At the same time, rural hospitals continue to close — 10 since the fix became available.

Federal lawmakers have introduced a handful of legislative solutions since March. In one bill, senators from Kansas and Minnesota list a myriad of tactics, including allowing older closed facilities to reopen.

Another proposal introduced in the House by two Michigan lawmakers is the Rural 340B Access Act. It would allow rural emergency hospitals to use the 340B federal drug discount program, which Congress created in 1992.

The 340B program, named after its federal statute, lets eligible hospitals and clinics buy drugs at a discount and then bill insurance companies, Medicare, or Medicaid at market rates. Hospitals get to keep the money they make from the difference.

Congress approved 340B as an indirect aid package to help struggling hospitals stay afloat. Many larger hospitals say the cash is used for community benefits and charity care, while many small hospitals depend on the drug discounts to help cover staffing and operational shortfalls.

Currently, emergency hospitals are not eligible for 340B discounts. According to a release from U.S. Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.), the House proposal would "correct this oversight." Backers of the House bill include the American Hospital Association and the National Rural Health Association.

In Iowa, Briesemeister said the 340B federal drug discount program "can be used for tremendous good." The small-town hospital uses money it makes from 340B to subsidize emergency services and uninsured and underinsured patients who frequent the emergency department, he said.

Chuck Grassley, Iowa's longtime Republican senator, shepherded the Rural Emergency Hospital program into law. His spokesperson, Gillie Maddox, did not respond directly to questions about why the federal law creating rural emergency hospitals omitted the 340B program. Instead, Maddox said the designation was a "product of bipartisan negotiations."

A survey conducted by the health analytics and consulting firm Chartis, along with the National Rural Health Association, found that nearly 80% of rural hospitals had participated in 340B and nearly 40% said

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they reaped \$750,000 or more annually from the program.

Sanford Health, a largely rural health system headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, considered converting a handful of smaller critical access hospitals into rural emergency hospitals.

Martha Leclerc, vice president of corporate contracting for Sanford, said the system analyzed how much revenue would be lost by closing inpatient beds, which is also a requirement of the emergency hospital program, and by being unable to file for drug discounts.

In the end, she said, switching did not "make a lot of sense."

While many rural hospitals are clamoring for the 340B provision to be added to the rural emergency hospital program, opponents have said 340B can be a cash cow for hospitals that don't serve enough vulnerable patients.

Nicole Longo is deputy vice president of public affairs for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the nation's largest, most influential pharmaceutical lobbying group. She wrote in a recent blog post that hospital systems and chain pharmacies are "exploiting the program" and said patients have not benefited from the growth in the program.

In an interview, Longo said PhRMA supports rural emergency hospitals being able to access 340B because they are treating "vulnerable patients in underserved communities" and are "true safety net providers."

PhRMA, she said, wants to encourage a thoughtful conversation about "which types of hospitals should be in the program." Last year, PhRMA formed an unlikely pact with community health centers to create the Alliance to Save America's 340B Program, or ASAP 340B.

Vacheria Keys, associate vice president of policy and regulatory affairs at the National Association of Community Health Centers, said, "There is a new day of openness, from all parties."

Use of the drug discount program skyrocketed after provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, passed in 2010, allowed hospitals and clinics to contract with an unlimited number of retail pharmacies, such as Walgreens and CVS, which are paid a fee to dispense the discounted drugs.

Adam J. Fein, president of the industry research organization Drug Channels Institute, reports that the 340B program is the second-largest federal drug program, trailing Medicare Part D. The flow of drugs purchased under the 340B program reached \$53.7 billion in 2022, about \$9.8 billion more than in 2021.

In response to the exploding use of contract pharmacies, pharmaceutical manufacturers have restricted the drugs they offer at a discount through the pharmacies. That throttling is affecting rural hospitals like Labette Health, a Kansas hospital whose president asked President Joe Biden for help in dealing with the pharmaceutical companies.

Rena Conti, an associate professor of markets, public policy, and law at Boston University's Questrom School of Business, has studied the drug discounts for years and said she has "significant worries about expanding" the 340B program.

"There is a lot of money being generated in this program that we really can't understand exactly how much that really is and exactly who it is benefiting," Conti said.

At the same time, said Conti, a health care economist, giving rural hospitals access to the federal drug discounts "makes sense because they are hospitals that are serving particularly vulnerable patient populations."

Sarah Jane Tribble, senior correspondent, is the lead reporter on the rural health desk of KFF Health News. She created the organization's first narrative podcast, "Where It Hurts," about the closure of a rural Kansas hospital. An Emmy winner, she has received honors for her work from the National Press Club, the National Institute for Health Care Management, and the Association of Health Care Journalists. Before joining KFF Health News, she covered the health care industry in Cleveland for NPR and PBS, and spent more than a decade as a reporter for major newspapers from the Carolinas to California.

COMMENTARY

Bipartisanship alive with congressional delegation, not so much with governor

DANA HESS

MAY 30, 2024 8:00 PM

South Dakota Searchlight readers were recently treated to two very different views of bipartisanship and governance.

First came the story about an analysis of bipartisanship in the U.S. Congress. Released by the Lugar Center and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, the report had good news about South Dakota's congressional delegation's willingness to work with the other political party.

Rep. Dusty Johnson ranked 106th in bipartisanship in the 435-member House. In the 100-member Senate, Sen. Mike Rounds ranked 20th and Sen. John Thune ranked 42nd.

Thune's ranking in the top half of senators is an oddity given that he is the right-hand man of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Despite carrying so much water for McConnell, Thune still managed to be more bipartisan than 30 of his Republican Senate colleagues, according to the analysis. That bodes well for the Senate should Thune ascend to the top job as McConnell's replacement.

Johnson's high rank in the House is a testament to his refusal to get involved in the Donald Trump-inspired shenanigans that have taken up so much of that chamber's time. His spurning of the Trump-backed messes made by Marjorie Taylor Greene and her ilk stands in stark contrast to the leadership of South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem.

Noem has become something of a contortionist, trying to shape herself into the person that Trump would choose as his vice president. Her approach to bipartisanship is neatly summed up in the title of her new book, "No Going Back." While her publisher will be "going back" to correct mistakes in the book, Noem holds true to a course that calls for never admitting a mistake and never making an apology.

This was evident in another South Dakota Searchlight story about a rare news conference Noem hosted where she once again linked the problems at the nation's southern border to drug cartels and the state's Native American reservations. Noem's previous comments on these topics suggested that tribal leaders were benefiting from the drug cartels and characterized children on the reservation as having no hope.

That didn't sit well with the tribal leaders of the state's nine reservations, each of which has moved to ban Noem from its lands. Usually someone has to be a suspected terrorist to be banned from nine sovereign nations. To earn her status on the no-reservation list, all Noem had to do was lob a few verbal bombs at the state's tribes.

The tribal bans are symbolic at best. It's any easy bet that as governor, Noem has spent more time traveling out-of-state — first as the darling of the Republican Party and lately during the world's worst book tour — than she ever has on the state's reservations.

The recent news conference would have been the perfect time to walk back some of her previous statements, express some remorse or even apologize for her harsh prediction about the lives of children on the reservations. Instead, she was true to the title of her book with no going back.

Had she apologized to tribes, they might be inclined to be more bipartisan. Instead of banning Noem, they might invite her to visit the reservations often and at some length. As South Dakotans, they could press the governor to bring the full weight of the state's resources to bear in the areas of law enforcement, health and human services, social work, education and whatever else is needed.

Instead, they've symbolically slammed the door on the state official who could help them the most.

What's most important in the Lugar Center analysis is the fact that bipartisanship is hard work. That makes the high marks for this state's congressional delegation all the more laudable. Bipartisanship takes a willingness to listen, discuss and compromise — attributes that are too often missing in today's political climate.

Trump found guilty on 34 felony counts in NY hush money trial

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 30, 2024 4:27 PM

WASHINGTON — Jurors in New York state court on Thursday found Donald Trump guilty on all 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to cover up hush money payments to a porn star ultimately to influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential election.

The first-ever criminal trial of a former U.S. president wrapped up in Manhattan, marking an extraordinary moment in American history not only for a former leader, but for one who is seeking to again hold the Oval Office. Trump, the Republican Party's presumed 2024 presidential nominee, is now a convicted felon.

The jury deliberated for more than 11 hours, beginning Wednesday just before 11:30 a.m. Eastern and delivering the verdict to Justice Juan Merchan just after 5 p.m. Thursday, according to reporters at the courthouse.

New York does not allow recording in the courtroom but provides public transcripts of the proceedings. States Newsroom covered the trial in person on May 20.

Trump now faces penalties ranging from probation to up to four years in prison for each charge of falsifying business records in the first degree.

Merchan set a sentencing date for July 11 at 10 a.m. That's just days before the Republican National Convention, where Trump is expected to be officially nominated as the party's presidential candidate.

New York state prosecutors charged 34 felonies against the former president for each of the 11 invoices, 11 checks, and 12 ledger entries tied to reimbursing his former personal lawyer Michael Cohen.

Cohen, often referred to as Trump's former "fixer," said during trial testimony that he wired \$130,000 to adult film star and director Stormy Daniels days before the 2016 election to silence her about an alleged sexual encounter with Trump.

Three criminal cases, two federal and one in Georgia, also still hang in the balance for Trump, but the likelihood of another trial happening before November's election is slim.

Trump speaks after verdict

Trump briefly spoke to news cameras outside the courtroom, criticizing the proceeding as a "rigged, disgraceful trial."

"The real verdict is going to be Nov. 5 by the people, and they know what happened here and everybody knows what happened here," Trump said in remarks live-streamed and cataloged on C-SPAN.

As he has repeated almost daily for the cameras, Trump again called Merchan a "conflicted" judge and falsely claimed the case "was done by the Biden administration."

The charges were brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whom Trump described during his post-verdict comments as "Soros-funded," a common mantra from Trump's party referring to Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist George Soros.

During his roughly three-minute remarks, Trump also referred to immigration at the U.S. Southern border, a major campaign rallying cry for Republicans.

"We don't have the same country anymore. We have a divided mess. We're a nation in decline, serious decline. Millions and millions of people pouring into our country right now," Trump said before exiting the hallway without answering shouted questions from reporters.

Despite being a convicted felon, Trump will still be able to vote in November in Palm Beach County, Florida, where he is registered, as long as he is not incarcerated.

That's because Florida law only bars voting for convicts tried in a separate state if that state also restricts them; a 2021 New York law restored voting rights for convicted felons following a release from prison and regardless if they are on parole, according to reporting by PolitiFact.

House speaker sees 'shameful day in American history'

Republicans in Congress and other top GOP officials gathered with Trump at the courthouse for support during the trial and members of the GOP immediately decried the verdict.

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U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican who was among those who made the trek, released a statement saying the verdict marked "a shameful day in American history."

"Democrats cheered as they convicted the leader of the opposing party on ridiculous charges, predicated on the testimony of a disbarred, convicted felon," Johnson wrote. "This was a purely political exercise, not a legal one."

Johnson was referring to the testimony from Cohen, who served time in prison for campaign finance crimes related to hush money payments.

Sen. Joni Ernst, an Iowa Republican, blasted it as the result of an unfair political process.

"This was never about justice. It was always about politics," she wrote on X. "Americans see through Democrats' weaponization of our justice system and this sham trial as a desperate attempt to persecute Trump and block his re-election."

The Trump campaign almost immediately solicited donations following the verdict, posting a link on his Truth Social platform to his WinRed donation portal.

Trump's son Eric Trump reacted on X with "May 30th, 2024 might be remembered as the day Donald J. Trump won the 2024 Presidential Election."

Video posted from reporters outside the courthouse showed a black SUV driving slowly outside the courthouse while members of the news media held cameras and some scattered in the crowd waved Trump flags and shouted "we love you."

Trials in limbo in D.C., Georgia, Florida

The verdict brought to a close the historic first criminal proceeding against a former sitting American president, albeit at the state level.

Trump is currently mired in a fight for absolute immunity from federal criminal charges accusing him of scheming to overturn the 2020 presidential election results.

A U.S. Supreme Court decision on his immunity claim is pending. Justices heard arguments in the case on April 25.

Meanwhile in Florida, federal District Judge Aileen Cannon has indefinitely postponed the U.S. case against Trump for mishandling and refusing to return classified documents that he hid at his Mar-a-Lago estate after he left office.

Trump faces another state case in Georgia, along with several co-conspirators, on racketeering and conspiracy charges related to the state's 2020 presidential election results. The case has been held up due to pretrial disputes over alleged misconduct by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis.

Biden campaign reacts

A spokesman for President Joe Biden's campaign, Michael Tyler, said in a statement that the verdict showed "no one is above the law" and that Trump remained a threat to democracy whom voters should reject.

"Donald Trump has always mistakenly believed he would never face consequences for breaking the law for his own personal gain," Tyler wrote. "But today's verdict does not change the fact that the American people face a simple reality. There is still only one way to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office: at the ballot box. Convicted felon or not, Trump will be the Republican nominee for president."

"The threat Trump poses to our democracy has never been greater," Tyler continued. "He is running an increasingly unhinged campaign of revenge and retribution, pledging to be a dictator 'on day one' and calling for our Constitution to be 'terminated' so he can regain and keep power. A second Trump term means chaos, ripping away Americans' freedoms and fomenting political violence – and the American people will reject it this November."

The Biden White House had much less to say.

Ian Sams, a spokesperson for the White House Counsel's Office, said in a one-sentence email: "We respect the rule of law, and have no additional comment."

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Members of Congress speak out

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, said in a statement the guilty decision from the jurors represented "a devastating defeat for any American who believes in the critical legal tenet that justice is blind."

"This verdict will not withstand an appeal, and was only brought as an attempt to interfere with the 2024 election," Scalise wrote. "The radical partisan Democrats behind this abuse of our justice system will not prevail. The voters will settle this on November 5th."

Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, chair of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's federal courts subcommittee, released a statement saying that an "individual who has been convicted of 34 felony counts and shows zero respect for the rule of law is not fit to lead the greatest nation in the world."

"It's only in honest courtrooms that the former president has been unable to lie and bully his way out of trouble," Whitehouse said. "Americans trust juries for good reason."

North Carolina Republican Sen. Thom Tillis posted on social media that he was "shocked by the verdict considering that this case should have never been brought forward."

"From the beginning, it was clear that a radical, politically-motivated state prosecutor was using the full weight of his office to go after President Trump at the same time he turned a blind eye to violent criminals," Tillis wrote. "I expect and hope that President Trump will appeal this verdict to address fundamental questions, including whether President Trump received a fair trial and whether the Manhattan D.A. even had jurisdiction on a federal election matter."

Minnesota Democratic Rep. Betty McCollum said the jury's decision showed that America's justice system functioned the way it was supposed to.

"Today our system of justice worked, and former President Trump was found guilty on all 34 counts by a jury of American citizens," McCollum wrote on social media. "No person is above the law."

A 'sham' or an 'affirmation'?

Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds wrote in a statement the trial was a "sham."

"For years, Democrats like Alvin Bragg have been trying to put President Trump in jail with complete disregard for our democracy and the will of the American people," Reynolds wrote. "The only verdict that matters is the one at the ballot box in November where the American people will elect President Trump again."

Florida Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz wrote on social media that the jury's guilty verdict wasn't political. "A former president being convicted is nothing to be celebrated, but it is an affirmation that nobody is above the law," Moskowitz wrote. "This verdict was reached by a jury of Trump's peers, by citizens of the American justice system, not by a judge or by a political opponent."

Ohio Republican Rep. Jim Jordan, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, rejected the verdict, writing on social media it was a "travesty of justice."

"The Manhattan kangaroo court shows what happens when our justice system is weaponized by partisan prosecutors in front of a biased judge with an unfair process, designed to keep President Trump off the campaign trail and avoid bringing attention to President Biden's failing radical policies," Jordan wrote.

Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine posted on social media the "verdict is proof that no one is above the law in this country."

"It's also tragic in this way — Americans put the reins of leadership in the hands of a person whose character is so far beneath the office that no rational adult would ever encourage young people to emulate ... his behavior," Kaine wrote.

"Trump's lack of character has caught up to him," Kaine added. "And Americans — once again — have received a clear warning about a person who wants to seize leadership once again. I pray that we heed the warning."

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer, a Kentucky Republican, said Thursday was a "sad day for all Americans."

"This verdict in New York is another example of Democrats being relentless in their pursuit to weaponize the courts, abuse America's judicial system, and target President Joe Biden's political opposition," Comer wrote. "One thing is clear: Democrats are afraid to face Donald Trump. Americans will make their voices heard this November."

Former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, the Republican nominee for the state's open U.S. Senate seat, urged restraint in a social media post.

"Regardless of the result, I urge all Americans to respect the verdict and the legal process," Hogan wrote. "At this dangerously divided moment in our history, all leaders — regardless of party — must not pour fuel on the fire with more toxic partisanship. We must reaffirm what has made this nation great: the rule of law."

Jacob Fischler and Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.

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

Group that sued Noem says she was 'threatening' while trying to avoid being served

Judge has dismissed suit, but plaintiff is seeking reinstatement

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 30, 2024 11:00 AM

The group that sued Governor Kristi Noem for her promotion of a Texas dental office wants the lawsuit reinstated and says Noem was "evasive" and "threatening" while she attempted to avoid being served with legal documents.

Noem's spokesman Ian Fury has since responded on social media, writing that Noem is "warm and loving to everyone she interacts with. If these attorneys had ever met with her, they'd know that. More proof than ever that they never served her."

The lawsuit is from Travelers United, a consumer advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. It alleges Noem may have violated the law by failing to disclose any potential financial relationship she has with Smile Texas. Noem released a 5-minute video March 11 on social media showcasing the dental work she received there.

Fury recently released a statement to South Dakota media saying "Governor Noem has never received compensation for any alleged 'advertisements.'"

Travelers United said in a recent court filing it has received no proof of that defense.

"Travelers United has made it very clear to defendant's counsel that we would drop this case if Ms. Noem was able to provide a receipt that Ms. Noem paid in full for her cosmetic dental procedure," wrote the group's lawyer. "Defense counsel is yet to provide a receipt."

Serving of paperwork debated

The judge overseeing the lawsuit recently dismissed it, writing that Travelers United failed to "serve" — in other words, personally deliver — the lawsuit paperwork to Noem by the required deadline of May 13. The court file shows no proof of service before that date.

Fury's statement said the dismissal reflects the "baseless" nature of Travelers United's claims.

"Their actions have exposed them as a fake watchdog group filing frivolous claims intended as a smear against the Governor," Fury wrote. He added, "If Travelers United continues to engage in baseless lawfare, then Governor Noem will use every resource at her disposal to hold them accountable."

Lauren Wolfe, attorney for Travelers United, hopes the proof of service document she filed on Tuesday convinces the judge to reinstate the case. The document outlines numerous attempts to serve Noem and mentions Noem's comments about the case on social media, all of which adds up to sufficient proof of service, Wolfe argues.

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Travelers United hired One Legal, a process serving company. The problems it allegedly encountered while attempting to serve Noem with the lawsuit papers are detailed in Wolfe's filing.

"The process server who served Ms. Noem said Noem was 'highly evasive and also threatening,'" the document reads, adding that "Ms. Noem has recently been in the news for shooting and killing her dog. The process server felt legitimately threatened."

The mention of the dog is a reference to a story Noem divulged in her recently published book, "No Going Back," about fatally shooting her dog after it failed at hunting pheasants and killed some of a neighbor's chickens.

Attempts to serve Noem outlined

Wolfe's court filing says representatives of One Legal, acting as a "process server," made numerous attempts to serve Noem.

On April 10, a process server visited the Governor's Office but was unable to make contact with anyone who could accept the documents.

On April 18, a server stopped by Noem's personal residence in Castlewood. Her husband, Bryon Noem, said the governor was not home and discussed arranging a more suitable time for the service.

"He assured me that we would make this happen one way or another," reads correspondence included in the court document from One Legal's representative. The server told Bryon Noem that the next attempt to serve Gov. Noem would be at a public luncheon.

On April 19, the process server attended the luncheon to serve Noem as she exited. Her security allegedly intervened, surrounded the server and escorted her away.

On May 1, server Katie Big Eagle returned to the Capitol but found the offices locked due to a meeting.

She returned the next day and reported encountering Office Manager and Executive Assistant Judy Davis, Constituent Services Representative Lisa Lei and Administrative Specialist Lana Blair. All three were adamant they were not authorized to accept service on behalf of Noem and refused to touch the documents, according to Big Eagle.

Big Eagle also attempted to call Noem on five occasions in early April, according to the court filing.

Tensions escalated after Noem wrote Tuesday on social media that the "baseless" lawsuit was dismissed. Travelers United takes that as an indication that Noem has been served.

"Given that Ms. Noem clearly knows about this lawsuit based on her tweets as of today, Tuesday, May 28th, 2024, and hiring of counsel that have met multiple times before this filing, Travelers United believes there has been sufficient service in this case," Wolfe argued in her filing to the court.

Travelers United also has a pending lawsuit against Smile Texas, accusing the company of running advertising campaigns lacking required disclosures, including the one involving Noem.

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.

Low-wage states with cheap housing dominated the post-pandemic jobs boom

South Dakota ranks 25th in jobs created since 2019

BY: TIM HENDERSON, STATELINE - MAY 30, 2024 6:00 AM

More than half of the nation's jobs created in the past five years have come in two states: Texas and Florida.

They're at the forefront of a job creation revolution in which states with lower wages and a lower cost of living are gaining the highest share of new jobs, according to a new Stateline analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Meanwhile, high-wage states such as California, New York, Washington state and Massachusetts tumbled out of the top 10. California, which had the highest share of new jobs from 2014-2019, crashed to the very bottom in job creation.

The changes closely follow state-by-state labor trends in the years during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Employers have been less willing to create jobs in higher-wage states. Workers, meanwhile, are avoiding skyrocketing housing costs and taking advantage of new options for remote work.

"In the pandemic's wake, workers are likely playing a bigger role because many have new flexibility about where to work and live," said Aaron Sojourner, a labor economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

"About 1 in 10 U.S. workers now work fully remote jobs, an expansion enabled by organizations' investments in distributed work capacity during the pandemic," Sojourner said. "Many families with high-paying remote jobs migrated towards areas with lower living costs because they're no longer tethered to a high-cost place."

Between 2014 and 2019, California gained 1.4 million new jobs — more than any other state and 12% of the national total. But for the past five years California has been dead last in job creation, losing about 214,000 jobs. Texas moved into first place during that time, seeing almost 1.3 million new jobs, almost one-third of all new jobs created nationally.

Florida was not far behind, with about 911,000 new jobs, almost 25% of the national total of about 4 million.

Besides California, which plunged from No. 1 to No. 51 in job creation for the states and the District of Columbia, New York fell from No. 5 to No. 50, and Massachusetts from No. 7 to No. 47.

Washington state, Michigan and Tennessee also fell out of the top 10, while Arizona, Utah, Virginia, South Carolina, Oklahoma and Colorado moved into the top 10.

High wages in some states are playing a part in lagging job creation, according to an April analysis by the Economic Innovation Group, a Washington, D.C.-based research organization.

California and New York have average salaries about 18-20% higher than the national average of \$65,500, while Texas and Florida are 6-7% lower, according to federal Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data.

"For the first time since the Great Recession, the richest metro areas are no longer creating the majority of new jobs in the U.S.," the report noted.

Some of the shift in job fortunes comes from a struggle between California's Silicon Valley and Texas' capital city of Austin for primacy in tech jobs. California's share of tech jobs began to plummet during the pandemic as Texas' share rose.

In a 2020 Wall Street Journal opinion piece headlined "California, Love It and Leave It," venture capital entrepreneur Joe Lonsdale described moving his company from San Francisco to "a new land of opportunity: Texas." He blamed bureaucracy for slowing business progress during the pandemic and restrictive zoning that made it impossible for employees to afford housing near their jobs.

More recently, Jeffrey Vonderhaar discussed in February his plans to move much of his business, Specialized Orthopedic Solutions Inc., which involves manufacturing prosthetic limbs and other medical equipment, back to Texas after 14 years in California. In an interview with Business Insider, he complained of

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business regulations and taxes in California, as well as high housing prices that fed homelessness and people living in parked RVs near his office in suburban Los Angeles.

Last year, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott gleefully proclaimed Austin “THE destination for the world’s leading tech companies” in a tweet, mentioning Tesla’s and Samsung’s expanding operations in the Austin area. Democratic U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett, who represents the Austin area, told Stateline that Samsung is building a third semiconductor fabrication plant in the area and already employs thousands of Texans.

But recent cutbacks in tech have led to setbacks in Texas as well as in California. Oracle announced in April a move to Nashville, Tennessee, from Austin, where it had built a massive lakefront campus with the help of tax breaks, citing even more generous incentives from Tennessee. Tennessee approved \$65 million in tax incentives in 2021, when Oracle pledged to bring in about 8,500 jobs; Tennessee’s average salary is also about 5% lower than in Texas.

Oklahoma made the biggest jump in the Stateline analysis of job creation rankings, from No. 31 to No. 9. The state has seen a reversal of the “brain drain” it experienced in the late 2010s, a period when it lost educated residents to other states, according to research this year by the Oklahoma City branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

The state had been losing college graduates and higher-income people to other states before the pandemic, but that has reversed, said Chad Wilkerson, the Oklahoma City branch executive for the bank and author of the report.

Leaders want to grow Oklahoma’s job landscape beyond the cyclical energy industry that attracts blue-collar workers but also creates boom-and-bust cycles, Wilkerson said. Many new Oklahomans have higher education levels and are employed in business services such as research and development and engineering, as well as retail management, reflecting both population growth and a more diverse economy.

“It’s been intentional to some degree by chambers [of commerce] and state policy, the desire to attract more than just oil and gas,” said Wilkerson.

The privately funded Tulsa Remote program, for example, has brought in thousands of remote tech workers from other states with a promise of lower living costs and a shared work space to encourage networking and friendship. A 2021 study found that \$4.5 million spent luring new residents paid off in the form of \$62 million in new jobs — both for those workers and other jobs created to support them.

Most states have some form of job creation incentives and evaluate them regularly for effectiveness. Oklahoma has tax incentives for data processing and research and development jobs, and a state commission last year recommended keeping them.

State tax incentives can pay off in the long run, but the effect is modest, said Robert Chirinko, a University of Illinois finance professor whose most recent study of state job creation tax incentives was published in September by the National Tax Journal.

Florida has enjoyed a decade of job creation, moving up the rankings from No. 3 to No. 2 in the past five years. But overall, its economic landscape is mixed.

Wages have not kept up with inflation, and housing prices in the Miami area are especially high, making poverty an increasing concern, according to a report last year by Florida International University’s Center for Labor Research and Studies.

“It is a tale of rich and poor,” said Ravi Gajendran, a business professor at Florida International University in Miami. “A lot of the migration [to Florida] is due to well-off individuals moving to Miami, which is part of the reason why real estate prices have risen here to a greater extent.

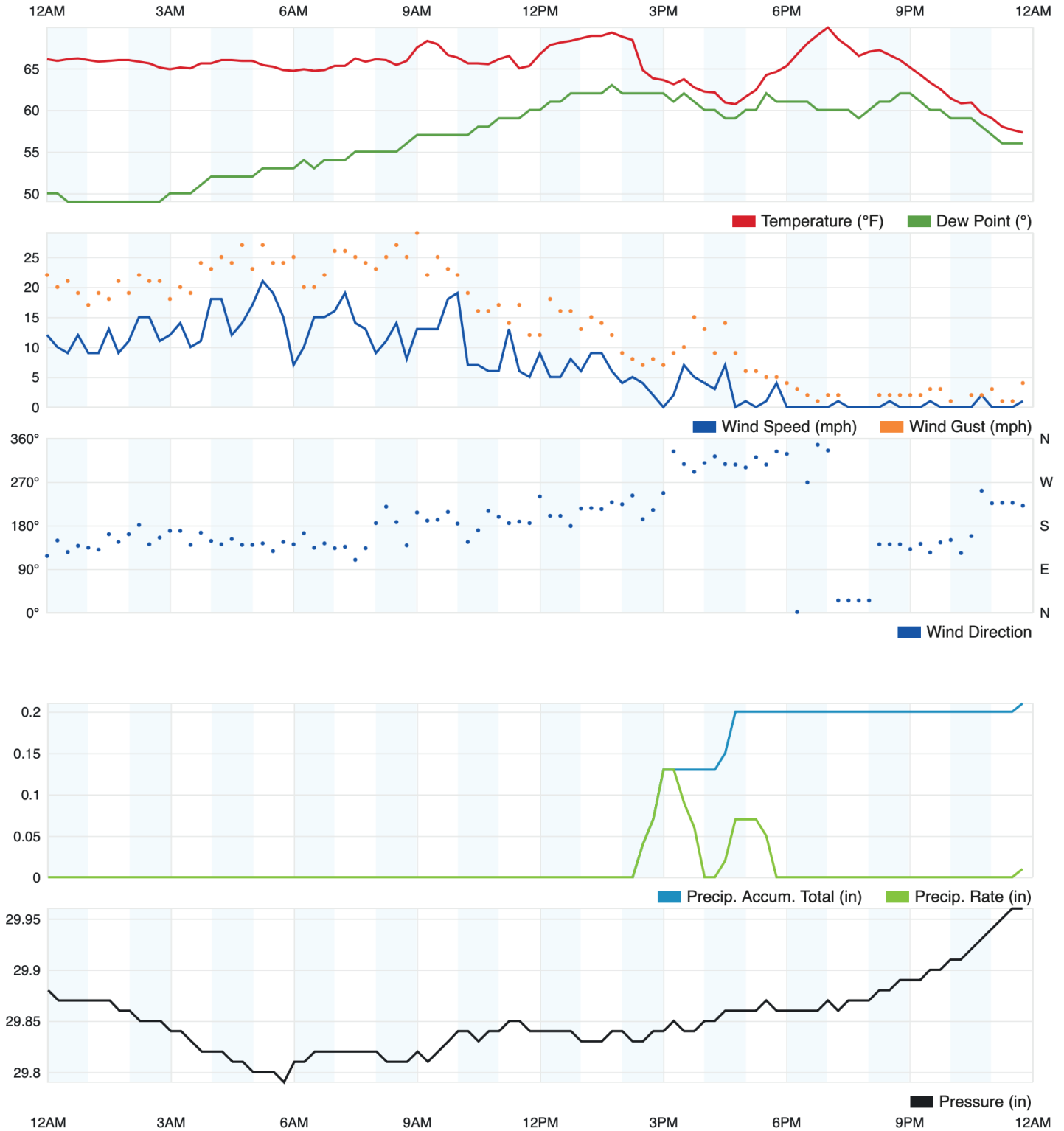
“For someone moving from New York or California, real estate prices are still cheap here in Miami,” he said. “But for local Miamians, this increases real estate and rental costs, making it less affordable to stay here.”

Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and The Journal News in suburban New York. Henderson became fascinated with census data in the early 1990s, when AOL offered the first computerized reports. Since then he has broken stories about population trends in South Florida, including a housing affordability analysis included in the 2007 Pulitzer-winning series “House of Lies” for the Miami Herald, and a prize-winning analysis of public pension irregularities for The Journal News. He has been a member and trainer for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since its inception 20 years ago, specializing in online data access and visualization along with demographics.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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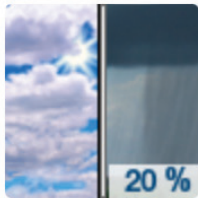
Today

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 71 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers



Low: 45 °F

Decreasing
Clouds



High: 78 °F

Sunny



Low: 54 °F

Chance
T-storms



High: 80 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
T-storms
Likely

Chances for Storms through the Weekend

Friday



Highs: 66-73°F
Lows: 45-52°F

15-30% chance of
rain showers

Saturday



Highs: 73-81°F
Lows: 54-57°F

Showers/t-storms
(20-40%) into
Saturday night

Sunday



Highs: 74-85°F
Lows: 51-60°F

Showers/t-storms
(30-80%)



Portions of central and northeastern SD will have a 15 to 30% chance of rain showers today. Storm chances return Saturday with 20-40% chances for showers and storms in the afternoon lasting into the evening hours mainly for central and eastern SD. Showers and storms are possible again Sunday afternoon and evening.

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Severe Weather Threat Overview

May 31, 2024
4:29 AM

Sunday afternoon and evening

Timing/Location

Strong to severe storms possible along and east of the Missouri River this Sunday afternoon and evening

The main threats for the area in **YELLOW**

Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

Max Hail Size

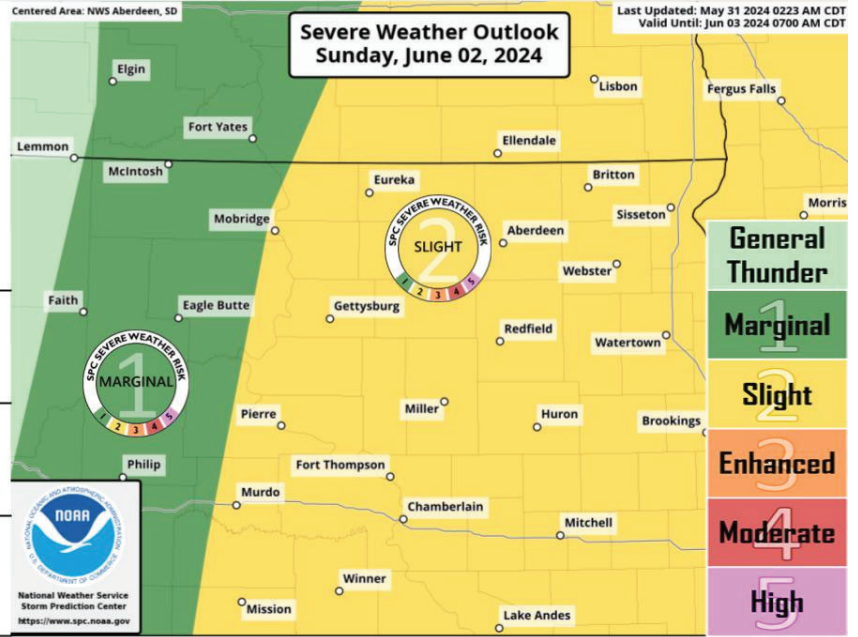
Dimes Quarters **Golfball** Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Thunderstorms are possible Sunday into Sunday night. Severe weather will be possible with these storms, mainly Sunday afternoon and evening. Winds over 60 mph and hail over 2 inches in diameter will be the main threats. Frequent lightning and heavy rain are also expected. A few tornadoes will also be possible.

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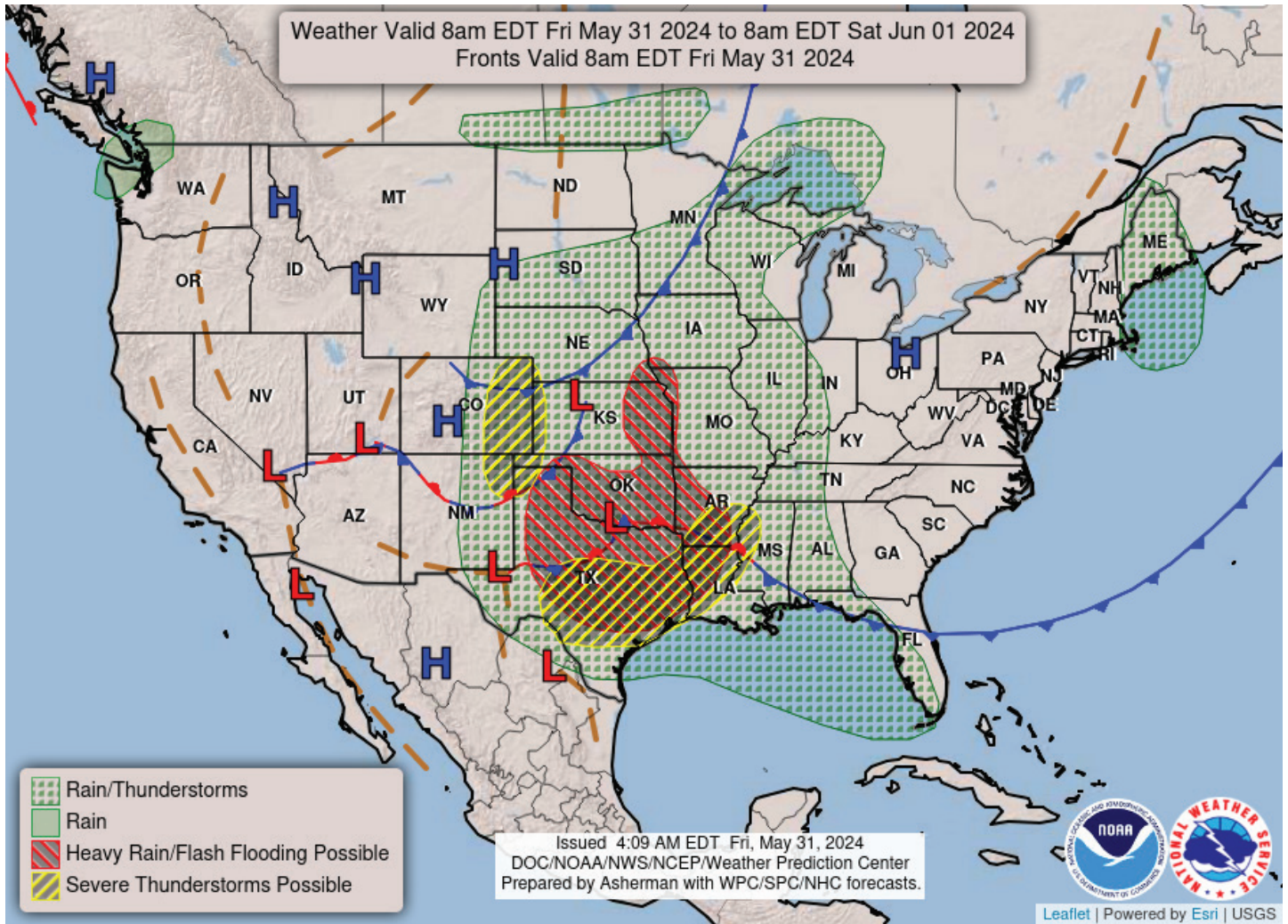
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 70 °F at 7:02 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 11:26 PM
Wind: 29 mph at 8:56 AM
Precip: : 0.21

Day length: 15 hours, 29 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1934
Record Low: 23 in 1897
Average High: 76
Average Low: 51
Average Precip in May.: 3.28
Precip to date in May: 2.47
Average Precip to date: 7.25
Precip Year to Date: 7.01
Sunset Tonight: 9:14:54 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:59 am



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Today in Weather History

May 31, 1960: A late evening thunderstorm cut a path of destruction, principally from high winds from Beadle County, northeast to Roberts and Grant Counties. Twelve head of cattle electrocuted for a downed high tensions wire occurred at Wolsey. Winds with gusts of 65 to 75 mph were observed at Huron and Watertown. A grain elevator tipped over, and a windmill was destroyed near Willow Lake. A Steel corn crib was blown over at Hayti and damaged occurred to other farm buildings and implements.

1830: Shelbyville, Tennessee was turned into "a heap of ruins" as a tornado moved east through the center of the town. This tornado destroyed 15 homes and 38 businesses along with churches and other public buildings. Losses were estimated to be as high as \$100,000. A book was said to be carried seven miles away.

1889: The Johnstown, Pennsylvania disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a thirty-foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as twenty-two feet per second, swept away all structures, objects, and people. The flood killed around 2100 people.

1941 - Thunderstorms deluged Burlington KS with 12.59 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Severe thunderstorms spawned forty-one tornadoes across the Lower Great Lakes Region and southeastern Ontario which killed 74 persons. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in New England produced wind gusts up to 90 mph at Worcester, MA, and Northboro, MA, and hail an inch and a half in diameter at Williston, VT. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Portland, ME, was a record for the month of May. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Hot and humid weather prevailed in the eastern U.S. Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Cape Hatteras, NC, reported their first ninety degree day in May in 115 years of records. "Dust buster" thunderstorms in northwest Texas drenched Amarillo with more than three inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather and torrential rains in northern Indiana, northern Ohio and southern Lower Michigan. Saint John IND was drenched with four inches of rain in two hours, and Woodland MI was deluged with two inches in twenty minutes. Pittsburgh PA reported a record 6.55 inches of rain for the month of May, with measurable rain reported on twenty-five days during the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from northwest Texas to southeastern Louisiana. The thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, including thirteen in northwest Texas. One tornado hit the town of Spearman, TX, causing more than a million dollars damage, and seven other tornadoes were reported within twenty-five miles of Spearman. Thunderstorms over northwest Texas also produced baseball size hail at Monahans, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Paducah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2013: The 2nd of the top 10 weather events for 2013 was EL Reno, Oklahoma tornado of May 31, 2013. Part of the multi-day storm outbreak caused \$2 billion in damage. The EF3 that traveled through the western suburbs of Oklahoma City was the largest tornado ever observed with a width of 2.6 miles. It took eight lives including four tornado chasers.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"WHY A ROPE, SON?"

After saying his nightly prayer, little Johnny said to his Dad, "I'll be right back."

"Where are you going?" asked his Dad.

"To get a rope," he quickly replied.

"Why a rope, Son?" he wondered.

"Well, Dad, you promised me that Jesus would answer my prayers. I asked him for a pony tonight, and the rope is to tie the pony to my bed when it comes."

Now that's faith. Asking God for a pony and then running to get a rope. But that is what happens when we take God at His Word. Jesus said, "You can pray for anything, and if you believe, you will have it."

Contained in the word "anything" is the word "everything." And when Jesus made that statement He would have us to understand that our prayers are to be motivated by asking for things that have God's best interest at heart. Certainly when we pray, we are to ask for the desires of our hearts, but we must always place His will above our wants, His good above our greed and ask for His wisdom so that we can recognize the needs of His Kingdom first and foremost.

Is it wrong to ask God for a pony? Of course not. He created the little ponies, and He wants us to enjoy all of His creation. But if spending time enjoying the pony causes us to stop reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, serving and obeying Him, we have the wrong priorities.

Prayer: Give us the boldness, Father, to pray sincerely, confidently, expectantly and with determination for those things that will honor You and enrich our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. Mark 11:22-25



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: 16 Hrs 7 Mins 3 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: 1 Days 15 Hrs 22 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.30.24

9 11 12 14 24 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 37 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.24

18 24 27 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$125,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 37 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.24

23 29 35 36 39 22

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 6 Mins 3 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: 1 Days 16 Hrs 6 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

AP Decision Notes: What to expect in the final presidential primaries and caucuses of 2024

By ROBERT YOON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After 146 days, 90 primaries and 17 caucuses in five U.S. territories, the District of Columbia and almost every state (Delaware canceled, remember?), the 2024 presidential primary calendar draws to a close with a handful of primaries on Tuesday and two Democratic caucuses on June 8.

Voters in Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, South Dakota and Washington, D.C., will head to the polls Tuesday for both presidential and state primaries, while the very last votes of the presidential primary season will be cast four days later in Democratic contests in Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Iowa will hold primaries on Tuesday for just state and local offices, having held its presidential contests in January and in March.

President Joe Biden, a Democrat, and former President Donald Trump, a Republican, have scored lopsided victories in every contest since securing their parties' nominations on March 12, but both presumptive nominees have also faced persistent protest votes in several contests along the way.

Biden will again face organized campaigns in multiple states to vote for "uncommitted" in protest of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. In New Jersey, "uncommitted" will appear on the ballot in most counties above the phrase, "Justice For Palestine, Permanent Ceasefire Now!"

For Trump, Tuesday marks the first primaries since he became the first former American president to be convicted of felony crimes as a New York jury found him guilty of all 34 charges in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex. It's also the first time since his chief rival for the 2024 nomination, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, announced that she would vote for him in November. Haley received a sizable share of the vote in some recent contests despite having ended her campaign in March. Her final appearance on a primary ballot will be in New Mexico.

Tuesday's other key races include the Republican primary to challenge Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Tester in Montana in what may be the most competitive contest to decide control of the chamber, as well as primaries to replace scandal-plagued Democratic U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez in New Jersey, who faces a bribery trial.

Here are the upcoming contests at a glance:

DELEGATES AT STAKE (TUESDAY)

DEMOCRATS: 216.

REPUBLICANS: 12 (82 delegates in Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota are unbound per party rules).

DELEGATES AT STAKE (JUNE 8)

DEMOCRATS: 14.

TUESDAY'S PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES (5)

DEMOCRATS (5): D.C., Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, South Dakota.

REPUBLICANS (4): Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, South Dakota.

TUESDAY'S STATE & LOCAL PRIMARIES (6)

D.C., Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, South Dakota.

TUESDAY'S PRIMARY TIMELINE

8 p.m. ET: All polls close in D.C. and New Jersey. Most polls close in South Dakota.

9 p.m. ET: All polls close in Iowa and New Mexico. Last polls close in South Dakota.

10 p.m. ET: All polls close in Montana.

GUAM AND VIRGIN ISLANDS TIMELINE (JUNE 8)

8 p.m. ET (June 7): Caucus starts in Guam.

12 a.m. ET (June 8): Caucus ends in Guam.

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5 a.m. ET (June 8): Guam results expected.

9 a.m. ET (June 8): Caucuses begin in Virgin Islands.

6 p.m. ET (June 8): Caucuses end in Virgin Islands.

8 p.m. ET (June 8): Virgin Islands results expected.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (D): Biden, Marianne Williamson, Armando Perez-Serrato and Write-in. Twenty delegates at stake.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (R): None. Republicans held a party-run contest in March.

STATE PRIMARY: Contested primaries for U.S. delegate to Congress, City Council, shadow senator and shadow representative.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only voters registered with a party may participate in that party's primary. Democrats can't vote in the Republican primary or vice versa. Independents or unaffiliated voters may not participate in any party's primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 8:30 p.m. ET.

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: 11:59 p.m. ET with about 69% of total votes counted.

IOWA

STATE PRIMARY: Contested primaries for U.S. House, state Senate, state House. Key races in the 1st, 3rd and 4th Congressional Districts and state House District 34.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only voters registered with a party may participate in that party's primary, but any voter may register or change their party affiliation on the day of the primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 9:12 p.m. ET.

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: 2:29 a.m. ET with more than 99% of total votes counted.

MONTANA

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (D): Biden, No Preference, Write-in. 20 delegates at stake.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (R): Trump, No Preference, Write-in. Montana's 31 unbound delegates are not tied to primary results.

STATE PRIMARY: Contested primaries for U.S. Senate, U.S. House, governor, attorney general, auditor, education superintendent, public service commission, state Senate, state House and non-partisan races for state Supreme Court, including chief justice.

WHO CAN VOTE: Any registered voter in Montana may participate in any party's primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 10:06 p.m. ET.

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: 6:02 a.m. ET with about 93% of total votes counted.

NEW JERSEY

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (D): Biden, Terrisa Bukovinac, Uncommitted, Write-in. 126 delegates at stake. (Uncommitted "Justice for Palestine, Permanent Ceasefire Now!")

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (R): Trump, Write-in. 12 delegates at stake.

STATE PRIMARY: Contested primaries for U.S. Senate and U.S. House. Key races for U.S. Senate and the 3rd and 8th Congressional Districts.

WHO CAN VOTE: Registered party members may vote only in their own party's primary. In other words, Democrats can't vote in the Republican primary or vice versa. Independent or unaffiliated voters may participate in either primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 8:04 p.m. ET

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: About 2 a.m. ET with 90% of total votes counted.

NEW MEXICO

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (D): Biden, Williamson, "Uncommitted Delegate." 34 delegates at stake.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (R): Trump, Haley, Chris Christie, Vivek Ramaswamy, "Uncommitted Delegate." New Mexico's 22 unbound delegates are not tied to primary results.

STATE PRIMARY: Contested primaries for U.S. House, state Senate, state House.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only voters registered with a party may participate in that party's primary. Democrats can't vote in the Republican primary or vice versa. Independent or unaffiliated voters may not participate

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in either primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 9:11 p.m. ET.

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: 2:50 a.m. ET with about 99% of total votes counted.

SOUTH DAKOTA

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (D): Biden, Williamson, Dean Phillips, Perez-Serrato. 16 delegates at stake.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (R): Will not appear on ballot because Trump is uncontested. South Dakota's 29 unbound delegates are not tied to primary results.

STATE PRIMARY: Contest primaries for state Senate, state House. Key race in state Senate District 27.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only registered Republicans may vote in the Republican primary. Registered Democrats and independent or unaffiliated voters may vote in the Democratic primary.

FIRST VOTES REPORTED (2022 primaries): 9:02 p.m. ET.

LAST ELECTION NIGHT UPDATE: 3:26 a.m. ET with about 92% of total votes counted.

GUAM (June 8)

PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUS (D): Voters participate in a presidential preference vote.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only voters affiliated with the Democratic Party may participate in the caucuses, but voters may register and affiliate on caucus day.

RESULTS: The AP will update its Delegate Tracker with Guam delegate results when the Democratic Party of Guam makes them available. The AP will not provide raw vote totals from the caucus vote.

VIRGIN ISLANDS (June 8)

PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUS (D): Biden, Williamson, "Uncommitted," Write-in.

WHO CAN VOTE: Only voters affiliated with the Democratic Party may participate in the caucuses, but voters may register and affiliate on caucus day.

RESULTS: The AP will update its Delegate Tracker with Virgin Islands delegate results when the U.S. Virgin Islands Democratic Party makes them available. The AP will not provide raw vote totals from the caucus vote.

UNCOMMITTED OR WRITE-IN ON THE PRESIDENTIAL BALLOT

UNCOMMITTED: Montana (as "No preference"), New Jersey (Democrats only), New Mexico, Guam (June 8, Democrats only), Virgin Islands (June 8, Democrats only)

WRITE-IN: D.C. (Democrats only), Montana, New Jersey, Virgin Islands. In Montana, write-in candidates must file with the state before the election.

ARE WE THERE YET?

As of Tuesday, there will be 41 days until the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, 76 days until the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and 154 days until the November general election.

As of June 8, there will be 72 days until the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and 150 days until the November general election.

Schwan's Company and State of South Dakota announce future investments in Sioux Falls to support new food production facility

BLOOMINGTON, Minn., May 30, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Schwan's Company, a leading U.S.-based food company and subsidiary of South Korea-based CJ Foods, announced today a decision to further invest in South Dakota with the purchase of a 142-acre site at Foundation Park for a 700,000 square-foot Asian-style food production facility.

Initially, the company announced plans in 2021 for the new plant in Sioux Falls, which is projected to cost hundreds of millions of dollars and add more than 600 new employees. Now, in addition, the company is announcing plans to open a regional office in downtown Sioux Falls to support its continued expansion and operations at the new manufacturing facility. Initial plans for the regional office will add 50 high-paying jobs, with the potential to grow up to 100 jobs once the production facility is complete.

The company has also worked with the State of South Dakota and City of Sioux Falls to design a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility that will be built by Schwan's Company on the new manufacturing

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site. The wastewater treatment facility will enable the company to discharge water to the city with the least amount of impact on the city's current operations.

"We thank all state and local officials in South Dakota for helping us make great progress on this project, which will ultimately help us meet the needs of our retail and food service customers," said Schwan's outgoing CEO Dimitrios P. Smyrniotis. "This project will create significant new production capacity for Schwan's, enabling us to continue to support our market-share leading bibigo brand and drive future innovation and growth in the Asian food category. I want to personally thank Governor Kristi Noem and her team for their leadership and commitment to our plans. Without her unwavering support, this project would not be possible. It's clear to me that the 'State of South Dakota is open for business.'"

Incoming Schwan's CEO Brian Schiegg agreed: "Our investment in this world-class Asian-style food plant in South Dakota will help us strengthen our position in one of the fastest growing food categories in the United States. We look forward to continuing our work with state and local officials to build a facility that will benefit the residents of South Dakota as well as our family of businesses."

CJ Foods CEO Minsok Pak added: "The U.S. market continues to deliver high growth for CJ Foods and the ability to continue to scale our portfolio of products to meet the growing consumer demand is vitally important to our strategy. This facility will enable us to further accelerate the growth of K-Food and other Asian cuisines. We appreciate the support from local and state officials and look forward to contributing to our new home in South Dakota."

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and other officials said they appreciate the investment Schwan's is making in South Dakota.

"Schwan's has recognized the superior business climate that the state offers," she said. "I know that their confidence in South Dakota is not misplaced and thank them for the additional investment that they are making."

"When we began working with Schwan's several years ago, we didn't know that the project would grow to this magnitude," stated Deputy Commissioner Chris Schilken. "It's been the leadership of Governor Noem and the willingness of Schwan's to see South Dakota's advantages that have brought us to this announcement."

"It was a pleasure to work with Schwan's and the Governor's Office of Economic Development to push this project to the finish line with the additional investments," said Bob Mundt, president of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation. "We are excited to see the project moving dirt."

The new manufacturing facility will produce Asian-style foods, primarily for Schwan's #1 Korean food brand bibigo, using state-of-the-art automated production lines. Once complete, people working at the facility will focus on making a broad range of Asian-style meals, sides, snacks and appetizers in the shelf-stable and frozen categories. The new manufacturing campus will also include a warehouse and distribution center, shipping and receiving docks, and office space.

Schwan's Company

Based in Minnesota, Schwan's Company is a leading U.S.-based manufacturer and marketer of quality foods offered through retail-grocery and food-service channels. Its many popular brands include Red Baron®, Tony's®, Hearth & Fire™, Big Daddy's™, Villa Prima® and Freschetta® pizza, Mrs. Smith's® and Edwards® desserts and bibigo™ and Pagoda® Asian-style foods. The company is an affiliate of global lifestyle company, CJ Foods. To learn more about Schwan's, visit www.schwanscompany.com.

View original content to download multimedia: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/schwans-company-and-state-of-south-dakota-announce-future-investments-in-sioux-falls-to-support-new-food-production-facility-302159947.html>

SOURCE Schwan's Company

ISG Expands Presence with Third South Dakota Office

DAKOTA DUNES, S.D., May 30, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- ISG, a leading architecture, engineering, environmental, and planning firm, continues its strategic growth in South Dakota with the opening of a new office in Dakota Dunes, just months after establishing a presence in Pierre. This expansion enhances ISG's ability to serve communities across South Dakota, and the broader Siouxland region encompassing Iowa and Nebraska.

ISG is currently engaged in several projects and partnerships in Dakota Dunes while the local team enhances the firm's specialized expertise in refrigeration and industrial food experience. The firm is eager to bring value to local municipalities through ISG's commitment to providing on-call engineering professionals who offer essential services that support daily operations and long-term infrastructure needs.

The expansion represents a meaningful milestone in ISG's growth. CEO Lynn Bruns is enthusiastic about continuing the firm's momentum in South Dakota, "Our proximity will support the diverse opportunities in the southeast part of the state. We are actively seeking opportunities to grow within the industrial market, driving our commitment to meet the evolving needs of our customers and stakeholders. Our services will bolster existing community initiatives and amenities across the Siouxland."

With a network of locations throughout the Midwest, ISG is well-positioned to deliver a vast knowledge base, expanded capacity, and a high level of creativity. This benefits a diverse range of clients, including government entities, developers, municipalities, school districts, and other organizations.

"We are grateful for ISG's confidence in our Siouxland community and look forward to working with their team of professionals to develop a vision and workable plans for our tri-state region," says Chris McGowan, President of the Siouxland Chamber of Commerce and The Siouxland Initiative.

ISG comprises professionals from institutions such as the South Dakota State University, Southeast Technical College, and Dordt University. Dedicated to investing in local graduates and actively recruiting top talent to drive innovation and excellence, the company is planning for growth in all South Dakota offices, including Dakota Dunes. ISG is committed to fostering positive change and tailoring its services to meet the unique needs of Siouxland communities, striving to make tomorrow better than today.

A formal ribbon cutting and open house is planned for August 22, 2024.

South Dakota man arrested and charged in Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man pushed a police officer during the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol and was among those who shoved a large metal "Trump" sign into a police line, the U.S. Department of Justice said.

William George Knight, 37, of Rapid City, was arrested by the FBI on May 26. He was charged with two felonies: obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder; and assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers. He also was charged with five misdemeanors. The Justice Department announced the arrest and charges on Wednesday.

Knight was released to home detention following a brief court hearing on Wednesday. Knight's attorney, federal public defender Jennifer Albertson, declined comment on Thursday.

The Justice Department alleges in a court document that Knight was among the first rioters to breach a restricted area near the Capitol. After police set up a barrier using bike racks, Knight grabbed one of the racks and pulled it away so hard that he fell backward, the Justice Department alleged.

Later, Knight and others pushed a large metal-framed sign that read "Trump" toward the police line, and Knight shoved a police officer before grabbing one of the protective bike racks away from the police line, the court document states.

Knight and other rioters pushed against the line of officers, causing the line to collapse, the Justice Department said. Knight then went into the Capitol's Lower West Terrace, where he stayed for at least two hours, the agency said.

All told, more than 1,400 people have been charged in connection with the riot, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

Trump will try to turn his guilty verdict into campaign fuel

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Being convicted of a felony — let alone 34 of them — is the kind of blow that would normally tank any politician's ambitions.

Donald Trump will instead try to turn what might otherwise be a career-ending judgment into campaign fuel.

Trump will return to the campaign trail with a news conference at his namesake tower in Manhattan on Friday, a day after he was convicted of trying to illegally influence the 2016 election by falsifying business records to hide a hush money payment to a porn actor who claimed they had sex. His lawyers and allies described him as defiant and ready to fight a verdict they argue is illegitimate and driven by politics.

No former president or presumptive party nominee has ever faced a felony conviction or the prospect of prison time, and Trump is expected to keep his legal troubles central to his campaign. He has long argued without evidence that the four indictments against him were orchestrated by Democratic President Joe Biden to try to keep him out of the White House.

"There is nobody who is more defiant," said Trump spokesman Jason Miller on Fox News hours after the verdict was read. "He's ready to get out there and start fighting again."

Trump and his campaign had been preparing for a guilty verdict for days, even as they held out hope for a hung jury. On Tuesday, Trump railed that not even Mother Teresa, the nun and saint, could beat the charges, which he repeatedly labeled as "rigged."

His top aides on Wednesday released a memo in which they insisted a verdict would have no impact on the election, whether Trump was convicted or acquitted.

The news nonetheless landed with a jolt. Trump, his team and reporters at the courthouse had been under the impression that the jury on Thursday would wrap up deliberations for the day at 4:30 p.m. Trump sat smiling and chatting with his lawyers as the proceedings seemed to be coming to a close.

Trump had spent the hours before the verdict was announced sequestered in the private courtroom where he had spent breaks throughout the trial, huddled with his attorneys and campaign aides, eating from a revolving lunch menu of McDonald's, pizza, and subs.

As the jury was deciding his fate, he filled his time making calls, firing off social media missives and chatting with friends, including developer Steve Witkoff, who joined him in court, and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, who is considered a top vice presidential contender.

In a sign that they expected deliberations to continue, Trump's holding room was outfitted with a television Thursday, according to two people familiar with the setup who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the case.

Instead, Merchan announced that a verdict had been reached. Thirty minutes later, Trump listened as the jury delivered a guilty verdict on every count. Trump sat stone-faced while the verdict was read.

His campaign fired off a flurry of fundraising appeals, and GOP allies rallied to his side. One text message called him a "political prisoner," even though he hasn't yet found out if he will be sentenced to prison. The campaign also began selling black "Make America Great Again" caps to reflect a "dark day in history."

Aides reported an immediate rush of contributions so intense that WinRed, the platform the campaign uses for fundraising, crashed.

Trump campaign spokesman Brian Hughes cited the outpouring as a sign "that Americans have seen this sham trial as the political election interference that Biden and Democrats have always intended."

"November 5th," he said, echoing Trump, "is the day Americans will deliver the real verdict!"

Trump has long complained that the trial limited his campaign appearances for several weeks. "I want to campaign," he had told reporters Thursday morning before a verdict was reached.

It is unclear, however, how much Trump's schedule will ramp up in the days ahead. He held only a handful of public campaign events as the trial unfolded, despite the fact that he had Wednesdays, as well as evenings and weekends, to do what he wished.

He's set in the upcoming two months to have his first debate with Biden, announce a running mate and

formally accept his party's nomination at the Republican National Convention.

But before he goes to Milwaukee for the RNC, Trump will have to return to court on July 11 for sentencing. He could face penalties ranging from a fine or probation up to four years in prison.

Houthi rebels say at least 16 killed and 42 others wounded in joint US-British airstrikes in Yemen

By JON GAMBRELL and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Joint British-U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 42 others, the rebels said Friday, the highest publicly acknowledged death toll from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over the rebels' attacks on shipping.

Three U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe a then-ongoing attack, described the strikes Thursday as hitting a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities. They called it a response to a recent surge in attacks by the Iran-backed militia group on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the Israel-Hamas war.

The U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets involved in the strikes took off from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, officials said. Other U.S. warships in the region also participated.

But the Houthis focused Friday morning on a strike they said struck a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea. Their Al Masirah satellite news channel aired images of one bloodied man being carried down stairs and others in the hospital, receiving aid. It said all the dead and nearly all the wounded from the strikes came from there.

The Houthis described all those killed and hurt in Hodeida as civilians, something The Associated Press couldn't immediately confirm. The rebel force that's held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014 includes fighters who often aren't in uniform.

Other strikes hit outside of Sanaa near its airport, and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released on those sites — likely signaling that Houthi military sites had been struck. One person was wounded in Sanaa.

"We confirm this brutal aggression against Yemen as punishment for its position in support of Gaza, in support of Israel to continue its crimes of genocide against the wounded, besieged and steadfast Gaza Strip," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam posted on X.

Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, a Houthi official, threatened both the U.S. and U.K. with further retaliation.

"We will meet escalation with escalation," he wrote on X.

Yemen's military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, gave the casualty figures, then alleged without offering any evidence that the rebels targeted the Eisenhower in response with drones and ballistic missiles. Another U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said that the aircraft carrier was fine.

In the United Kingdom, the country's Defense Ministry said that Royal Air Force Typhoon FGR4s conducted strikes on both Hodeida and further south in Ghulayfiqah. It described its targets as "buildings identified as housing drone ground control facilities and providing storage for very long-range drones, as well as surface-to-air weapons."

"The strikes were taken in self-defense in the face of an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose," U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. "There's an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose."

The U.S. and the U.K. have launched strikes against the Houthis since January, with the U.S. regularly carrying out its own in the time since as well. Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the Houthis' secretive supreme leader, offered an overall death toll for the strikes up to that point as 40 people killed and 35 others wounded. He didn't offer a breakdown between civilian and combatant casualties at the time.

The Houthis 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 around 250 hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and

sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. This week, they attacked a ship carrying grain to Iran, the rebels' main benefactor.

On Wednesday, another U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone apparently crashed in Yemen, with the Houthis claiming they fired a surface-to-air missile at it. The U.S. Air Force didn't report any aircraft missing, leading to suspicion that the drone may have been piloted by the CIA. As many as three may have been lost in May alone.

The Latest | Following Trump's conviction in hush money case, he is set to hold news conference

NEW YORK (AP) — A day after a New York jury delivered a historic guilty verdict in Donald Trump's criminal hush money trial, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee will likely look to cast the conviction and his campaign in a new light.

The former president is expected to hold a news conference at Trump Tower late Friday morning.

Following his conviction on Thursday, Trump angrily denounced the trial as a "disgrace," telling reporters he was an "innocent man."

His supporters were quick to echo those sentiments while many of his critics — political and otherwise — applauded the verdict.

Trump was convicted of 34 felony charges in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex. The hush money trial and subsequent conviction mark the first time a former U.S. president has ever been tried or convicted in a criminal case.

He still faces three other felony indictments, but the New York case was the first to reach trial and likely the only one ahead of the November election.

Judge Juan M. Merchan scheduled Trump's sentencing for July 11. The charges are punishable by up to four years in prison, though the punishment would ultimately be up to Merchan. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg declined to say whether prosecutors would seek prison time.

Currently:

- What to know about the guilty verdict in Trump's hush money trial
- Photos: A visual look at the past seven weeks at Donald Trump's hush money trial
- How Trump's conviction affects the 2024 presidential race
- Trump could still vote for himself if he's not in prison on Election Day
- Trump investigations: The status of the cases brought against him

Here's the latest:

REPUBLICAN LAWMAKERS RALLIED TO TRUMP'S DEFENSE

Several Republican lawmakers reacted with fury to Donald Trump's felony conviction on Thursday and rushed to his defense — questioning the legitimacy of the trial and how it was conducted.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said it was a "shameful day in American history" and labeled the charges as "purely political."

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, who has been one of Trump's most frequent allies, said, "This verdict says more about the system than the allegations."

And while Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell refrained from attacking the judge or jury, he said the charges "never should have been brought in the first place."

Many GOP lawmakers, including Johnson, visited the courthouse in New York to support Trump during his criminal trial.

UNLESS HE'S SENT TO PRISON, TRUMP CAN STILL VOTE

Donald Trump may have been convicted of a felony and reside in Florida, a state notorious for restricting the voting rights of felons, but he can still vote as long as he stays out of prison in New York state.

That's because Florida defers to other states' disenfranchisement rules for residents convicted of out-of-state felonies. In Trump's case, New York law only removes their right to vote when incarcerated. Once they're out of prison, their rights are automatically restored — even if they're on parole, per a 2021 law

passed by the state's Democratic legislature.

"If a Floridian's voting rights are restored in the state of conviction, they are restored under Florida law," Blair Bowie of the Campaign Legal Center wrote in a post explaining the state of law, noting that people without Trump's legal resources are often confused by Florida's complex rules.

THE FIGHT IS FAR FROM OVER

Donald Trump's conviction Thursday on 34 felony counts marked the end of the former president's historic hush money trial.

Now comes the sentencing and the prospect of a prison sentence. A lengthy appellate process could follow, especially as Trump's legal team has already been laying the groundwork for an appeal.

And all the while, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee still faces three more criminal cases and a campaign that could see him return to the White House.

Here's what you should know about Donald Trump's conviction in his hush money trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JILL COLVIN, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's conviction on 34 felony counts marks the end of the former president's historic hush money trial, but the fight over the case is far from over.

Now comes the sentencing and the potential for a prison sentence. A lengthy appellate process. And all the while, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee still has to deal with three more criminal cases and a campaign that could see him return to the White House.

After more than nine hours of deliberations over two days, the Manhattan jury found Trump guilty of falsifying business records in the case stemming from a hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels during his 2016 presidential campaign.

Trump angrily denounced the trial as a "disgrace," telling reporters he's an "innocent man."

Some key takeaways from the jury's decision:

PRISON TIME?

The big question now is whether Trump could go to prison. The answer is uncertain. Judge Juan M. Merchan set sentencing for July 11, just days before Republicans are formally set to nominate Trump for president.

The charge of falsifying business records is a Class E felony in New York, the lowest tier of felony charges in the state. It is punishable by up to four years in prison, though the punishment would ultimately be up to the judge, and there's no guarantee he would give Trump time behind bars. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg declined to say whether prosecutors would seek prison time.

It's unclear to what extent the judge may factor in the political and logistical complexities of jailing a former president who is running to reclaim the White House. Other punishments could include a fine or probation. And it's possible the judge would allow Trump to avoid serving any punishment until after he exhausts his appeals.

Trump faces the threat of more serious prison time in the three other cases he's facing, but those cases have gotten bogged down by appeals and other legal fights, so it remains unclear whether any of them will go to trial before the November election.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE ELECTION

The conviction doesn't bar Trump from continuing his campaign or becoming president. And he can still vote for himself in his home state of Florida as long as he stays out of prison in New York state.

Trump's daughter-in-law Lara Trump, who serves as co-chair of the Republican National Committee, said in a Fox News Channel interview on Thursday that Trump would do virtual rallies and campaign events if he's convicted and sentenced to home confinement.

In a deeply divided America, it's unclear whether Trump's once-unimaginable criminal conviction will have any impact at all on the election.

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Leading strategists in both parties believe that Trump still remains well-positioned to defeat President Joe Biden, even as the Republican now faces the prospect of a prison sentence and three separate criminal cases still outstanding.

In the short term, at least, there were immediate signs that the guilty verdict was helping to unify the Republican Party's disparate factions as GOP officials across the political spectrum rallied behind their embattled presumptive presidential nominee and his campaign reported a flood of fundraising dollars within hours of the verdict.

There has been some polling conducted on the prospect of a guilty verdict, although such hypothetical scenarios are notoriously difficult to predict. A recent ABC News/Ipsos poll found that only 4% of Trump's supporters said they would withdraw their backing if he's convicted of a felony, though another 16% said they would reconsider it.

AVENUES FOR APPEAL

After Trump is sentenced, he can challenge his conviction in a New York appellate court and possibly the state's highest court. Trump's lawyers have already been laying the groundwork for appeals with objections to the charges and rulings at trial.

The defense has accused the judge of bias, citing his daughter's work heading a firm whose clients have included Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and other Democrats. The judge refused the defense's request to remove himself from the case, saying he was certain of his "ability to be fair and impartial."

Trump's lawyers may also raise on appeal the judge's ruling limiting the testimony of a potential defense expert witness. The defense wanted to call Bradley Smith, who served on the Federal Election Commission, to rebut the prosecution's contention that the hush money payments amounted to campaign finance violations.

But the defense ended up not having him testify after the judge ruled he could give general background on the FEC but couldn't interpret how federal campaign finance laws apply to the facts of Trump's case or opine on whether Trump's alleged actions violate those laws. There are often guardrails around expert testimony on legal matters, on the basis that it's up to a judge — not an expert hired by one side or the other — to instruct jurors on applicable laws.

The defense may also argue that jurors were improperly allowed to hear sometimes graphic testimony from Daniels about her alleged 2006 sexual encounter with Trump, which he denies ever happened. The defense unsuccessfully pushed for a mistrial over the tawdry details prosecutors elicited from Daniels. Defense lawyer Todd Blanche argued Daniels' description of a power imbalance with the older, taller Trump, was a "dog whistle for rape," irrelevant to the charges at hand, and "the kind of testimony that makes it impossible to come back from."

A DEFENSE THAT CENTERED ON CREDIBILITY

The verdict shows the jury wasn't persuaded by Trump's defense, which hinged on assailing the credibility of some key witnesses — especially Michael Cohen, the Trump attorney-turned-adversary who directly implicated Trump in the hush money scheme.

As in many criminal cases, Trump's lawyers tried to make a lot of their points while questioning prosecution witnesses. The defense called just two witnesses of its own, including Robert Costello, a defense attorney who had sought to represent Cohen after the latter came under federal investigation due to his work for Trump.

The move may have backfired because it opened the door for prosecutors to question Costello about a purported pressure campaign aimed at keeping Cohen loyal to Trump after the FBI raided Cohen's property in April 2018.

Costello buoyed the defense by testifying that Cohen denied to him that Trump knew anything about the \$130,000 hush money payment to Daniels.

But prosecutors portrayed Costello as a "double agent" whose agenda was really to keep Cohen from turning on Trump and confronted him with emails he sent to Cohen in which he repeatedly dangled his close ties to Trump ally Rudy Giuliani. In one email, Costello told Cohen: "Sleep well tonight. you have friends in high places" and relayed that there were "some very positive comments about you from the

White House.”

The pugnacious Costello annoyed the judge — at times in view of the jury — by continuing to speak after objections and rolling his eyes. At one point, after sending the jury out of the room, the judge became enraged when he said Costello was staring him down. Merchan then briefly cleared the courtroom of reporters and scolded Costello, warning that if he acted out again, he’d be removed from the courtroom.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A LOSS

While projecting confidence, Trump and his campaign also spent weeks trying to undermine the case ahead of a potential conviction. He repeatedly called the whole system “rigged” — a term he also used in false descriptions of the election he lost to Biden in 2020.

“Mother Teresa could not beat these charges,” Trump said Wednesday, invoking the Catholic nun and saint.

Trump has lambasted the judge and complained about members of the prosecution team as he tried to paint the case as nothing more than a politically motivated witch hunt brought by Bragg, a Democrat.

He has also complained about a gag order that restricted him from speaking about some people involved in the case. Instead of testifying in the case — and subjecting himself to cross-examination — Trump has focused on the court of public opinion and the voters who will ultimately decide his fate.

The Latest | 12 killed in airstrikes in Central Gaza as strikes targeting Houthi rebels kill 16

By The Associated Press undefined

At least a dozen people were killed in two airstrikes Friday in Central Gaza. Two children and four women were among the dead.

Palestinians in the border city of Rafah have reported heavy fighting in recent days as Israel’s military widened its offensive in the south, seizing control of the entire length of Gaza’s border with Egypt. Fighting in Rafah has spurred more than 1 million Palestinians to flee, most of whom had already been displaced earlier in the war. 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.

Joint British-United States airstrikes targeting Yemen’s Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said Friday. That’s the highest publicly acknowledged death toll from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over the rebels’ attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, demanding that Israel end the war in Gaza.

The Israel-Hamas war has 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:

- Houthi rebels say at least 16 killed and 35 others wounded in joint U.S.-British airstrikes in Yemen.
- Slovenia’s government endorses recognition of a Palestinian state.
- A pro-Palestinian camp at Wayne State is dismantled while MIT students walk out of commencement.
- A global aid group asks warring forces to respect its neutrality, saying 24 of its aid workers have been killed.

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

Here’s the latest:

AIRSTRIKES IN CENTRAL GAZA KILL AT LEAST A DOZEN PEOPLE

DEIR AL-BALAH — At least a dozen people were killed, including children, in two airstrikes Friday in Central Gaza, according to hospital officials and Associated Press journalists who counted the bodies.

The strikes hit Nuseirat and Bureij, two children and four women were among those killed and the bodies were brought to the Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah.

A funeral for all 12 people was held Friday.

Israel's campaign of bombardment and offensives in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians and wounded more than 80,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Its count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

AIRSTRIKES TARGETING YEMEN'S HOUSHI REBELS KILL AT LEAST 16

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Joint British-United States airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said Friday — the highest publicly acknowledged death toll from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over the rebels' attacks on shipping.

The Houthis 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 around 250 hostage.

Houthis said Friday morning that one of the strikes struck a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea. Their Al Masirah satellite news channel aired images of one bloodied man being carried downstairs and others receiving aid in the hospital. The Houthis described all those killed and hurt in Hodeida as civilians, something The Associated Press could not immediately confirm. The rebel force that's held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014 includes fighters who often are not in uniform.

Other strikes hit outside of Sanaa near its airport and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released on those sites — likely signaling that Houthi military sites had been struck.

The U.S. and the U.K. have launched strikes against the Houthis since January. Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the Houthis' secretive supreme leader, offered an overall death toll for the strikes up to that point as 40 people killed and 35 others wounded. He did not offer a breakdown between civilian and combatant casualties at the time.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. This week, they attacked a ship carrying grain to Iran, the rebels' main benefactor.

Berlin lets Ukraine use German weapons against targets in Russia after the US also eases its stance

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The German government said Friday that Ukraine can use German-supplied weapons against Russian attacks from positions just over their joint border, in a significant policy change that came a day after U.S. President Joe Biden gave Kyiv a green light to strike back with American weapons at Russian military assets targeting the country's second-largest city.

A German government statement noted that, in recent weeks, Russia has prepared, coordinated and carried out attacks on Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region in particular from areas just over the border in Russia.

"Together we are convinced that Ukraine has the right under international law to defend itself against these attacks," the statement said. "For this, it can also use the weapons delivered for that purpose in accordance with its international legal commitments, including the ones delivered by us," it added, without elaborating on what Berlin called confidential agreements with Kyiv.

A Russian onslaught this month in the northeastern Kharkiv region, including a Russian aerial bomb attack on a large construction supplies store that killed 18 people on May 25, has forced the evacuation of thousands of people and has stretched Ukraine's depleted forces in what is proving to be a critical period in the war, which is now in its third year. That appears to have prompted the change in policy among Western leaders.

The Kremlin's bigger and better-equipped army is exploiting Ukrainian shortages in troops and ammunition after a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid. Western Europe's inadequate military production has also slowed crucial deliveries of military aid to Ukraine.

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Biden's decision allows for U.S.-supplied weapons to be used for "counterfire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," one Washington official told The Associated Press.

But the officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, stressed that the U.S. policy calling on Ukraine not to use American-provided ATACMS or long-range missiles and other munitions to strike offensively inside Russia has not changed.

The German announcement came hours after Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment block in Kharkiv and killed at least four people in a nighttime attack.

Russia launched five S-300/S-400 ballistic missiles at Kharkiv overnight, Ukraine's air force said. One of them struck a residential building close to midnight and was followed by another missile 25 minutes later that hit first responders, according to regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. At least 25 people were injured, he said.

Ukrainian officials have previously accused Russia of targeting rescue workers by hitting residential buildings with two consecutive missiles — the first one to draw emergency crews to the scene and the second one to wound or kill them. The tactic is called a "double tap" in military jargon. Russia used the same method in Syria's civil war.

Apart from Kharkiv, Moscow's troops are pressing in the Donetsk region further south and are assembling a force for an expected attack in the Sumy region further north, according to Ukrainian officials.

The restrictions until now on the use of Western weapons have frustrated Ukrainian officials as the military has been unable to order hits on Russian troops massing across the border — Kharkiv city is only 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Russia — or Russian bases used to launch missile attacks.

The question of whether to allow Ukraine to hit targets on Russian soil with Western-supplied weaponry has been a delicate issue since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Western leaders hesitated to take the step because it runs the risk of provoking Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has repeatedly warned that the West's direct involvement could put the world on a path to nuclear conflict.

But as Russia has recently gained the battlefield initiative in some parts of the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, some Western leaders are pushing for a policy change allowing Kyiv to strike military bases inside Russia with sophisticated long-range weapons provided by its Western partners.

Barred from combat, women working as codebreakers, cartographers and coxswains helped D-Day succeed

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — What did you do in the war, Granny?

For British women who came of age during World War II, the answer to that question is often: quite a lot.

The history of D-Day is often told through the stories of the men who fought and died when the Allies stormed the beaches of northern France on June 6, 1944.

But behind the scenes were hundreds of thousands of military women who worked in crucial non-combat roles such as codebreakers, ship plotters, radar operators and cartographers. Often overlooked, their contributions have come into sharper focus as the number of living D-Day veterans dwindles and the world prepares for the 80th anniversary of the landings.

One of those women was Marie Scott, who was a 17-year-old radio operator when she heard the chaos of battle through her headset as she relayed messages between Allied commanders in England and men on the Normandy beaches.

"You realize the reality of war, what it really entails. It's not a word. It's an action that affects thousands, millions," Scott said recently, discussing her time in the Women's Royal Naval Service, commonly known as the Wrens. "I think I grew up that day from being a stupid 17-year-old. I think I honestly grew up on D-Day."

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Almost 160,000 Allied troops landed at Normandy on D-Day in a massive amphibious operation designed to break through heavily fortified German defenses and begin the liberation of Western Europe.

Throughout the war, more than 1.1 million women served in the armed forces of the Western Allies, including 640,000 in Britain, where there was a real threat of invasion after Nazi troops drove to the shores of the English Channel.

Even Princess Elizabeth, the future queen, did her bit, training to be a driver and mechanic in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the women's branch of the British Army.

The pitch on recruiting posters was simple: By joining the military and taking over support roles, women could free men for front-line service. Although technically barred from combat, more than 800 British women were killed in military service during the war.

"People forget they were 17, 18 doing these jobs," said Dick Goodwin, the honorary secretary of the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, which helps veterans travel to Normandy each year. "I mean, it's just amazing, really. Talk about thrown in at the deep end!"

Those who did not join the military had other opportunities to serve. Millions of women worked in defense factories, grew crops and rode motorcycles through the blacked out streets of London to keep firefighters updated on the latest bomb damage as the British government asked them to keep the economy going after men went off to fight.

The Allied nations' decision to mobilize women was an important strategic choice that contrasted with Nazi Germany, where the authorities relied on forced labor, according to Ian Johnson, a historian at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

"Part of the intent was to take it — use the economic and material advantages of the Allies and really ... put that to greatest use compared to the way the Germans structured their military," he said. "So those support roles were crucial in providing the logistical advantages that help the Allies win."

Altogether, some 7 million British women served their country in some capacity during World War II.

Their sacrifices are honored with a sculpture in central London, near the Cenotaph, the national war memorial.

The bronze monolith is decorated with 17 different uniforms hung on pegs to represent the jobs women took on during the war, then gave up when the men returned.

They include the uniforms of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and the Women's Royal Naval Service. But there are also police overalls, a nursing cape and a welder's mask.

"I get a certain satisfaction from my wartime experience," Scott said. "And I do allow myself, occasionally, just a tinge of pride in my younger self."

Guilty: Trump becomes first former US president convicted of felony crimes

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, ERIC TUCKER, JILL COLVIN and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump became the first former American president to be convicted of felony crimes Thursday as a New York jury found him guilty of all 34 charges in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex.

Trump sat stone-faced while the verdict was read as cheering from the street below could be heard in the hallway on the courthouse's 15th floor where the decision was revealed after more than nine hours of deliberations.

"This was a rigged, disgraceful trial," an angry Trump told reporters after leaving the courtroom. "The real verdict is going to be Nov. 5 by the people. They know what happened, and everyone knows what happened here."

Judge Juan M. Merchan set sentencing for July 11, just days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where GOP leaders, who remained resolute in their support in the aftermath of the verdict,

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are expected to formally make him their nominee.

The verdict is a stunning legal reckoning for Trump and exposes him to potential prison time in the city where his manipulations of the tabloid press helped catapult him from a real estate tycoon to reality television star and ultimately president. As he seeks to reclaim the White House in this year's election, the judgment presents voters with another test of their willingness to accept Trump's boundary-breaking behavior.

Trump is expected to appeal the verdict and will face an awkward dynamic as he returns to the campaign trail tagged with convictions. There are no campaign rallies on the calendar for now, though he traveled Thursday evening to a fundraiser in Manhattan that was planned before the verdict, according to three people familiar with his plans who were not authorized to speak publicly.

He's expected to appear Friday at Trump Tower and will continue fundraising next week. His campaign was already moving quickly to raise money off the verdict, issuing a pitch that called him a "political prisoner."

The falsifying business records charges carry up to four years behind bars, though Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg would not say Thursday whether prosecutors intend to seek imprisonment, and it is not clear whether the judge — who earlier in the trial warned of jail time for gag order violations — would impose that punishment even if asked.

The conviction, and even imprisonment, will not bar Trump from continuing his White House pursuit.

Trump faces three other felony indictments, but the New York case may be the only one to reach a conclusion before the November election, adding to the significance of the outcome. Though the legal and historical implications of the verdict are readily apparent, the political consequences are less so given its potential to reinforce rather than reshape already hardened opinions about Trump.

For another candidate in another time, a criminal conviction might doom a presidential run, but Trump's political career has endured through two impeachments, allegations of sexual abuse, investigations into everything from potential ties to Russia to plotting to overturn an election, and personally salacious storylines, including the emergence of a recording in which he boasted about grabbing women's genitals.

The case's general allegations have also been known to voters for years and, while tawdry, are widely seen as less grievous than the allegations he faces in three other cases that charge him with subverting American democracy and mishandling national security secrets.

Ahead of the verdict, Trump's campaign had argued that, no matter the jury's decision, the outcome was unlikely to sway voters and that the election would be decided by issues such as inflation.

Even so, the verdict is likely to give President Joe Biden and fellow Democrats space to sharpen arguments that Trump is unfit for office, though the White House offered only a muted statement that it respected the rule of law. Conversely, the decision will provide fodder for the presumptive Republican nominee to advance his unsupported claims that he is victimized by a criminal justice system he insists is politically motivated against him.

Trump maintained throughout the trial that he had done nothing wrong and that the case should never have been brought, railing against the proceedings from inside the courthouse — where he was joined by a parade of high-profile Republican allies — and racking up fines for violating a gag order with inflammatory out-of-court comments about witnesses.

After the verdict, Trump lawyer Todd Blanche said in television news interviews that he did not believe Trump received a fair trial and that the team would appeal based on the judge's refusal to recuse himself and because of what he suggested was excessive pretrial publicity.

Republicans showed no sign of loosening their embrace of the party leader, with House Speaker Mike Johnson lamenting what he called "a shameful day in American history." He called the case "a purely political exercise, not a legal one."

The first criminal trial of a former American president always presented a unique test of the court system, not only because of Trump's prominence but also because of his relentless broadsides on the foundation of the case and its participants. But the verdict from the 12-person jury marked a repudiation of Trump's efforts to undermine confidence in the proceedings or to potentially impress the panel with a show of GOP support.

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"While this defendant may be unlike any other in American history, we arrived at this trial and ultimately today in this verdict in the same manner as every other case that comes through the courtroom doors, by following the facts and the law and doing so without fear or favor," Bragg said after the verdict.

The trial involved charges that Trump falsified business records to cover up a hush money payment to Stormy Daniels, the porn actor who said she had sex with the married Trump in 2006.

The \$130,000 payment came from Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer Michael Cohen to buy Daniels' silence during the final weeks of the 2016 race in what prosecutors allege was an effort to interfere in the election. When Cohen was reimbursed, the payments were recorded as legal expenses, which prosecutors said was an unlawful attempt to mask the true purpose of the transaction.

Trump's lawyers contend they were legitimate payments for legal services. He denied the sexual encounter, and his lawyers argued at trial that his celebrity status made him an extortion target.

Defense lawyers also said hush money deals to bury negative stories about Trump were motivated by personal considerations such as the impact on his family, not political ones. They also sought to undermine the credibility of Cohen, the star prosecution witness who pleaded guilty in 2018 to federal charges related to the payments, by suggesting he was driven by personal animus toward Trump and fame and money.

The trial featured weeks of occasionally riveting testimony that revisited an already well-documented chapter from Trump's past. His 2016 campaign, threatened by the disclosure of an "Access Hollywood" recording that captured him talking about grabbing women sexually without their permission, also faced the prospect of other stories about Trump and sex surfacing that could have harmed his candidacy.

Trump did not testify, but jurors heard his voice through a secret recording of a conversation with Cohen in which he and the lawyer discussed a \$150,000 hush money deal involving a Playboy model, Karen McDougal, who has said she had an affair with Trump. Trump denies that affair.

Daniels herself testified, offering a vivid recounting of the sexual encounter she says they had in a Lake Tahoe hotel suite. The former publisher of the National Enquirer, David Pecker, testified about how he worked to keep stories harmful to the Trump campaign from becoming public at all, including by having his company buy McDougal's story.

Jurors also heard from Keith Davidson, the lawyer who negotiated the hush money payments on behalf of Daniels and McDougal. He detailed the tense negotiations to get both women compensated for their silence but also faced aggressive questioning from a Trump attorney who noted Davidson had helped broker similar hush money deals in cases involving other prominent figures.

The most pivotal witness, by far, was Cohen, who during days of testimony gave an insider's view of the hush money scheme and what he said was Trump's detailed knowledge of it.

"Just take care of it," he quoted Trump as saying.

He offered jurors the most direct link between Trump and the heart of the charges, recounting a meeting in which a plan to have Cohen reimbursed in monthly installments for legal services was discussed.

And he emotionally described his dramatic break with Trump in 2018, when he began cooperating with prosecutors after a decade-long career as the then-president's personal fixer.

"To keep the loyalty and to do the things that he had asked me to do, I violated my moral compass, and I suffered the penalty, as has my family," Cohen said.

The case, though criticized by some legal experts who called it the weakest of the prosecutions against Trump, took on added importance not only because it proceeded to trial first but also because it could be the only one to reach a jury before the election.

The other three — local and federal cases in Atlanta and Washington alleging that he conspired to overturn the 2020 election, as well as a federal indictment in Florida charging him with illegally hoarding top-secret records — are bogged down by delays or appeals.

NATO ministers meet in Prague as allies ease restrictions on Ukraine's use of their weapons

By MATTHEW LEE and KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — NATO foreign ministers were meeting in the Czech capital Friday to prepare for this summer's leaders' summit as the alliance boosts support for Ukraine and countries one-by-one remove restrictions on how Kyiv can use western-supplied weaponry to combat Russia's invasion.

A day after U.S. President Joe Biden gave Ukraine the go-ahead to use American munitions to strike inside Russia for the limited purpose of defending Kharkiv, numerous ministers, including those from the Netherlands, Finland, Poland and Germany, expressed approval of the decision, saying that Ukraine has the absolute right to defend itself from attacks originating on Russian soil.

The chorus of allied voices backing greater leeway for Ukraine to use their weapons grew louder in recent weeks after Russia launched artillery strikes on Kharkiv from its territory, prompting appeals for help from Kyiv. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had hinted strongly this week that a change in Washington's position was coming.

"This is a matter of upholding international law — Ukraine's right to self-defense," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said. "Russia has attacked Ukraine, (which) has the right to defend themselves. And that includes also attacking military legitimate targets inside Russia."

"If you look at the battlefield now, Russia is launching attacks on Ukraine's soil from Russian soil with artillery, missiles, and massing troops," he said. "And, of course, it makes it very hard for Ukraine to defend themselves if they are not allowed to use advanced weapons to repel those attacks."

Ukrainian officials had stepped up calls on the U.S. administration to allow their forces to defend themselves against attacks originating from Russian territory. Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, is just 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the Russian border.

Ukrainian officials, most notably President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, have been increasingly vocal in arguing that the restriction was putting Ukrainian forces in an untenable situation as Russia intensified attacks around Kharkiv.

Russia has been exploiting a lengthy delay in replenishment of U.S. military aid and Western Europe's inadequate military production that has slowed crucial deliveries to the battlefield for Ukraine.

The alliance is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year and leaders will be meeting in Washington in July to reaffirm their support. Stoltenberg said he expects to be able to announce at the summit that at least two-thirds of members are meeting their commitment to spend 2% of their gross domestic product on defense.

Oil giant Saudi Aramco offers a second stock tranche worth billions of dollars

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia said Friday it will sell a second sliver of stock in its state oil giant Aramco worth billions of dollars, its first tranche since its initial public offering back in 2019.

Saudi Aramco, formally known as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., acknowledged the stock sale in a corporate disclosure online. It put the number of shares being offered at 1.545 billion, priced at between \$7.12 and \$7.73 a share.

At the high range of the valuation, that would make the shares worth some \$11.9 billion. They'll begin being sold on Sunday to institutional investors and on Monday to retail investors.

Aramco has a market value of \$1.8 trillion, making it the world's sixth most valuable company behind Microsoft, Apple, NVIDIA, Google owner Alphabet and Amazon respectively.

Just 1.73% of the company, a narrow sliver, has been traded on the Tadawul, Saudi Arabia's stock exchange, since the company's 2019 IPO. This additional offer represents 0.64% of all the company's shares.

The Saudi government remains the dominant shareholder in Aramco, with shares also going toward the kingdom's sovereign wealth funds as part of its efforts to rapidly diversify the country's economy away

from oil.

Saudi Arabia's vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, make it one of the world's least expensive places to produce crude.

Shares in Aramco stood around \$7.75 a share in trading Thursday. Aramco shares have lost nearly 12% of their value since the start of the year.

Aramco reported making a \$121 billion profit last year, down from its 2022 record due to lower energy prices.

US and Britain strike Houthi rebel targets in Yemen after surge in shipping attacks

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Britain struck 13 Houthi targets in several locations in Yemen on Thursday in response to a recent surge in attacks by the Iran-backed militia group on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the Israel-Hamas war, three U.S. officials said. The Houthi rebels said the airstrikes killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others.

According to the officials, American and British fighter jets and U.S. ships hit a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to provide early details of an ongoing military operation.

Also struck by the U.S. were eight uncrewed aerial vehicles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen that were determined to be presenting a threat to American and coalition forces.

The Houthis' Al Masirah satellite news station highlighted one of the strikes, which hit a radio building in the Red City port city of Hodeida. It aired images of one bloodied man being carried down stairs and others receiving treatment at a hospital.

Other strikes hit outside of the rebel-held capital, Sanaa, near its airport and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released — likely signaling that Houthi military sites had been struck.

"We confirm this brutal aggression against Yemen as punishment for its position in support of Gaza, in support of Israel to continue its crimes of genocide against the wounded, besieged and steadfast Gaza Strip," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam wrote on the social platform X.

The strikes came a day after a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone went down in Yemen, and 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 was the third such downing in May alone.

Also earlier this week, missile attacks twice damaged a Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-owned ship in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, with a private security firm saying radio traffic suggested the vessel took on water after being struck. The Houthis have claimed responsibility for the attack.

This is the fifth time that the U.S. and British militaries have conducted a combined operation against the Houthis since Jan. 12. But the U.S. also has been carrying out almost daily strikes to take out Houthi targets, including incoming missiles and drones aimed at ships, as well as weapons that were prepared to launch.

The U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets launched from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, officials said. Other U.S. warships in the region also participated.

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. 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.

U.S. warships, meanwhile, took out a number of missile launchers and drones targeting vessels in the region over the past week.

President Joe Biden and other senior leaders have repeatedly warned that the U.S. won't tolerate the Houthi attacks against commercial shipping. But the counterattacks haven't appeared to diminish the Houthis' campaign against shipping in the region.

In Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, a hidden underground world is under threat by the Maya Train

By TERESA DE MIGUEL, MEGAN JANETSKY and RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

AKTUN TUYUL CAVE SYSTEM, Mexico (AP) — Rays of sunlight slice through pools of crystal water as clusters of fish cast shadows on the limestone below. Arching over the emerald basin are walls of stalactites dripping down the cavern ceiling, which opens to a dense jungle.

These glowing sinkhole lakes — known as cenotes — are a part of one of Mexico's natural wonders: A fragile system of an estimated 10,000 subterranean caverns, rivers and lakes that wind almost surreptitiously beneath Mexico's southern Yucatan peninsula.

Now, construction of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's crown jewel project — the Maya Train — is rapidly destroying part of that hidden underground world, already under threat by development and mass tourism. As the caverns are thrust into the spotlight in the lead-up to the country's presidential elections, scientists and environmentalists warn that the train will mean long-term environmental ruin.

Deep in the jungle, the roar of heavy machinery cuts through the cave's gentle "drip, drip, drip." Just a few meters above, construction of the train line is in full swing. The caverns rumble as government workers use massive metal drills that bore into limestone, embedding an estimated 15,000 steel pillars into the caverns.

Engineer Guillermo D. Christy looks upon the once immaculate cave, now coated with a layer of concrete and broken stalactites, icicle-shaped rock formations normally hanging from the roof of the cave. A mix of grief and anger is painted upon the face of D. Christy, who has long studied the waters running through the caves.

"Pouring concrete into a cavern, directly into the aquifer, without any concern or care," D. Christy said. "That's total ecocide."

A TOURISM BOON, BUT AT WHAT COST?

For nearly a thousand miles, (1,460 kilometers) the high-speed Maya Train will wind its way around Mexico's southern Yucatan Peninsula. When it's completed, it'll connect tourist hubs like Cancun and Playa del Carmen to dense jungle, remote communities and archaeological sites, drawing development and money into long-neglected rural swathes of the country.

The more than \$30 billion train is among the keystone projects of Mexico's outgoing President López Obrador, who has spent his six years in office portraying himself as a champion of the country's long-forgotten poor.

"The Maya Train will be our legacy of development for the southeast of Mexico," the president wrote in a post on the social platform X last year.

With elections on Sunday, the future of the train, and López Obrador's legacy, is uncertain. Both leading candidates to replace him have made promises for a green agenda, but also supported the economic promises the train brings.

At issue is the path the train takes.

It was originally planned to run along the region's highway in more urban areas. But after waves of complaints by hotel owners, the government moved one of the final sections of the line deeper into the jungle, atop the most important cave system in the country. It's plowed down millions of trees, a chunk of the largest tropical forest in the Americas after the Amazon.

The caves contain one of the biggest aquifers in Mexico and act as the region's main water source, crucial at a time when the nation faces a deepening water crisis. In 2022, archaeologists also discovered some of the oldest human remains in North America within the caverns.

The area was once a reef nestled beneath the Caribbean Sea, but changing sea levels pushed Mexico's

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southern peninsula out of the ocean as a mass of limestone. Water sculpted the porous stone into caves over millions of years.

It produced the open-face freshwater caverns, "cenotes," and underground rivers that are in equal parts awe-inspiring and delicate, explained Emiliano Monroy-Ríos, a geologist at Northwestern University studying the region.

"These ecosystems are very, very fragile," Monroy-Ríos said. "They are building upon a land that is like Gruyere cheese, full of caves and cavities of different sizes and at different depths."

López Obrador promised his government would prevent damage to the Great Mayan Aquifer by elevating the sections of the train on thousands of hefty steel pillars buried deep into the ground.

But the populist leader was met with an uproar in late January when environmentalists and scientists posted videos showing government drills carving tunnels into the tops of caverns, implanting rows of 6-foot-wide (2-meter-wide) steel pillars.

López Obrador responded angrily to the videos, calling them "staged" by his political enemies.

"These pseudo-environmentalists are liars," López Obrador said in a news briefing. "Don't watch those videos because they're specialists in staging."

Associated Press journalists traveled to construction sites along the Maya Train route where López Obrador denied causing any environmental damage. What they saw directly contradicted the president's claims.

DOCUMENTING DESTRUCTION

D. Christy treks through dense rainforest and clicks on his headlight as he climbs into a split in a rock.

The engineer and hydrological expert has spent 25 years roving the intricate cave system, tracking the quality of the waters. Like many of the people studying the mysteries of the ancient cave system, his once tame job was inadvertently turned turbulent with the rise of the train project.

Today, he wanders into a small section of the caverns known as Aktun Tuyul, less than an hour from the tourist city of Playa del Carmen. As the 58-year-old Mexican walks past layers of stalactites and steel pillars burrowing into the rock formations, the cave's darkness is broken by wagon wheel-sized holes drilled into the roof of the cave, where even more pillars will be implanted.

D. Christy wades through waist-deep water, now turned a murky brown by corroded metal from the pillars, and pushes his body through a narrow passage in the rock.

Sitting next to one of more than a dozen pillars embedded into this cavern, he pulls out a series of syringes and bottles, taking a sample of the water next to the metal.

"It clearly has a color characteristic of iron contamination," he said, holding up a syringe of foggy yellow water. "We're going to take a sample."

D. Christy pours the water into a glass vial, mixing it with a chemical that turns it a deep blue, indicating the water contains traces of iron from the poles. Next to other pillars, he presses his ear to the metal, listening to globs of concrete pour into the hollow tube.

Across the cave system, stalactites broken off by vibrations from train construction litter the ground like rubble following an earthquake. In other caverns, the concrete filling the pillars has spilled out to coat the limestone ground.

While the long-term environmental consequences of the construction are unknown, what is certain is that it is transforming the entire ecosystem, said geologist Monroy-Ríos.

"Just by drilling, before you even put in the pillars, you are killing an entire ecosystem that was in those caves" he said. "Why? Because now light is coming in, the gasses within have changed, and there are very sensitive species that live in total darkness. They have already killed hundreds of millions" of organisms.

But the geologist's greatest concern continues to be that the morphing limestone upon which the train is built and caves underneath the pillars could cause a collapse of the line. Scientists have long warned of the risks of building on soluble rock like limestone.

Already, sections of highway in the Yucatan have warped or caved in, and the Maya Train has been marred by a series of accidents, including a March train derailment, which government officials blamed on a loose clamp set by contractors.

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Further damage to the limestone could lead to another accident that could be deadly. If a cargo train derailed, it could cause an oil spill that could permanently devastate the aquifer, Monroy-Ríos said.

'IT WILL BENEFIT US ALL'

Not everyone is opposed to the train running through the remote communities. Some see an unprecedented economic opportunity, a chance to help poor families earn money.

Maria Norma de los Angeles and her family have long lived off a modest flow of tourists in their community of Jacinto Pat, tucked in a stretch of jungle in the southern coastal state, Quintana Roo.

They offer temazcal baths, traditional Mayan steam rooms meant to purify and relax the body, and charge visiting foreigners to swim in a nearby cenote.

The family, like many along the train's path, was originally opposed of the project because they worried it would destroy the cenotes drawing tourists.

But their feelings about the train began to change when government officials contracted local people to build the track, De los Angeles said. They also promised to bring communities electricity, a sewage system and running water, and agreed to pay more for the land the train would pass over.

"It has its pros and its cons," De los Angeles said as her family gathered to kill a pig to eat for her father's birthday. "But there will be a moment when we see an economic spillover ... I know that it will benefit us all."

That's the mentality of many Mexicans toward both the train and López Obrador. Many are willing to overlook the controversies of the populist and his train, in favor of his charisma and the strong economy seen during his presidency.

The 70-year-old leader has connected with Mexico's long-invisible working class in a way few leaders have in recent history. López Obrador's government has raised the minimum wage and provided cash handouts to older Mexicans and students. The government says more than 5 million people have been pulled out of poverty while López Obrador was president.

Luruama de la Cruz, a California resident whose family comes from the local town of Leona Vicario, said she bought her father tickets to the train for his birthday because it was a dream of his.

"A dream made reality," De la Cruz says as she rode the train and took a video on her phone, meandering past passengers wearing "Maya Train" T-shirts and watching an interview between López Obrador and Russian state media.

"Whenever you build something, something else is destroyed," she said, adding that family members worked on train construction. "This is for the good of the people."

A RUSH TO BUILD THE TRACK

López Obrador has fast-tracked construction of the train to try to keep promises to complete it before June elections, something that has appeared all but impossible. The moves he's made have only deepened his ongoing clashes with the country's judiciary, further fueling criticisms that his government is undermining democratic institutions.

In a violation of Mexican law, the government didn't carry out a comprehensive study to assess the potential environmental impacts before starting construction. That's led to blindly plowing into caverns with no clue what's being damaged, scientists and independent lawyers say.

"Our president has little respect for the law. He's in a sort of tug of war for power and he does what he wants," said Claudia Aguilar, a lawyer at Mexico's Free School of Law.

When a judge ordered construction of the line be suspended until an adequate report of how the train would affect the caves was carried out, López Obrador ignored the ruling, and the work continued.

At the same time, much of the project has been cloaked in secrecy as López Obrador has charged Mexico's military with construction and blocked the release of information in the name of "national security."

While Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that unconstitutional, López Obrador disregarded that ruling, too, saying it was to protect his project from "corrupt" critics.

When the AP requested an interview with leadership of the Maya Train project, spokesperson Mariana Galicia said they were "ordered that we cannot give interviews" but could respond to questions sent over email to "better control" the information shared. They did not respond to questions sent by email.

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'SWIMMING IN POOP'

Meanwhile, thousands of passengers are already riding sections of the train that have been built. The atmosphere above is far-removed from the conflicts playing out around the caverns.

Hotels and clubs host raves and even music festivals in some of the cenotes, with one club boasting it "takes the relaxation and wellness experience to another level. Let yourself be enveloped by this sacred, timeless place."

Luxurious beach hotels and booming clubs packed with drunk, khaki-clad tourists dominate the coastal tourist city of Playa del Carmen. Once a Mayan settlement, the city is among many in the Yucatan Peninsula that in recent decades have been converted into a party hub for vacationing foreigners.

In the caves below, biologist Roberto Rojo paddles through a sea of trash.

Under the arching cavern roof, Rojo and a group of volunteers push a green kayak through a cenote, filling bulking bags of glass beer bottles, plastic tubes, metal grating, plastic Coca-Cola bottles, rotten wooden planks and even a printer.

"You don't even want to know what many of those things are," Rojo said.

It's a fate Rojo and many others worry may await hundreds of cenotes, caves and underground lakes and rivers along the new Maya Train line.

"It's not just the train, but everything the train brings with it – urban developments, hotel developments," said water expert D. Christy. "Rather than solving a problem, they're coming in and making a big problem worse."

Millions of tourists a year flock to the region, affecting the entire underground as the industry guzzles water and sewage seeps through the earth and into the caves, killing fish and other wildlife. In 2022, authorities found that the water of more than a dozen of the caverns near the tourist city of Tulum was tainted with E. Coli bacteria.

Last year, the environmental organization Va Por La Tierra estimated that approximately 95% of the cenotes in Yucatan state — where the Maya Train cuts through — were already contaminated due to the lack of a sufficient sewage system. Scuba diving master Bernardette Carrión even told the AP that tourists admiring the splendor of the caves "are swimming in poop."

The underground system is connected to the sea, so waste trickles out to the ocean, where scientists say it feeds seaweed-like algae piling up on Caribbean coastlines, spurring on a slate of other environmental and health hazards.

Rojo and other volunteers created the organization known as "Urban Cenotes" in Playa del Carmen to clean the water system, cave by cave.

"We're trying to return the dignity that these spaces have had for thousands of years, that are now being turned into landfills, sewers and drains," Rojo said.

But it's an uphill battle for the hundreds of volunteers, and something they worry will become impossible as pollution expands into rural areas with the Maya Train, deepening ongoing pollution caused by pig farms and massive soy plantations.

Looking forward, they're uncertain about what will come as June elections loom, with López Obrador leaving office in the coming months. The leader will likely be replaced by either race front-runner and ally Claudia Sheinbaum or rival ex-senator Xóchitl Gálvez.

Sheinbaum, an environmental scientist who leads the race by a comfortable margin, has portrayed herself as a champion for the environment, but has supported López Obrador's fossil-fuel agenda and made few remarks about the environmental damage the train has wrought.

Little more than a week before the presidential election, Sheinbaum said she was meeting with leaders of neighboring Guatemala and Belize in talks to extend the Maya Train to Central America.

Gálvez, a López Obrador opponent, has taken advantage of the controversy to tear into her adversaries, calling the train's damage "irreversible" and a "consequence of the negligence of the government because they didn't do any environmental impact studies." Months earlier, though, she said she would also continue with plans to extend the train.

Meanwhile, groups like Rojo's do everything they can to salvage an ecosystem that took millennia to form. They worry they might not have all that much time left.

"I'm not going to sit quietly and wait for the government to solve things," Rojo said. "The people who live in the Yucatan peninsula are on the verge of a water crisis."

Italy's migrant jails are squalid and chaotic. A young man from Guinea was desperate to escape

By PAOLO SANTALUCIA, GIADA ZAMPANO, ANNIE RISEMBERG and BOUBACAR DIALLO Associated Press ROME (AP) — It was still dark and quiet outside when Ousmane Sylla performed his last prayer in the courtyard of an Italian migrant jail.

"I miss my Africa very much and my mother too," read a scribble in French on the wall nearby. "May I rest in peace."

A few moments later, the silence of dawn was shattered. Chaos took over the detention and deportation center of Ponte Galeria on the outskirts of Rome as other inmates discovered the body of the 21-year-old Sylla, who had apparently hanged himself.

Sylla had landed on Italian shores the year before, one of tens of thousands of people who pay migrant smugglers hundreds or thousands of euros to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. He had no visa, and had been ordered to leave after admitting that he had lied about being a minor.

Fellow detainees who discovered his body screamed for help and frantically tried to resuscitate him. When paramedics finally arrived, Sylla was gone. Enraged by his death, migrants set mattresses on fire, broke down doors and threw stones at security forces inside the jail. The riots led to the arrest of 13 people.

Sylla's death in February shined a spotlight on the conditions inside these de-facto jails for migrants, which have been condemned by lawyers and refugee activists as "black holes" of human rights violations. And yet the far-right-led government, led by Premier Giorgia Meloni, vowed to build more such facilities across the country as well as abroad.

"I want to send a clear message to those who want to enter Italy illegally ... it is better you don't do it and you don't put your life in the hands of smugglers," Meloni said in a video posted on social media last year addressing would-be migrants. "And in any case, if you enter Italy illegally you will be detained and repatriated".

The Italian government says the centers, which were established in 1999, are essential to deterring migrants like Sylla from risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe.

The centers are meant to detain those migrants who enter the Italian territory without a visa, are not entitled to apply for asylum and are labeled as "socially dangerous" by law enforcement authorities. Earlier this year the Italian government extended the time foreigners can be detained, from 90 days to 18 months.

Sylla's chances of being deported were minimal because Guinea has no repatriation agreement with Italy. He wanted to return to Guinea, he told officials, yet a judge extended his detention.

He had dreamed of a better life in Europe. Now he just wanted to go home.

FROM CONAKRY TO ROME

Sylla's journey from the West African nation of Guinea to Italy began in 2022. One of 7 children, he dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic after his family could no longer afford the fees. He learned masonry but his real passion was singing. Sylla posted videos of himself on TikTok rhyiming and gesturing his hands like a rapper.

"His dream was to become a big star, that everyone would say his name, and he would sing for everyone," his older sister, Mariama Sylla, said from the family's modest house in the outskirts of the capital, Conakry.

He had never shown any signs that he was mentally unwell, his family said.

"He was strong. He was brave. He loved our entire family. He can't do it, he can't do it. He can't leave us like that," Mariama repeated in despair.

To get to Europe, Sylla crossed the Sahara through Mali, Algeria and Tunisia, always calling his mother and sister to keep them updated on his journey. They sometimes wired him a little money when they

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could, and Sylla worked small jobs to pay smugglers along the way. He made his way to the Tunisian coast, where smugglers move thousands of migrants from northern Africa to Europe on rickety boats. This Central Mediterranean route is known as one of the deadliest migration crossings in the world; more than 2,500 people died or went missing last year alone.

After nearly drowning in the Mediterranean, Sylla finally reached the Italian island of Lampedusa on July 29, 2023. Again, he called his family to tell them he had made it.

But his odyssey through the Italian migration and asylum system was only beginning.

TRAPPED IN ITALY

Sylla was trying to join his older brother, who lives in France. But when he reached the border town of Ventimiglia on August 9, 2023, he was rejected by French authorities. After lying about his age in the hopes it would increase his chance of getting residency, Sylla was sent south, to a center for underage migrants in the town of Cassino.

But the place that was supposed to look after unaccompanied minors was violent and dysfunctional, his brother and witnesses told AP. During his time in Cassino, Sylla told them he was repeatedly beaten up by other migrants and felt unsafe. He sometimes left the center and sought shelter with neighbors who told AP that police were frequently called in to resolve scuffles.

According to witnesses working at the center, the facility lacked basic services such as proper clothing, psychological support and translators. Food deliveries, pocket money and mobile data cards were scarce, creating tensions among the young residents.

"He told me he was in danger and that he was surrounded by really bad people and that they wanted to hurt him," Sylla's brother Djibril Sylla told AP in Rome, where he traveled to identify Sylla's body. He last heard from his brother on Sept. 27.

In audio messages sent to employees that were obtained by AP, the Cassino center's director, Rossella Compagna, insulted the facility's residents, calling them "a hassle," and threatened to punish them or throw them out into the street. But she said the center needed them: each placement brought in money from the government.

The center was shut down for lack of proper staff by the Cassino social services office. Michelangelo Soli lawyer of Compagna, the director when Sylla was held, said her comments referred to several violent guests, and that despite shortcomings, Sylla and others weren't mistreated.

Desperate for help, Sylla attended a local municipal council meeting on Oct. 6. He repeatedly raised his hand for a chance to speak but was never given the floor. After the meeting, he eventually caught the attention of local councilor Laura Borraccio.

"He lifted his shirt and actually had some bruises," Borraccio, recalled. "I asked him what those bruises were and he replied that they had been from daily arguments that happened within the center with other guests."

She said Sylla, who was very agitated but not violent, showed her videos of screaming inside the center and admitted he was not a minor and was desperate to be transferred elsewhere.

"He was very upset and the only thing he said was 'help me ... Please I want to go back to my country'... He said there were bad people in Italy and didn't want to stay here any longer," Borraccio recalled.

UNFIT FOR DETENTION

A few days later on Oct. 13, Sylla received an order expelling him from the country. One day later, he was transferred to a detention and deportation center in Trapani, the first of two migrant centers where he would spend the last four months of his life, according to Dario Asta, a lawyer who assisted Sylla.

Giuseppe Caradonna, another lawyer who tried to assist Sylla, said that's when a psychologist first flagged his mental health issues.

Caradonna informed local authorities on Nov. 14 that Sylla's mental and physical conditions made him unfit for detention and requested his transfer to a facility where he could receive adequate medical and psychological attention.

"Ousmane Sylla continues to maintain a conduct that is completely incompatible with the conditions of

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the center, probably due to mental disorders resulting from traumatic experiences to the point of putting him at serious risk," Caradonna wrote in his communication, which included a psychologist's report describing Sylla's aggressive behavior, both against the workers and other detainees.

But the transfer request was denied and on Jan. 5 his detention was extended by a judge for three more months.

"I don't understand why nobody told him to apply for asylum in Cassino", regretted Gaetano Pasqualino, the lawyer who is now representing Sylla's family. "The application would have prevented him from being detained and would have given him more time."

A fellow migrant detainee from Guinea-Bissau said that Sylla was taking daily medication provided by a doctor at the Trapani facility. In late January, when a riot broke out in the center, burning most of it, both of them were transferred to the Ponte Galeria detention center near Rome.

As Sylla boarded the bus that would transfer him, a doctor handed him his case file, urging him to show it to staff at the new center so he could get proper care.

"She kissed Ousmane on the head and told him 'Everything will be fine,'" the Guinean man told AP under the condition that his name not be published over concerns about his legal status.

But there is no evidence that the file was ever seen by any professional at the Rome detention center and Sylla was never seen by the center's psychologist. The center, managed by an international detention and reception company called ORS, wouldn't comment on Sylla's treatment, but their contract confirms they had a responsibility to provide psychological care to detainees.

Four days later, the young man took his own life.

Sylla's family in Guinea learned of his suicide via a Facebook post 10 days after he died. They hadn't had any news of him in months and had been worried.

At that time, communicating with the outside world was almost impossible for migrants at the Ponte Galeria center. Mobile phones weren't allowed, and only one public phone was shared by dozens of migrants.

"We were never informed he was in a detention center. Never. That's not normal," his sister, Mariama Sylla, said. "He had the right at least to call his family and tell us."

SQUALID CONDITIONS, VIOLENCE

Enclosed by tall metal bars, detainees at the Ponte Galeria detention and deportation center near Rome, where Sylla died, walk around in circles and kick balls to pass time. Their days are cadenced only by breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as a few medical appointments and sporadic detention hearings. Unlike normal jails and prisons where inmates work, learn and do other activities, in Italy's these temporary migrant centers there's only boredom.

"There's nothing to do there: you just wake up, eat, go to sleep, day after day ... People accumulate lots of rage, lose their minds, because they have no hope left," said another former detainee from Tunisia. Like many other detainees who spoke to AP, he asked to remain anonymous fearing repercussions on his application to stay in Italy.

Some of them described how many migrants hurt themselves in a desperate attempt to be released from the centers. Videos from inside the center reviewed by AP showed some of those self-harm attempts, including two detainees using an iron bar to break the ankle of another resident with his permission. His screams could be heard throughout the cavernous facility.

Although the Ponte Galeria center's management allowed AP a rare visit to the facilities, they declined to answer specific questions about the conditions of the residents and Sylla's time there.

Italy currently has 10 such migrant centers across the country with a capacity to hold 700 foreigners under administrative detention at any one time. Two of them, including Trapani's, are closed for upgrades. Only months after the death of Sylla, mobile phones without cameras were allowed in, and the public health service said it will provide a psychiatrist three times a week at the center.

In theory, the aim of the centers is deportation. But according to Interior Ministry data, only 52% of migrants in detention centers are successfully expelled. The rest are eventually released with a self-expulsion order, unable to work or regularize their situation. Many fall into the underground economy or become

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prey to criminal groups.

"The (detention and deportation) system is a catalyst for failures," said Maurizio Veglio, a migration law expert active with the Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration, an advocacy group.

"That's because the final outcome of the repatriation process depends mainly on the will of the migrants' country of origin to cooperate with Italy. And, often, their decisions are based on all different kinds of political reasons, which have nothing to do with the behavior of the detainees," he said.

Rights groups and human rights lawyers have for years denounced and documented squalid conditions inside the migrant jails, including the lack of adequate health services, overprescription of psychiatric drugs to keep detainees sedated, and limited access for their lawyers and relatives.

From 2019 to 2024, 13 people had died - five by suicide - inside Italy's detention centers, which also registered hundreds of suicide attempts and self-harm episodes.

DOUBLING DOWN ON MIGRANTS' DETENTION

Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi has insisted that the expansion of the network of deportation centers is a "fundamental element" in the government's overall migration strategy, stressing that the difficult conditions in them are the result of riots and vandalism by detainees.

"There is no intention to deny any human rights, but in these centers are people who (...) present conditions of danger that have been confirmed by judicial authorities," said Piantedosi, who has defended the migrant detention centers' effectiveness.

Italy is also trying to outsource migration to third countries. Last year, the government signed a deal with Albania for the non-EU country to hold thousands of asylum seekers on behalf of Italy. Under the five-year deal, an Italian detention center in Albania would shelter migrants rescued from international waters who would normally be taken to Italian ports. It's not clear how the system will be implemented, and the construction of the centers in Albania is undergoing major delays.

But the novel approach has sparked curiosity of a majority of other European Union member states who called for similar arrangements earlier this month. The bloc's new Migration and Asylum Pact also strives to speed up asylum procedures and deportations of those not eligible to stay in the EU.

With parliamentary elections in the bloc in June, many right-to-center politicians are also eager to adopt a tough stance on the issue for fear of losing even more votes to the likes of Italian premier Meloni and other populists with an anti-migrant rhetoric.

Italy has a very low rate of effective returns: in 2023, only 12% of all migrants with expulsion orders were effectively deported home, well below the 19% recorded in the EU.

"This system is a total failure. Often it doesn't reach its goal, which is to repatriate as many migrants as possible, while keeping young people in limbo, without any respect for their human rights," said Stefano Anastasia, an independent regional ombudsman for detainees.

MOURNING IN GUINEA

Back in Guinea, Sylla's relatives blame the Italian government for his death.

"I am so, so angry at them! What they've done to my little brother, they abandoned him like he's not a human being. I'm furious," Mariama told AP shortly after his burial in Conakry.

She vowed the family would fight for justice with the help of an Italian lawyer. Their hopes are pinned on the ongoing official probe looking into possible "incitement to suicide and manslaughter," according to Attilio Pisani, one of the Rome prosecutors on the case. So far, there have been no indictments.

"If I die, I'd like my body to be sent back to Africa," Sylla had written on the jail wall. "My mother will be happy."

On April 8 his final wish was accomplished. Paid by crowdfunding from activists at the group LasciateCIEntrare, Sylla's body was flown from Rome to Conakry in a metal coffin. That evening, dozens of relatives and friends chanting "justice" with their fists in the air marched to the airport to receive his remains.

Following Islamic tradition, they removed his remains from the casket and buried him next to his father's grave the next day. It was Ramadan, just like when he had left, only two years before.

Sylla's house was then flooded by family and neighbors who came to give his mother Mariam Bangoura their heartfelt condolences. Surrounded by other women from her community, Bangoura wiped tears from her eyes and looked at photos of her son on a cell phone.

"My child was suffering and I didn't know," she said.

In Guinea's capital, a heartbroken family brings their son's body home

By The Associated Press undefined

Ousmane Sylla's final journey home came not with joyful celebration, but with mourning.

The 21-year-old's body was flown in a metal coffin from Rome to Conakry, Guinea's coastal capital.

On a hot day in April, his family collected him from the airport. It was Ramadan, so no one had eaten. But they walked for miles through the crowded streets with more of Sylla's friends, shouting "justice for Ousmane!" along the way.

Their beloved Ousmane was always full of cheer, even when he left to join his brother in France, hoping to get a job and send money home. He traveled through the Malian desert to Algeria and through Tunisia, and crossed the Mediterranean on a smuggler's boat.

In Italy, he found despair. He spent months in a crowded, squalid migrant detention center, unable to contact his family. He died by suicide in February after other detainees said he became depressed and withdrawn.

Mariam Bangoura didn't know her son was in pain. His sister, Mariama Sylla, blames the Italian government. "They abandoned him like he's not a human being," Mariama Sylla said.

Sylla had scribbled on the wall before he died that he wanted to be returned to Africa, and to his mother. So they bid him farewell in his home, with love and hopes to see him again.

Modi touts India's roaring economy as he seeks reelection, but many feel left behind

By KRUTIKA PATHI and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

SAMASTIPUR, India (AP) — Narendra Modi swept to power a decade ago on promises to transform India's economy, and it would be hard to argue he hasn't made strides. As he seeks a third term as prime minister, the country's economic growth is the envy of the world, its stock markets are booming, and new buildings and highways are popping up everywhere.

There are cracks in the facade, though, that his political challengers hope to benefit from, including high unemployment, persistent poverty and the sense that only a small portion of India's 1.4 billion people has been able to cash in on the good fortune.

"You have a booming economy for people higher up on the socioeconomic ladder, but people lower down are really struggling," said Milan Vaishnav, director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party have remained popular since he was first elected prime minister in 2014 on a strident Hindu-first platform and pledges to succeed where past governments had failed by finally transforming the economy from rural to industrial.

He promised to clamp down on deeply rooted corruption and to leverage the country's manpower advantage to turn it into a manufacturing powerhouse. While campaigning this spring — the six-week-long election concludes Saturday — Modi has vowed to make India's economy the world's third-largest, trailing only those of the U.S. and China. Votes will be counted Tuesday.

Modi has had successes. The economy is growing by 7% and more than 500 million Indians have opened bank accounts during his tenure — a big step toward formalizing an economy where many jobs are still off the books and untaxed. His administration has also poured billions of dollars into the country's creaky infrastructure to lure investment, and notably streamlined its vast welfare program, which serves around 60% of the population and which his party is leveraging to try to win over poor and disillusioned voters.

Despite these advances, though, Modi's economic policies have failed to generate employment that moves people from low-paying, precarious work to secure, salaried jobs. With inequality, joblessness and underemployment soaring, they've become central themes of the election.

Even as India's millionaires multiply, nearly 90% of its working-age population earns less than the country's average annual income of around \$2,770, according to a World Inequality Lab study. The top 1%

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own more than 40% of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50% own just above 6%, the study found.

To stem economic discontent, Modi and the BJP are hoping to win over poor and disgruntled voters with more than \$400 billion in welfare subsidies and cash transfers.

At the heart of their welfare agenda is a free ration program, which serves 800 million people. It existed under the previous government and is a right under India's National Food Security Act. But it was greatly expanded during the pandemic to provide grain for free, instead of just cheap, and then extended for another five years beginning in January.

Through roughly 300 programs, hundreds of millions have received household goods ranging from cooking gas cylinders to free toilets. Millions of homes have been built for the poor, who now have greater access to piped water, Wi-Fi and electricity. And the government has ramped up cash transfers to farmers and other key voting blocs.

When Rajesh Prajapati lost his job at a chemical factory in Prayagraj, a city in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, his family of five survived on government grain.

"For almost a year, the free ration was our only solace," he said, adding that it was the reason they voted for Modi again.

Indian parties have always used welfare to win elections. But experts say the BJP has done it better.

Benefits such as subsidies, pensions and loans are now delivered through cash transfers directly to bank accounts linked to each individual's biometric identity card, which the government says has helped eliminate leakages and corruption by cutting out intermediaries.

These large-scale handouts provide relief, but some say they are only a temporary fix and a sign of rising economic distress. To reduce inequality, they should be accompanied by investment in health and education, which have stagnated in recent years, said Ashoka Mody, an economist at Princeton University.

Subsidies are helpful, "but they do not create the ability of people to put themselves on a trajectory where they and their children can look forward to a better future," he said.

Tuntun Sada, a farmworker from Samastipur, a city in the eastern state of Bihar, said the 18 kilograms (40 pounds) of free grain that helps feed his family of six each month has only marginally improved their lives. He still earns less than \$100 a month after working the fields of wealthier landowners.

"People like us don't get very much," Sada said. "Modi should walk the talk. If we don't earn enough, how will we raise our children?"

The free rations don't last through the month, piped water has yet to reach his community and there are no nearby schools for his four kids to attend. What he really needs, he said, is a better job.

Modi's opposition, led by the Congress party, are betting on the jobs crisis to dent the BJP's chances of securing a majority. Before the election, a survey by the Center for Study of Developing Societies found that more than 60% of voters were worried about unemployment and believed finding a job had become tougher. Only 12% felt like economic opportunities had increased.

Official government data, which many economists question, shows the unemployment rate declining. But a recent report from the International Labor Organization found that youth unemployment in India is higher than the global average, that more than 40% of Indians still work in agriculture, and that 90% of workers are in informal employment.

The liberalizing of India's economy in the 1990s laid the foundation for the remarkable growth since, with millions escaping poverty and spawning a middle class. But it has also allowed for the growing disparity between rich and poor, economists say.

Rahul Gandhi, the main face of the opposition, has sought to tap into the growing resentment felt by the country's many have-nots by promising to take on the issue of wealth distribution if his alliance gains power.

Modi, who says his government has lifted 250 million Indians out of poverty, is unapologetic. In a TV interview this month, he said wealth distribution is a gradual process and dismissed criticism of the growing inequality by asking, "Should everyone be poor?"

Both the BJP and the Congress party say they will create more employment through various sectors including construction, manufacturing and government jobs. Experts say this is crucial for reducing economic disparities, but it's also hard to do.

Mass unemployment and underemployment have always been intractable problems in India, so parties inevitably fall back on the promises of handouts, said Mody, the Princeton economist. Case in point: The Congress party has pledged to double people's free rations if voted into power.

"It's completely the wrong focus... what we need is job creation," Mody said. "And there is no one today who has an idea of how to solve that problem."

Degree attainment rates are increasing for US Latinos but pay disparities remain

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA Associated Press

Earning her bachelor's degree from the University of California at Riverside was surreal for Angelina Chavez, the culmination of overcoming her imposter syndrome and embracing the efforts of her mothers, who walked the stage with her during the Latinx ceremony.

"They were both wearing one of my sashes," said Chavez, 23, referring to her Mexican flag and first-generation sashes. "They are living their experience of pursuing higher education through me, and that is something that I value so much."

Chavez's moms, who immigrated from Mexico, encouraged her to get good grades and pursue as many extra-curricular activities as possible. Nevertheless, Chavez's path to college wasn't easy. Her parents had a limited understanding of SAT scores, advanced placement classes and how to apply to U.S. colleges.

While the number of Latinos — the nation's largest minority group — graduating college has increased in the last two decades, they remain underpaid and underrepresented in the workforce, a reality that may require more Latinos in positions of power to facilitate change.

From 2000 to 2021, the number of Hispanic women earning advanced degrees climbed by 291%, and by 199% among Hispanic men, according to U.S. Census Bureau data analyzed by the Pew Research Center.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said those gains can be attributed to efforts by policy leaders to address disparities in achievements and outcomes and, despite attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion programs, he expects graduation rates in the Hispanic community to continue to rise.

"I think the country recognizes the importance of making sure we invest in all of our students, including our Latinos," said Cardona, who is of Puerto Rican heritage. "We have just as much potential as everyone else to be successful."

According to census data, 21% of Hispanics ages 18 to 34 were enrolled in higher education in 2021, compared with 23% of white non-Hispanics. Pew found that 7% of Latinos aged 25 or older held a graduate degree in 2021, up from 4% in 2000, but still far fewer than 14% among all others in that age group.

Excelencia in Education, a nonprofit research and policy institute, found that more Latinos are gaining credentials in STEM and healthcare, up 44% from 2005 to 2020. Yet Latinos remain underrepresented in those fields.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from 2021 show only 7% of computer and information system managers and architectural and engineering managers are Hispanic, compared to at least 72% who are white. In healthcare, Latinos represent 21% of workers compared to whites, who command 65% of the workforce.

Excelencia in Education co-founder and CEO Deborah Santiago said many Latinos aren't getting beyond associate degrees and college certificates because they have to work their way through school, and they often lack the necessary support or guidance to progress to a bachelor's or move up the career ladder.

Labor Bureau data shows Latinos are underrepresented in higher-paying positions and are most often employed in production, transportation, farming, construction and maintenance occupations. In 2021, only 25% of Latinos in the workforce were employed in management or professional occupations.

"While it's important that we are in service industries, we should also be in those white-collar jobs that pay more," Santiago said. "We have a strong work ethic. We value higher education, but we need to have industry and institutions meet us part of the way and help us see the opportunities to those higher salaries."

It was that mindset that helped Alexia Iman Burquez, who earned a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations in 2019, to move from her job on Capitol Hill to a higher paying position

with Google in Los Angeles. A daughter of Mexican immigrants, Burquez says she doesn't want to be overworked and underpaid.

"Being a first gen, I knew that although I wanted to make a difference in my community, I didn't want to sacrifice myself and perpetuate the same cycles of poverty that I came from," she said.

Cardona believes more nonwhite Hispanic people holding bachelor's degrees will translate to greater representation in positions of power. Once there, Latinos can create pathways for more access and higher-paying positions.

"I am a Latino secretary of education and I know the value of diversity, not only with Latinos, but with other cultures as well," Cardona said. "So, there is a greater likelihood that because I've experienced it, I am more likely to see the value in people who come with diverse backgrounds"

However, pay disparities endure.

Census data analyzed by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute shows Latinas with a bachelor's degree or higher are paid on average \$26 per hour, lower than most college-educated workers regardless of race and gender, said co-author Misael Galdámez, senior research analyst at UCLA. Similarly educated white men make \$14 more than Latina women.

Latinos in general earn the lowest salaries compared to other races. In 2021, the weekly median wage for a full-time Latino worker was \$777 compared with \$1,328 for Asians, \$1,018 for whites and \$801 for African Americans, according to Labor Bureau data.

"One of the reasons that we think that's the case is representation in occupations," Galdámez said. "For Latinas in particular, many of them are still working in an office admin role, which tends to pay lower than, say, if you were in a STEM field, or if you were in a management position or a CEO."

Since graduating, Chavez has been working for a marketing company and volunteering with COOP Careers, a nonprofit focused on helping first-generation and low-income students.

"A lot of my fellows are people of color," she said. "I feel it's very empowering to know that I am making a difference, especially being first-generation and having this firsthand impact."

Burquez said her first-generation friends encouraged her to ask for a salary raise instead of just being grateful she was working at a top tech company.

"It's taxing that we have to be our best advocates, but if we don't advocate for ourselves no one else will," she said. "Closed mouths don't get fed."

Biden partially lifts ban on Ukraine using US arms in strikes on Russian territory, US officials say

By MATTHEW LEE, AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has given Ukraine the go-ahead to use American weaponry to strike inside Russia for the limited purpose of defending Kharkiv, according to four U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, underscored that the U.S. policy calling on Ukraine not to use American-provided ATACMS or long-range missiles and other munitions to strike offensively inside Russia has not changed.

Biden's directive allows for U.S.-supplied weapons to be used for "counterfire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," one official said.

Ukrainian officials have stepped up calls on the U.S. administration to allow their forces to defend themselves against attacks originating from Russian territory. Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, is just 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the Russian border.

Biden's decision was first reported by Politico.

Ukrainian officials, most notably Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, have been increasingly vocal in arguing that the restriction was putting Ukrainian forces in an untenable situation as Russia intensified attacks around the northeast Kharkiv region.

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The advances came with Russia exploiting a lengthy delay in replenishment of U.S. military aid and as Western Europe's inadequate military production has slowed crucial deliveries to the battlefield for Ukraine.

Talks about changing the policy intensified inside the Biden administration more than two weeks ago, after Russia stepped up its offensive around Kharkiv, according to one of the officials familiar with the White House deliberations.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, held a secure video conference with their Ukrainian counterparts in which the Ukrainian side pressed for permission to use U.S. weaponry to hit Russian positions across the border that were being used to attack the Kharkiv region, according to a U.S. official familiar with the White House deliberation.

Following that May 13 meeting with the Ukrainians, Sullivan, Austin and Brown huddled and agree to make a recommendation to Biden to alter the policy.

Sullivan presented the recommendation to Biden two days later, making the case that it was common-sense for the Ukrainians to be able to strike back to counter the attacks on their land that were originating from Russian territory. Biden agreed.

Later on May 15, Biden had a follow-up conversation with Gen. Christopher Cavoli, who leads U.S. European command, Austin and Sullivan and asked them to move forward on finalizing the details to the change in policy.

Meanwhile, during Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Kyiv two weeks ago, Zelenskyy made his case for using American weapons to strike back at positions in Russia that were launching attacks into north and northeast Ukraine.

Blinken was convinced and brought that message back to Washington, according to three U.S. officials familiar with the top U.S. diplomat's thinking.

Blinken met with Biden and Sullivan on May 17, following his visit to Kyiv, and shared what he heard from Zelenskyy and made clear that he also supported giving the Ukrainians more leeway to strike back on Russia.

Still, Biden remained cautious and asked for due diligence before giving final approval.

Sullivan convened the administration's national security leaders for a conversation the following week, and they all agreed to move forward. Sullivan received final approval from Biden several days ago, but the guidance did not go into effect until Thursday, the official said.

It wasn't an easy decision to make. Since the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, Biden has been steadfast in his opposition to Ukraine's offensive use of American-made weaponry, concerned that the action could be seen as provocative and lead to Moscow widening the war.

Blinken said in Moldova on Wednesday that U.S. policy on how Ukraine deploys American weapons is constantly evolving, hinting that Washington may alter its unwritten prohibition on Ukraine's use of them for attacks on Russian territory. On Thursday, Blinken joined NATO foreign ministers for a meeting in Prague, where during a tour of a Czech military base he saw armored vehicles that are being sent to Kyiv.

Although U.S. officials insist there is no formal arms ban, they have long made clear that they believe the use of American weapons to attack targets inside Russia could provoke an escalatory response from Moscow, something that Russian President Vladimir Putin has promised.

That position, Blinken noted, was a "hallmark" of the Biden administration's stance on Ukraine to "adapt and adjust" as needed.

"As the conditions have changed, as the battlefield has changed, as what Russia does has changed in terms of how it's pursuing its aggression, escalation, we've adapted and adjusted, too, and I'm confident we'll continue to do that," Blinken said at a news conference in Moldova.

"We're always listening, we're always learning, and we're always making determinations about what's necessary to make sure that Ukraine can effectively continue to defend itself, and we'll continue to do that," he said.

Calls for a change in policy have been mounting.

Earlier this week, French President Emmanuel Macron and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said that Western

countries should not object if Ukraine needs to strike inside Russia to defend itself. Stoltenberg reaffirmed that position on Thursday.

"I believe that time has come to (re)consider some of these restrictions to enable the Ukrainians to really defend themselves," he said. "We need to remember what it is. This is a war of aggression launched by choice by Moscow against Ukraine."

The right to self-defense, he said, " includes also striking legitimate military targets outside Ukraine."

Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said at a NATO-related event Thursday in Prague that Ukraine needs resources to counter Russia's relentless assault.

"Ukraine cannot fight against Russia with one hand tied behind its back," he said. "Ukraine must be able to fight against Russia's barbaric invasion even on Russian territory. Political resolve must be backed by credible capabilities."

Norway's foreign minister, Espen Barth Eide, told Norwegian broadcaster NRK that his country believes Ukraine "has a crystal-clear right under international law to attack Russia inside Russia as part of the defense of its territory."

Biden's decision comes as he's set to travel to France early next month to attend D-Day 80th anniversary commemorations in Normandy, a watershed moment in changing the course of World War II. Zelenskyy is among dozens of world leaders expected to attend the D-Day commemorations.

The Latest | Slovenia moves to recognize a Palestinian state as Israel fights in Rafah

By The Associated Press undefined

Slovenia's government endorsed a motion Thursday to recognize a Palestinian state and asked the parliament to do the same. It comes just two days after Spain, Norway and Ireland recognized a Palestinian state, a move that was condemned by Israel.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians in the border city of Rafah have reported heavy fighting in recent days as Israel's military widens its offensive in the south, seizing control of the entire length of Gaza's border with Egypt.

Beyond Rafah, Israeli forces were still battling militants in parts of Gaza that 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.

Fighting in Rafah has spurred more than 1 million Palestinians to flee, most of whom had already been displaced earlier in the war. 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 U.N. says.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Thursday that 53 people killed by Israeli strikes had been brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours, as well as 357 wounded people.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has 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:

- Slovenia's government endorses recognition of a Palestinian state.
- The U.S.-built pier in Gaza broke apart. Here's how we got here and what might be next.
- China leader Xi Jinping pledges more Gaza aid at a summit with Arab leaders.
- A ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels was full of grain bound for Iran, the group's main benefactor. Follow AP's coverage of the war in Gaza at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's the latest:

U.S. MILITARY SAYS FIGHTING AND WEATHER HAVE HALTED AIRDROPS

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. Central Command says the military has not airdropped humanitarian aid into Gaza since May 9, with a Pentagon spokesperson blaming weather and Israel's offensive in the southern city of Rafah.

The lack of U.S. airdrops comes as a U.S.-built pier to deliver aid by sea broke apart in strong winds and heavy seas just over a week after it became operational.

"The solution is to open the land routes," Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said Thursday. "We need to see those land routes open. We need to see more trucks getting in."

Gaza's land crossings are now entirely controlled by Israel. Fighting in Rafah has made it nearly impossible for humanitarian groups to import and distribute aid to southern Gaza, and the Rafah crossing with Egypt has been closed since it was seized by Israeli forces on May 6.

The Israeli military says it has allowed hundreds of trucks to enter through its nearby Kerem Shalom crossing during the Rafah operation, but aid groups say it's extremely difficult to access that aid on the Gaza side because of the fighting.

Although strong winds and weather have been an issue for the airdrops, the ongoing challenge is the Rafah operation in Gaza's south, Singh said.

"We cannot do some airdrops when the IDF is conducting operations," she said, using an acronym for the Israeli military. "We don't want civilians running into an active battlespace. So there hasn't been airdrops recently."

Amid clear skies Thursday, a Jordanian-flagged military cargo plane could be seen airdropping aid to the city of Khan Younis in central Gaza.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are dependent on the aid to survive, and U.N. officials say parts of the territory are experiencing famine. The chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court is seeking arrest warrants for two of Israel's top leaders for allegedly using starvation as a weapon of war and other crimes related to the fight against Hamas in Gaza.

U.N. WARNS ISRAEL'S RAFAH OPERATION IS SEVERELY RESTRICTING AID

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. food agency is warning that Israel's military operation in Gaza's southern Rafah area has severely restricted aid deliveries and risks causing the same "catastrophic levels of hunger" seen in northern Gaza.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Thursday that the World Food Program is also reporting that hunger levels in central and southern Gaza "are deteriorating fast."

WFP is calling for all crossing points to be opened to get desperately needed food and other humanitarian aid into Gaza "as the Israeli incursion in Rafah continues to have a devastating impact on civilians and on humanitarian operations," the spokesman said.

WFP also reports there is little the Rome-based agency can do in Rafah, "with stocks very low and mobility severely restricted," Dujarric said.

The U.N. spokesman said humanitarian officials report that aid workers are facing movement restrictions, including to border areas, and repeated denials of access and delays including to collect supplies from the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Gaza side "which is in an area where fighting continues to escalate."

"We need Israeli authorities to swiftly facilitate access to the crossing so that aid workers can safely reach the crossing to pick up supplies," Dujarric said. "We also need safe and unimpeded passage to distribute that assistance to scale to people in need, wherever they may need it in Gaza."

He stressed that providing humanitarian assistance in a war zone requires security for aid workers and also requires "passable roads, adequate fuel, reliable communications, and sustained access."

JERUSALEM HOLDS LGBTQ+ PRIDE PARADE AS OTHER CITIES SCALE BACK FESTIVITIES

JERUSALEM — Tens of thousands of people marched in Jerusalem's annual Pride Parade carrying rainbow flags through the streets of the city. Thursday's parade kicked off a month of events for the LGBTQ+ communities across Israel.

Many other cities and towns, including Tel Aviv, which usually throws a raucous weeklong party, opted to scale down their events due to the war in Gaza. Organizers in Jerusalem said that it was especially im-

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portant to hold the parade this year because minorities are often inordinately impacted by emergencies. "This is a way for the queer community to acknowledge we are here for anyone," said Eldad, a participant in the Jerusalem parade who declined to share their last name.

At the front of the parade was a rainbow banner reading "Born to be free" carried by members of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a grassroots group that advocates for returning the hostages in Gaza. Other marchers held signs with anti-war messages in English and Hebrew with slogans such as "No Pride in War & Occupation."

The march in the conservative city is always tense and tightly secured by police, and has been wracked by violence in the past. Police said around 2,000 officers were deployed along the route.

About a dozen people protested against the parade, including Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King, who denounced the parade as being part of an "anti-God" agenda.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SAYS ISRAEL'S RAFAH OFFENSIVE STILL ISN'T A 'MAJOR OPERATION'

WASHINGTON — Israel's widening offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has yet to amount to a "major operation" in the eyes of the Biden administration, a U.S. State Department spokesman said Thursday.

Deputy spokesman Vedant Patel was responding to questions about what actions in Israel's 3-week-old Rafah offensive would cross the "red lines" that the Biden administration had earlier warned Israel about regarding a full-fledged invasion of the city.

"The truth of the facts on the ground is that we have yet to see a major operation into Rafah," Patel told reporters Thursday. "We have been clear about what this isn't, which is a major military operation."

Israel has deepened its incursion into Rafah, and intensifying violence in recent days has killed scores of Palestinians. The military said a fifth brigade — up to several thousand soldiers — joined troops operating in the city on Tuesday.

The U.S. continued to urge Israel to allow humanitarian access and spare civilians, Patel said.

Biden administration officials had issued repeated warnings before the Rafah operation expanded that the U.S. could cut the supply of some offensive weapons to Israel if Israeli forces struck population centers in Rafah.

It's unclear how many civilians are still in Rafah. At least 1 million people have fled since Israel launched its offensive into the city, which was crowded with roughly 1.3 million Palestinians, most of whom were already displaced from other parts of Gaza.

The top U.N. court ordered Israel to halt its military offensive in Rafah last week as part of South Africa's case accusing Israel of committing a genocide against the Palestinians. Israel strongly denies the charges.

Administration officials have largely declined comment on reports of Israeli tanks moving into the center of Rafah and the Philadelphi corridor along the border with Egypt, saying they have no on-the-ground knowledge of the circumstances.

Officials have expressed sorrow at recent days' deadly strikes on tent camps housing displaced Palestinians, but said they await the full results of Israeli investigations.

SWEDEN ACCUSES IRAN OF USING GANGS TO TARGET ISRAELI OR JEWISH INTERESTS

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — The Swedish domestic security agency has accused Iran of using established criminal networks in Sweden as a proxy to target Israeli or Jewish interests in the Scandinavian country.

The accusations were raised at a news conference Thursday by Daniel Stenling, the head of the SAPO agency's counterespionage unit. Stenling, without offering specifics or evidence to back up his assertion, said the agency "can establish that criminal networks in Sweden are used as a proxy by Iran."

"It is very much about planning and attempts to carry out attacks against Israeli and Jewish interests, goals and activities in Sweden," he said, adding that the agency sees "connections between criminal individuals in the criminal networks and individuals who are connected to the Iranian security services."

Justice Minister Gunnar Strömmer and Hampus Nygård, deputy head of the Swedish police's National Operations Department, were also at the online news conference.

Stenling and the others made no mention of the recent episodes connected to the Israel Embassy in Stockholm and stopped short of naming any criminal groups or suspects.

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In late January, the Israeli Embassy was sealed off after what was then described as “a dangerous object” was found on the grounds of the diplomatic mission. Swedish media said the object was a hand grenade.

The embassy was not evacuated and the object was eventually destroyed. No arrests were made and authorities did not say what was found. On May 17, gunshots were heard near the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm and the area was cordoned off. No one was arrested.

Sweden has grappled with gang violence for years and criminal gangs often recruit teenagers in socially disadvantaged immigrant neighborhoods.

WAR CABINET MEMBER GANTZ’S PARTY MOVES TO FORCE EARLY ELECTIONS

TEL AVIV — Israeli War Cabinet member Benny Gantz’s centrist party has called for a vote to dissolve the parliament in an attempt to force early elections.

Thursday’s announcement deepens a divide in Israel’s leadership more than seven months into a war. But it appears unlikely to threaten the current parliament. Even to put the request on the agenda requires majority consent from parliament, which would need at least five members of the governing coalition to defect and vote in favor.

Parliament member Pnina Tamano-Shata, the head of the National Unity party, submitted a bill on Thursday to dissolve the Knesset.

“Oct. 7 was a tragedy that requires us to come back and receive the trust of the people, and to create a wider, stable unity government that can lead us safely against the immense challenges in security, economy, and especially – Israeli society,” Tamano-Shata said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party denounced the bill, saying it was a “prize for (Hamas leader Yahya) Sinwar, a surrender to international pressure, and a fatal blow to efforts to release the hostages.”

Last week, Gantz threatened to resign from the government if Netanyahu does not put forth a new plan for the war in Gaza by June 8. His departure would leave Netanyahu more beholden to far-right allies who believe Israel should occupy Gaza and rebuild Jewish settlements there.

SLOVENIA’S GOVERNMENT ENDORSES RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN STATE

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia — Slovenia’s government on Thursday endorsed a motion to recognize a Palestinian state and asked the parliament to do the same.

The decision by Slovenia’s government comes just two days after Spain, Norway and Ireland recognized a Palestinian state, a move that was condemned by Israel.

Prime Minister Robert Golob said that his government sent the recognition proposal to parliament, which could convene as early as next week.

“All the world should act in the direction of peace,” Golob said after the government session. “The way to achieve peace is a two-state solution.”

“The decision is not directed against anyone, not even Israel, but that it is a message of peace,” he added as the Palestinian flag was displayed on the government headquarters in Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital.

Parliamentary approval is necessary for the move to take effect. Golob’s ruling liberal coalition has a comfortable majority in the 90-member assembly and the vote should be a formality.

With its move, Slovenia is set to become the 10th member of the 27-nation European Union to officially recognize a Palestinian state. Norway isn’t an EU member, but its foreign policy is usually aligned with the bloc.

Slovenia first began the recognition process in early May, but said it would wait until the situation in the ongoing Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza improved.

Golob said this week that he was expediting the process in reaction to Israel’s latest attacks on Rafah, which have caused more than 1 million Palestinians to flee.

More than 140 countries recognize a Palestinian state — more than two-thirds of the United Nations.

SURVEY FOUND MOST ISRAELIS BELIEVED CAMPAIGN AGAINST HAMAS WAS RIGHT OR NOT FAR ENOUGH

WASHINGTON — A Pew Research Center survey conducted in late winter and early spring shows a ma-

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majority of Israelis believed at the time that the Israeli military campaign against Hamas in Gaza was either about right or hadn't gone far enough.

The poll, released Thursday, was conducted in March and early April. That was before the Israeli military offensive in the southern city of Rafah and renewed operations in parts of Gaza's north after Hamas militants resurfaced there.

The survey shows that roughly two-thirds of Israelis expressed confidence at the time that Israel will either probably (27%) or definitely (40%) achieve its goals against Hamas.

However, majorities of Israeli adults were worried about some aspects of the conflict: 61% said they were extremely or very concerned about fighting spreading in the region, and 68% said they were extremely or very concerned about the war going on for a long time.

Forty percent of Israelis then thought that Israel should govern the Gaza Strip, while 12% thought the Palestinian Authority should. Fourteen percent thought the people of Gaza should decide that.

At the time, only 26% of Israelis said that Israel and an independent Palestinian state could coexist peacefully. That's down from 35% last year before the war, and about half as many who thought so when the question was asked in 2013.

The survey questioned 1,001 adults between March 3 and April 4. It has a margin of error of 4 percentage points.

ISRAELI MILITARY REVIEWING EVENTS THAT KILLED RED CRESCENT WORKERS

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Thursday that it was reviewing events that killed two workers with the Palestinian Red Crescent in the Gaza city of Rafah.

The Gaza Health Ministry said the two medics were killed Wednesday when the ambulance they were traveling in to evacuate casualties came under Israeli fire.

The Israeli military said a "suspicious vehicle" approached soldiers, posing "a threat" to the forces. A tank then fired at the vehicle, the military said in a statement. The statement did not specify whether the vehicle was an ambulance.

The area of Rafah, where Israel is deepening its offensive, has seen intensifying fighting in recent days that has killed dozens of Palestinians.

Israel has come under fierce international criticism for the high civilian death toll during the war. Scores of aid and medical workers have also been killed. The Palestinian Red Crescent said 19 workers have been killed in Gaza since the war began.

Israel accuses Hamas of embedding itself in civilian areas and using ambulances to transport its members.

MORE THAN 4,000 PALLETS OF AID REACH GAZA FROM CYPRUS

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Over 4,000 pallets of humanitarian aid have been shipped from Cyprus to Gaza via the U.S.-built pier and causeway offshore the Palestinian territory, a Cypriot official said Thursday.

Spokesperson Konstantinos Letymbiotis said Thursday some 14,000 pallets of aid have been collected in the east Mediterranean island nation for eventual shipment to Gaza as part of the maritime aid corridor initiative. Of the 4,134 pallets that have already reached Gaza, approximately half have been picked up by humanitarian aid groups for distribution to civilians in need. The other half has been offloaded and stored.

The aid includes food, hygiene items, shelters and pharmaceuticals. Donor countries include the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy and Romania. Other donors include the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism and the U.N.'s World Food Program and the International Organization for Migration.

The Cypriot official said the initiative that started May 9 is ongoing, with ships still departing with loads of aid, despite the recent damage to part of the U.S.-built pier that suspended operations. The pier is expected to come back on line by the middle of next week.

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.

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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.

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 AID FOR GAZA 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 AHEAD OF JUNE 28 PRESIDENTIAL 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.

The verdict: Inside the courtroom as Donald Trump learned he had been convicted

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — History happened just as everyone was about to leave for the day.

Judge Juan M. Merchan had already summoned Donald Trump, his legal team and prosecutors into the courtroom where the former president has been on trial since mid-April. The judge said he planned to send the jury home in a few minutes — at 4:30 p.m. — with deliberations to resume the next morning.

Trump looked upbeat, having animated chats with his lawyers. A bell that rang in the courtroom whenever the jury had something to tell the court had been silent all day.

In the end, it wasn't the bell that signaled something was up, but the jingling of a court officer's keys — a ring full of them clanking as Maj. Michael McKee hustled past the judge's bench and out a door into a private corridor.

Then, unexpectedly, the judge was back on the bench. There was another note from the jury, signed at 4:20 p.m. Merchan read it aloud.

"We the jury have reached a verdict," it said, and asked for an extra 30 minutes to fill out the verdict form.

The "hurry up and wait" beat of deliberations gave way to anticipatory tension.

"I'm sure you will hear from the sergeant and the major and everyone else, but please let there be no outbursts of any kind when we take a verdict," Merchan warned everyone in the courtroom. "I'll be back out in a few minutes."

As the minutes ticked by, defense lawyer Todd Blanche whispered to Trump, who was stone-faced, arms crossed across his chest. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whose office brought the case, entered the courtroom and sat with aides in the gallery.

The courtroom was packed with people, among them dozens of reporters, sketch artists, members of the public and Trump's son Eric. Bragg staffers crammed into the back row of the audience. Court personnel lined the wall next to the judge's bench. Just two seats were unclaimed, occupied by a Van Gogh sunflower seat cushion and a newspaper that someone had not returned to claim.

Just before 5 p.m., the judge returned to the bench. He reread the portentous note and instructed court officers to bring the jury into the courtroom.

The six alternate jurors, who sat through the testimony but weren't part of deliberations, were brought into the courtroom and seated in the first row of the audience.

The 12 jurors followed. Most looked straight ahead as they walked past Trump.

About a dozen court officers filled the room.

Then, the moment came. The courtroom was silent.

"How say you to the first count of the indictment, charging Donald J. Trump with falsifying business records in the first degree?" a court staffer asked. "Guilty," the foreperson, whose name has not been publicly released, said in a steady voice.

The same answer, "guilty," came again and again. Trump was convicted of all 34 counts of falsifying records at his company as part of a broad scheme to cover up payments made to a porn actor during the 2016 election.

As the verdict was read, and dozens of reporters transmitted the news to editors, wireless internet service in the courtroom suddenly became sluggish.

Monitors in another courtroom where more reporters were watching the proceedings on a closed-circuit television feed were turned off as the verdict was read, so members of the media and public who were there to observe could not see Trump's face as the first "guilty" was read aloud, but a hushed gasp could be heard.

The video feed resumed after the last charge was read aloud, showing Trump sitting with an expressionless stare.

Trump began slowly looking around the room and glanced, still expressionless, at jurors as they affirmed they found him guilty on all counts.

Blanche rested his face in his hands and furrowed his brow.

Merchan thanked the jury for its work, something common at the end of any trial.

"You were engaged in a very stressful and difficult task," he said, adding that the weeks of the trial were "a long time to be away from your jobs, your families, all of your responsibilities."

The jury was then excused. Trump stood as jurors filtered out of the courtroom, appearing to be looking at them one by one as they passed in front of him.

In the hallway outside the 15th-floor courtroom, cheering could be heard from the street below, where a small group of Trump supporters and detractors had gathered.

As the former president and presumptive Republican nominee walked out of the courtroom, Eric Trump put a hand on his back.

Then, after watching mum as the verdict came, Donald Trump turned to the news cameras awaiting him in the hallway.

"I'm a very innocent man," he said, before vowing to keep contesting a case he has repeatedly called "a disgrace."

"We'll fight to the end, and we'll win," he said.

His sentencing is scheduled for July 11, likely in the same courtroom where history was made Thursday.

Republican lawmakers react with fury to Trump verdict and rally to his defense

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers reacted with immediate fury on Thursday as a New York jury convicted former President Donald Trump on 34 counts of falsifying business records to influence the 2016 election, speaking out with near unanimity in questioning the legitimacy of the trial and how it was conducted.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said it was a "shameful day in American history" and the charges were "purely political." Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance said the verdict was a "disgrace to the judicial system." And Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, said that the decision was "a defeat for Americans who believe in the critical legal tenet that justice is blind."

Within minutes of the verdict being read, Republicans who have in the past been divided over support for their presumptive GOP presidential nominee found common ground in attacking — with few specifics — the judge, the jury and President Joe Biden, even though the conviction came on state charges in a Manhattan court. As the nation's top federal official, Biden has no say in what happens in the New York City courtroom.

The jury found that Trump falsified the records in a scheme to influence his presidential election through hush money payments to a porn actor who had said she had sex with Trump. Few Republicans mentioned the details of the case but many echoed his repeated assertions that it was a "rigged, disgraceful trial." He is expected to quickly appeal.

The ferocity of the outcry was remarkable, tossing aside the usual restraints that lawmakers and political figures have observed in the past when refraining from criticism of judges and juries. A lone Republican voice, former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, took that approach, saying ahead of the verdict that the public should "respect the verdict and the legal process."

"At this dangerously divided moment in our history, all leaders — regardless of party — must not pour fuel on the fire with more toxic partisanship," posted Hogan, who is running for the Senate in Maryland, before the verdict was announced. "We must reaffirm what has made this nation great: the rule of law."

There is no evidence that the trial was rigged. Trump's defense has complained about a \$15 donation

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Judge Juan Manuel Merchan made to Biden in 2020 and his daughter's job as a Democratic political consultant, but the judge rejected Trump's lawyers' request for a recusal and said he was certain of his "ability to be fair and impartial."

Still, Republicans have seized on Trump's attacks on the judge and the system in the New York trial and in three other cases — local and federal charges in Atlanta and Washington that he conspired to undo the 2020 election, and a federal indictment in Florida charging him with illegally holding on to top-secret records after his presidency. Many GOP lawmakers, including Johnson, have visited the courthouse in New York to support him.

"This verdict says more about the system than the allegations," said South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, who has been one of Trump's most frequent allies.

The verdict made Trump the first former president to be convicted of felony crimes. And it comes as almost all GOP lawmakers in Congress have forcefully rallied behind him in this year's election.

"Congratulations, progressives," posted Utah Sen. Mike Lee. "You've just guaranteed Trump's election."

Republicans shared their criticism, which came as Congress is out of Washington on a weeklong recess, in posts on X, formerly Twitter, in press releases and TV appearances. And the backlash was not only from Trump's GOP friends but from some of his detractors, as well.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn, who had distanced himself from the former president after the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack of Trump's supporters, said "this verdict is a disgrace, and this trial should have never happened."

"Now more than ever, we need to rally around @realdonaldtrump, take back the White House and Senate, and get this country back on track," said Cornyn, who is running to replace Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell when he steps down from the post after the November election. "The real verdict will be Election Day."

South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican who is also running to be leader and has also been critical of Trump, said the case was "politically motivated from the beginning, and today's verdict does nothing to absolve the partisan nature of this prosecution."

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Republican who voted to convict Trump in his second impeachment trial after the Capitol attack, said he disagreed with the verdict but wasn't surprised "given the way the defense was conducted, the trial was managed."

McConnell, who has long had a tense relationship with Trump but recently endorsed his 2024 campaign, refrained from attacking the judge or jury. But he said the charges "never should have been brought in the first place."

"I expect the conviction to be overturned on appeal," McConnell said in a post on X.

As expected, Democrats rejoiced — and tried to blunt the GOP attacks on the process.

"Trump toadies are going to attack the jury and the court because they have a plan to dismantle our democracy and it relies on everyone believing the justice system is rigged," posted Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn. "It isn't. Donald Trump committed a crime. He got caught. He got convicted. That's the rule of law."

Trump could still vote for himself after New York conviction if he's not in prison on Election Day

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Donald Trump may be convicted of a felony and reside in Florida, a state notorious for restricting the voting rights of people with felony convictions. But he can still vote as long as he stays out of prison in New York state.

That's because Florida defers to other states' disenfranchisement rules for residents convicted of out-of-state felonies. In Trump's case, New York law only removes the right to vote for people convicted of felonies when they're incarcerated. Once they're out of prison, their rights are automatically restored, even if they're on parole, per a 2021 law passed by the state's Democratic legislature.

"If a Floridian's voting rights are restored in the state of conviction, they are restored under Florida

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law," Blair Bowie of the Campaign Legal Center wrote in a post, noting that people without Trump's legal resources are often confused by Florida's complex rules.

So as long as Trump isn't sent to prison, he can vote for himself in Florida in November's election.

"His rights depend on his sentencing," wrote Michael McDonald, a University of Florida political scientist who's tracked his state's felony disenfranchisement rules, on the social media site X, formerly Twitter.

Trump was convicted Thursday of falsifying business records in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through hush money payments to a porn actor who said the two had sex.

A lifelong New Yorker, Trump established residency in Florida in 2019, while he was in the White House.

Even if he is elected president again, Trump will not be able to pardon himself of state charges in New York. The president's pardon power applies only to federal crimes.

The conviction, and even imprisonment, would not bar Trump from continuing his pursuit of the White House. The Republican National Convention, which will open four days after his July 11 sentencing date in New York, adopted rules last year that didn't include any specific provisions if its presumptive nominee is convicted of a crime.

Delegates could move to change their rules before formalizing Trump's nomination, but there's no evidence that a significant faction of the party would try to replace the former president on the GOP ticket. Trump commands loyalty across the GOP base, and the Republican National Committee is run by his loyalists, including his daughter-in-law Lara Trump as co-chair.

North Korea's trash rains onto South Korea, balloon by balloon.

Here's what it means

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Manure. Cigarette butts. Scraps of cloth. Waste batteries. Even, reportedly, diapers. This week, North Korea floated hundreds of huge balloons to dump all of that trash across rival South Korea — an old-fashioned, Cold War-style provocation that the country has rarely used in recent years.

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un confirmed Wednesday that North Korea sent the balloons and attached trash sacks. She said they were deployed to make good on her country's recent threat to "scatter mounds of wastepaper and filth" in South Korea in response to the leafleting campaigns by South Korean activists.

Experts say the balloon campaigning is meant to stoke a division in South Korea over its conservative government's hardline policy on North Korea. They also say North Korea will also likely launch new types of provocations in coming months to meddle in November's U.S. presidential election.

Here's a look at what North Korea's balloon launches are all about.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Since Tuesday night, about 260 balloons flown from North Korea have been discovered across South Korea. There's no apparent danger, though: The military said an initial investigation showed that the trash tied to the balloons doesn't contain any dangerous substances like chemical, biological or radioactive materials.

There have been no reports of damages in South Korea. In 2016, North Korean balloons carrying trash, compact discs and propaganda leaflets caused damage to cars and other property in South Korea. In 2017, South Korea found a suspected North Korean balloon with leaflets again. This week, no leaflets were found from the North Korean balloons.

Flying balloons with propaganda leaflets and other items is one of the most common types of psychological warfare the two Koreas launched against each other during the Cold War. Other forms of Korean psychological battle have included loudspeaker blaring, setting up giant front-line electronic billboards and signboards and propaganda radio broadcasts. In recent years, the two Koreas have agreed to halt such activities but sometimes resumed them when tensions rose.

WHAT DOES NORTH KOREA WANT?

The North's balloon launches are part of a recent series of provocative steps, which include its failed spy satellite launch and test-firings of about 10 suspected short-range missiles this week. Experts say the North's leader, Kim Jong Un, will likely further dial up tensions ahead of the U.S. election to try to help former President Donald Trump return to the White House and revive high-stakes diplomacy between them.

"The balloon launches aren't weak action at all. It's like North Korea sending a message that next time, it can send balloons carrying powder forms of biological and chemical weapons," said Kim Taewoo, a former president of South Korea's government-funded Institute for National Unification.

Koh Yu-hwan, an emeritus professor at Seoul's Dongguk University, said North Korea likely determined that the balloon campaign is a more effective way to force South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's government to clamp down on the South's civilian leafletting.

"The point is to make the South Korean people uncomfortable, and build a public voice that the government's policy toward North Korea is wrong," Koh said.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to leaflets that South Korean activists occasionally float across the border via their own balloons, because they carry information about the outside world and criticism of the Kim dynasty's authoritarian rule. Most of the North's 26 million people have little access to foreign news.

In 2020, North Korea blew up an empty, South Korean-built liaison office on its territory in protest of South Korean civilian leafletting campaigns.

WAS ANYTHING LEARNED FROM THE TRASH?

North Korea is one of the world's most secretive countries in the world, and foreign experts are keen on collecting any fragmentary information coming from the country.

But Koh said that there won't be much meaningful information that South Korea can gain from the North Korean trash dumps, because North Korea would have not put any important items into balloons.

If the manure is the kind made of animal dung, its examination may show what fodder is given to livestock in North Korea. Looks at other trash can provide a glimpse into consumer products in North Korea. But observers say outside experts can get such information more easily from North Korean defectors, their contacts in North Korea and Chinese border towns, and North Korean state publications.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS ON TENSIONS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA?

The North's balloon activities may deepen public calls in South Korea to stop anti-North Korean leafletting to avoid unnecessary clashes. But it's unclear whether and how aggressively the South Korean government can urge civil groups to refrain from sending balloons toward North Korea.

In 2023, South Korea's Constitutional Court struck down a contentious law that criminalized the sending of anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets, calling it an excessive restriction on free speech.

"From Pyongyang's perspective, this is a tit-for-tat and even restrained action to get Seoul to stop anti-Kim regime leaflets from being sent north. However, it will be difficult for democratic South Korea to comply, given ongoing legal disputes over the freedom of citizens and NGOs to send information into North Korea," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"The immediate danger of military escalation is not high," he said, "but recent developments show how sensitive and potentially vulnerable the Kim regime is to information operations."

Doomsday plot: Idaho jury convicts Chad Daybell of killing wife and girlfriend's 2 children

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — An Idaho man was convicted Thursday of killing his wife and his new girlfriend's two youngest kids in a strange triple murder case that included claims of apocalyptic prophecies, zombie children and illicit affairs.

Jurors deliberated just six hours before finding Chad Daybell guilty, capping a case that began in 2019 and spanned at least four states. Daybell, standing and wearing a long-sleeve dress shirt, was stoic as the verdicts were read.

Now jurors will be tasked with deciding if Daybell, 55, should die for the murders of Tammy Daybell,

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16-year-old Tylee Ryan and 7-year-old Joshua "JJ" Vallow. The nearly two-month trial's penalty phase resumes Friday.

"Everything was addressed, every item was 'guilty,' and for that, I'm happy," JJ's grandfather Larry Woodcock told The Associated Press. "I'm still sad for the loss — there were four lives lost in this for no purpose, no reason — but my wife and I are just so satisfied with the verdict."

The childrens' mother, Lori Vallow Daybell, was sentenced to life in prison without parole on the same conspiracy and murder charges last year. She married Chad Daybell just two weeks after Tammy Daybell was killed. She's now awaiting trial in Arizona, charged with murder in connection with the shooting death of her fourth husband, Charles Vallow. Charles Vallow was JJ's father.

The judge in the case has issued a gag order prohibiting attorneys on both sides from talking to the media until the trial is complete.

The case drew widespread media attention, and the judge moved the trial from the rural Idaho community where the killings occurred to Boise in an effort to ensure a fair and impartial jury.

In the penalty phase, prosecutors will attempt to show that the crimes merit a death sentence because they were especially depraved, heinous or cruel or that they meet one of other "aggravating factors" detailed in state law. Daybell's defense, meanwhile, will try to provide the jury with mitigating circumstances to show a lighter sentence is more appropriate.

The investigation began five years ago, after JJ's grandparents Kay and Larry Woodcock became concerned that Vallow Daybell was refusing to let them have phone calls with the boy. Though they lived in different states, JJ and his grandparents had always been close, sharing regular video calls since he was about three years old. JJ was very bright and also autistic, Larry Woodcock said, and whenever he ran out of things to say he'd tell them, "Mawmaw, Pawpaw, I don't know."

"In the last couple of years of his life, he was developing his wit and his personality. If there's anything that I miss, it's his wit," Larry Woodcock said. "There's not a day that goes by now that my wife and I don't turn to each other and say, 'Mawmaw, I don't know,' or 'Pawpaw, I don't know.'"

In 2019, Kay Woodcock asked police to check on the child. Investigators soon realized both children were missing, and a multistate search ensued. The investigation soon took several unexpected turns.

Vallow Daybell and Chad Daybell were having an affair when both of their spouses died unexpectedly, investigators said. Vallow Daybell's husband, Charles, was shot to death by her brother Alex Cox in Arizona in July 2019; the brother told police it was in self-defense. He was not charged.

Vallow Daybell, her kids JJ and Tylee, and Cox subsequently moved to eastern Idaho to be closer to Daybell, a self-published writer of doomsday-focused fiction loosely based on Mormon teachings.

In October 2019, Tammy Daybell died. Chad Daybell initially told police she was battling an illness and died in her sleep, but an autopsy later determined that she died of asphyxiation. Chad Daybell and Vallow Daybell married just two weeks after Tammy Daybell's death, surprising family members.

Nearly a year after the children went missing, their remains were found buried on Chad Daybell's property in eastern Idaho. Investigators determined both children died in September 2019. Prosecutors say Cox conspired with Chad Daybell and Vallow Daybell in all three deaths, but Cox died of natural causes during the investigation and was never charged.

Prosecutors called dozens of witnesses to bolster their claims that Chad Daybell and Vallow Daybell conspired to kill the children and Tammy Daybell because they wanted to get rid of any obstacles to their relationship and obtain money from survivor benefits and life insurance. Prosecutors say the couple justified the killings by creating an apocalyptic belief system that people could be possessed by evil spirits and turned into "zombies," and that the only way to save a possessed person's soul was for the possessed body to die.

Fremont County prosecutor Lindsay Blake said Daybell styled himself a leader of what he called "The Church of the Firstborn" and told Vallow Daybell and others that he could determine if someone had become a "zombie." Daybell also claimed to be able to determine how close a person was to death by reading what he called their "death percentage," Blake said during closing arguments on Wednesday.

With these elements, Daybell followed a pattern for each of those who were killed, Blake said.

"They would be labeled as 'dark' by Chad Daybell. Their 'death percentage' would drop. Then they would have to die," she said.

Blake also said Daybell manipulated Vallow Daybell and her brother, Cox, into helping with the plan, at times bestowing 'spiritual blessings' on Cox and warning Vallow Daybell that the angels were angry because she was at times ignoring him.

Daybell's defense attorney, John Prior, rejected the prosecution's descriptions of Daybell's beliefs. He described Daybell as a traditional member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a deeply religious man who talked about his spiritual beliefs every chance he could get.

Prior said police looked only for things they could use against Daybell rather than the actual facts of the case — and he claimed that the children's late uncle, Cox, committed the crimes. He noted that Cox had killed JJ Vallow's father in Arizona and that the two children were the only witnesses to that shooting. He also said Cox tried to frame Daybell by burying the slain children in Daybell's yard.

During the sentencing phase, jurors will be asked to decide if Daybell should receive a death sentence — Idaho law allows execution by lethal injection or firing squad — or life in prison. Woodcock said he will be satisfied with either option.

"That's what you get for murdering children. That's what you get for murdering your wife. Chad made his decision — he knew it was wrong," Woodcock said.

Boeing tells federal regulators how it plans to fix aircraft safety and quality problems

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing officials explained their plan to improve manufacturing quality and safety during a three-hour meeting Thursday with federal officials, who will continue restrictions they placed on the company after one of its jetliners suffered a blowout of a fuselage panel in January.

Federal Aviation Administration chief Mike Whitaker said the plan is comprehensive and includes encouraging Boeing employees to speak up about safety concerns.

"This is a guide for a new way for Boeing to do business," Whitaker told reporters after the meeting. "Boeing has laid out their road map, and now they need to execute."

Boeing released an 11-page summary of its "Product Safety and Quality Plan," which described steps the company is taking, including increased inspections and tighter controls over suppliers. It also says how Boeing will measure its improvement.

CEO David Calhoun, who announced after the Jan. 5 blowout during an Alaska Airlines flight that he would step down at the end of the year, said the document was crafted from comments by employees, the FAA, airlines and independent experts.

"Many of these actions are underway, and our team is committed to executing on each element of the plan," Calhoun said in a statement. "It is through this continuous learning and improvement process that our industry has made commercial aviation the safest mode of transportation. The actions we are taking today will further strengthen that foundation."

Stephanie Pope, a possible successor to Calhoun who was recently promoted to chief operating officer and chief executive of Boeing's commercial airplanes division, said the plan was designed to improve employee training, simplify manufacturing, "eliminate defects at the source, and elevate our safety and quality culture."

Nobody was hurt during the Jan. 5 blowout of a door plug on a relatively new Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9 as it flew above Oregon. Accident investigators determined that bolts used to help secure the panel were missing after a repair job in a Boeing factory.

The mishap further battered Boeing's reputation, led to multiple civil and criminal investigations, and prompted Whitaker to order the report that Boeing delivered Thursday.

Whitaker said he wanted Boeing to develop a comprehensive, detailed plan that improves manufacturing process, quality and safety management, and encourages employees to raise concerns about safety.

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"Those are all elements of the plan," Whitaker said. He added that Boeing had accepted all the safety recommendations made earlier this year by a panel of independent safety experts.

Still, Whitaker said, the FAA will continue to cap production of the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling plane, and to insist on approving each plane that comes off the assembly line. He said the FAA also will maintain a "significant increase" in safety inspectors at plants run by Boeing and its key supplier, Spirit AeroSystems.

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.

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

Most of the recent problems have been related to the Max, however Boeing and 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 promoting a positive safety culture, improving worker training, reducing "traveled work" — assembly tasks that are done out of their proper chronological order — and keeping closer tabs on Spirit AeroSystems, including preventing the supplier from shipping defective fuselages to Boeing.

The plane that suffered the door-plug blowout was being repaired because it had damaged rivets when it arrived at a Boeing factory from Spirit.

Biden is said to be finalizing plans for migrant limits as part of a US-Mexico border clampdown

By COLLEEN LONG and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is finalizing plans for a U.S.-Mexico border clampdown that would shut off asylum requests and automatically deny entrance to migrants once the number of people encountered by American border officials exceeded a new daily threshold, with President Joe Biden expected to sign an executive order as early as Tuesday, according to four people familiar with the matter.

The president has been weighing additional executive action since the collapse of a bipartisan border bill earlier this year. The number of illegal crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border has declined for months, partly because of a stepped-up effort by Mexico. Still, immigration remains a top concern heading into the U.S. presidential election in November and Republicans are eager to hammer Biden on the issue.

The Democratic administration's effort would aim to head off any potential spike in crossings that could occur later in the year, as the fall election draws closer, when the weather cools and numbers tend to rise, two of the people. They were not authorized to speak publicly about the ongoing discussions and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The move would allow Biden, whose administration has taken smaller steps in recent weeks to discourage migration and speed up asylum processing, to say he has done all he can do to control the border numbers without help from Congress.

The talks were still fluid and the people stressed that no final decisions had been made.

The restrictions being considered are an aggressive attempt to ease the nation's overwhelmed asylum system, along with a new effort to speed up the cases of migrants already in America and another meant to quicken processing for migrants with criminal records or those who would otherwise be eventually deemed ineligible for asylum in the United States.

The people told the AP that the administration was weighing some of the policies directly from a stalled

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bipartisan Senate border deal, including capping the number of encounters at an average of 4,000 per day over a week and whether that limit would include asylum-seekers coming to the border with appointments through U.S. Customs and Border Protection's CBP One app. Right now, there are roughly 1,450 such appointments per day.

Two of the people said one option is that migrants who arrive after the border reaches a certain threshold could be removed automatically in a process similar to deportation and would not be able to return easily. Migrants were able to more easily return to the border if they were expelled under the pandemic-era policy known as Title 42. Under that arrangement, Mexico agreed to take back some non-Mexican nationalities, including migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Migrants, especially families, claiming asylum at the southern border are generally released into the U.S. to wait out their cases. But there are more than 2 million pending immigration court cases, and some people wait years for a court date while they live in limbo in the U.S.

Anyone can ask for asylum regardless of whether they arrive illegally at the border, but U.S. officials are increasingly pushing migrants to make appointments, use a legal pathway that avoids the costly and dangerous journey, or stay where they are and apply through outposts in Colombia, Guatemala and Costa Rica.

The Biden administration has grown ever more conservative on border issues as the president faces ceaseless criticism from Republicans and there are large numbers of migrants crossing into the U.S. from Mexico who are not easily returned, especially as global displacement grows from war, climate change and more.

The immigration authority that the administration has been looking to use is outlined in Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. It gives a president broad leeway to block entry of certain immigrants into the U.S. if it would be "detrimental" to the U.S. national interest.

Senate Republicans last week again blocked a bill that would have enshrined some of the same efforts into law. The vote was meant to underscore GOP resistance to the proposal even as Republicans have clamored for more restrictions and argued that Biden has not done enough to stem the flow of migrants entering into the U.S.

The bipartisan bill had been negotiated for months and appeared, for a moment anyway, to be heading toward passage. It was even endorsed by the National Border Patrol Council and its president Brandon Judd, an avowed supporter of Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. But Trump, concerned about handing Democrats an election-year win, called on Republicans to tank it, and they did.

White House officials did not confirm the expected executive order.

White House spokesman Angelo Fernández Hernández said the administration "continues to explore a series of policy options and we remain committed to taking action to address our broken immigration system."

"While congressional Republicans chose to stand in the way of additional border enforcement, President Biden will not stop fighting to deliver the resources that border and immigration personnel need to secure our border," he said.

Congress this year approved funding for a total of 41,500 detention beds and increased money for immigration enforcement and removal operations by \$1.2 billion over what the White House had initially requested. That included \$106 million in more funding for programs that monitor immigrants in the asylum system through phone apps and ankle bracelets, rather than through detention.

Those increases, negotiated after the collapse of the bipartisan deal, could pave the way for the administration to ratchet up immigration enforcement.

Yet unlike legislative action that is binding, anything Biden does through executive action can be challenged in the courts, and will almost certainly be, so it not clear whether — or if — the clampdown on asylum would begin. The administration was weighing other actions too, including faster and tougher enforcement of the asylum process.

The administration has generally paired proposed crackdowns with an expansion of legal paths elsewhere and was also planning to do so in the future, but not at the same time the new restrictions were announced, the people said.

Israel could have used smaller weapons against Hamas to avoid deaths in Gaza tent fire, experts say

By TARA COPP and JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense experts who have reviewed debris images from an Israeli airstrike that ignited a deadly fire in a camp for displaced Palestinians questioned why Israel did not use smaller, more precise weapons when so many civilians were nearby. They said the bombs used were likely U.S.-made.

The strikes, targeting Hamas operatives, killed as many as 45 people sheltering in a temporary displacement camp near the southern Gaza city of Rafah on Sunday and have drawn international condemnation.

Israel is investigating the attack but says the Hamas targets were 1.7 kilometers (1 mile) away from a declared humanitarian zone and that its review before the strike determined no expected harm to civilians.

But displaced civilians were scattered throughout the area, and Israel had not ordered evacuations. So even if the tents that burned were not inside the marked humanitarian zone, the civilians there thought it was safe.

Israel, which was attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, has not said where the burned tents were in relation to the compound it bombed on Sunday, but has released one satellite image showing there were some known civilian shelters located about 180 meters (600 feet) away. It emphasized that while there were no tents "in the immediate vicinity," due to "unforeseen circumstances, a fire ignited tragically taking the lives of Gazan civilians nearby."

Footage released by the Israeli military appears to show people walking next to the targeted buildings before the blast. The footage also appears to show tents nearby.

Israel has not identified the bombs it used, but Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israel Defense Forces spokesman, has emphasized that the country chose the smallest munition its jets could carry — with 17 kilograms (37 pounds) of explosive material each — and that an unintended secondary explosion may have caused the fire.

Even the smallest jet-launched munition may be too big when civilians are near because of how they explode and can send fragments far, defense experts said.

Images posted on social media from the tent camp on Monday and verified by The Associated Press showed a CAGE code, a unique identifier assigned to U.S. government suppliers, on pieces of the exploded weapons.

Based on those images and satellite photos of the debris field, two defense experts said the bombs used were likely U.S.-made 250-pound (113-kilogram) GBU-39 small-diameter bombs.

Though they're smaller than many other weapons the U.S. has provided to Israel, these bombs can still create a wide swath of damage. The entire 250-pound shell and components are designed to spew fragments that can travel as far as 2,000 feet (600 meters).

"You essentially have two bombs they use that the fragments can travel 600 meters in a densely packed area. So that just doesn't check out if they're trying to limit casualties," said Trevor Ball, a former Army explosive ordnance demolition technician.

Ball said the serial number on the pieces of the tail kit and the shell debris shown in the photographs identify the munitions as the 250-pound GBU-39. It's unusual to describe a bomb by its explosive load — in this case, 37 pounds — instead of its total weight, according to Ball and Mark Cancian, a retired Marine Corps Reserves colonel and senior adviser to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The debris field in Gaza is indicative of the bombs possibly being set to detonate before impact, which would ensure their intended targets were killed but also risk unintended deaths, Ball and Cancian said. The images showed a small hole where shrapnel was found.

The GBU-39's fuse settings can be adjusted to have the bomb explode on impact, which would create a crater at the site, or set for a delayed blast if the goal is to have it more deeply penetrate a target first.

They can also be set to detonate in the air, right before impact, to ensure multiple targets are hit. But that setting also maximizes area damage, which could explain a secondary explosion even if weapons or other flammable materials were some distance away, Ball said.

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Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters on Wednesday during a visit to Moldova that the U.S. is waiting for an investigation to show what weapons were used and how they were deployed.

Even if that confirms Israel used a small-diameter weapon, "we also see that even limited, focused, targeted attacks — designed to deal with terrorists who have killed innocent civilians that are plotting to kill more — even those kinds of operations can have terrible, horrific, unintended consequences," Blinken said.

The defense experts said Israel had better options to turn to than the GBU-39 when civilians were nearby. The Israelis have previously deployed drones to launch weapons that are smaller and more precise, Cancian said. These precision airstrikes used over the years have caused little damage beyond the immediate target.

Israel, for example, in this strike could have used a smaller anti-personnel weapon called the mini-Spike, which would not have created as wide an area of debris, if it was targeting specific Hamas leaders, Cancian said.

The U.S. has withheld a shipment of even larger 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) bombs from Israel out of concern they would be used in Israel's Rafah operation, where more than 1 million Palestinians crowded after Israel bombed other parts of Gaza. Now, that same number of people have escaped Rafah and are scattered across makeshift tent camps and other areas.

Sunday's strike shows that even the smaller 250-pound bombs the U.S. has continued to provide can be too large for use near densely packed refugee areas, Cancian said.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Wednesday that the U.S. was still trying to gather information from Israel about the deadly Rafah strike. He declined to discuss the specific munitions used by Israel but said Israel's public comments about the munitions used "certainly indicate a desire to be more deliberate and more precise in their targeting."

Larry Bird Museum officially opens in Terre Haute

By MARK AMBROGI Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (AP) — By his own admission, Larry Bird has always been a shy introvert.

So he wondered why he has to keep talking on stage in front of thousands of people.

"It's because of the love and respect I've had for my fans and the love and respect they've shown me back," Bird said.

The Indiana State University and Boston Celtics great addressed a public ceremony Thursday for the official opening of the Larry Bird Museum inside the Terre Haute Convention Center. After the ceremony, Bird took questions from the media, which he jokingly said might be his last interview.

"I got a little street named after me, I got a statue out there and now a museum here," Bird said of the city, the home of Indiana State. "Thank you, Terre Haute, but I think that's enough for a while. You have no idea how much I respect the city and the people in it."

Coincidentally, the ceremony took place a few days after the Celtics advanced to the NBA Finals by sweeping the Indiana Pacers in the Eastern Conference finals. Bird, a former head coach and executive with Pacers, returned to his home-state team as a consultant in 2023.

"I remember at the All-Star Game, I told one of the Celtics owners that I thought they had the best team in the league," said Bird, who won three NBA titles with the Celtics. "I'm very proud of the Indiana Pacers. I think they've got a very good opportunity to keep moving on and doing very well. (Tyrese) Haliburton and other guys play well together. When the ball's moving, they win. If they guard a little bit, they win. Sometimes they don't guard. They have a very good team and they'll only grow together and get better."

Bird, 67, is just as proud of the museum and all the work that went into it. The museum contains memorabilia from Bird's high school, college and NBA career, interactive exhibits and interviews with coaches, teammates and rivals. Bird led Indiana State to the 1979 NCAA championship game before losing to Magic Johnson-led Michigan State.

"I think they got enough in there to keep everyone's interest," Bird said. "I think it's going to be good for the city and a lot of people will come through it."

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Bird said there are so many items that bring back memories of his career.

Capital Improvement Board Museum Co-Chair Terri Conley said one thing Bird insisted on is the museum admission was free.

Bird described the museum opening reception as unbelievable.

"I think that's what social media is all about, thank God they didn't have that when I was playing," he said. "There are so many young kids wearing my jersey. ... Terre Haute has followed my career. You don't make these journeys alone. Terre Haute always had my back."

Bird never envisioned having a museum named after him.

"All I tried to do was follow my brother's footsteps and make the varsity team," he said. "I made myself proud when I got to start as a junior. I kept playing and, obviously, I love the game. I loved other sports, too, but basketball clicked for me."

Entering his sophomore year at Springs Valley High School, Bird was just 6-foot-1 before undergoing a huge growth spurt.

"Thank God, I grew or I'd still be working on that garbage truck," said Bird, referring to the job he had in French Lick after leaving Indiana University before his freshman season started and before enrolling at ISU. "At 6-1, you don't make it to the NBA unless you are special and very quick. I even grew up at Indiana State. I went from 6-7 1/2 to 6-9 and that really helped my game."

Bird said there were some tough losses and great wins along what he called his amazing journey.

"It's just unfortunate my career didn't last longer because I could have played two more years but the injuries started mounting," he said. "I felt we should have won at least one more championship with the team we had."

Bird retired before the 1992-93 season with back problems. Bird helped the Celtics capture NBA titles in 1981, '84 and '86. As a head coach, Bird coached the Indiana Pacers to the NBA Finals in 2000 before losing to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Roberts rejects Senate Democrats' request to discuss Supreme Court ethics and Alito flag controversy

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice John Roberts on Thursday declined an invitation to meet with Democratic senators to talk about Supreme Court ethics and the controversy over flags that flew outside homes owned by Justice Samuel Alito.

Roberts' response came in a letter to the senators a day after Alito separately wrote them and House members to reject their demands that he recuse himself from major Supreme Court cases involving former President Donald Trump and the Jan. 6 rioters because of the flags, which are like those carried by rioters at the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., a member of the Judiciary panel, had written Roberts a week ago to ask for the meeting and that Roberts take steps to ensure that Alito recuses himself from any cases before the court concerning the Jan. 6 attack or the Republican former president's attempts to overturn his 2020 election defeat.

"I must respectfully decline your request for a meeting," Roberts wrote.

Justices decide for themselves when to step aside from cases, Roberts noted. Alito said he concluded nothing about the flags, both of which he said were flown by his wife outside their homes in Virginia and New Jersey, required his recusal.

Last year, Roberts declined to testify at a Judiciary Committee hearing on Supreme Court ethics, and he made mention of that Thursday in saying that chief justices only rarely have met with lawmakers.

"Moreover, the format proposed — a meeting with leaders only of one party who have expressed an interest in matters currently pending before the court — simply underscores that participating in such a meeting would be inadvisable," he wrote.

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Both Alito and another conservative justice, Clarence Thomas, have rejected calls to recuse themselves from cases related to the 2020 election, which Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Thomas' wife, Ginni, supported efforts to overturn the election results.

Public trust in the Supreme Court is at its lowest point in at least 50 years.

Durbin's office issued a statement downplaying Roberts' concerns. Durbin's only interest "is restoring the credibility of the Court in the eyes of the American people," the statement said, adding that he would press efforts to pass an enforceable ethics code for the Supreme Court.

The justices are considering two major cases related to the Capitol attack, 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 of the justice's beach home in New Jersey last summer. Both flags were carried by rioters who violently stormed the Capitol in January 2021 echoing Trump's false claims of election fraud.

Alito has said the inverted American flag was flown by his wife amid a dispute with neighbors and he had no part in it. He said she also flew the "Appeal to Heaven" flag but was unaware of its ties to the Capitol rioters.

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 Judiciary panel 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.

Lab-grown meat isn't on store shelves yet, but some states have already banned it

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Lab-grown meat is not currently available in any U.S. grocery stores or restaurants. If some lawmakers have their way, it never will be.

Earlier this month, both Florida and Alabama banned the sale of cultivated meat and seafood, which is grown from animal cells. In Iowa, the governor signed a bill prohibiting schools from buying lab-grown meat. Federal lawmakers are also looking to restrict it.

It's unclear how far these efforts will go. Some cultivated meat companies say they're considering legal action, and some states – like Tennessee – shelved proposed bans after lawmakers argued they would restrict consumers' choices.

Still, it's a deflating end to a year that started with great optimism for the cultivated meat industry.

The U.S. approved the sale of lab-grown meat for the first time in June 2023, allowing two California startups, Good Meat and Upside Foods, to sell cultivated chicken. Two high-end U.S. restaurants briefly added the products to their menus. Some cultivated meat companies began expanding production. One of Good Meat's products went on sale at a grocery in Singapore.

But before long, politicians were pumping the brakes. Lawmakers in seven states introduced legislation that would ban cultivated meat, according to Kim Tyrrell, an associate director with the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In the U.S. Senate, Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana and Republican Mike Rounds of South Dakota introduced a bill in January to prohibit the use of lab-grown meat in school lunch programs.

The backlash isn't confined to the U.S. Italy banned the sale of lab-grown meat late last year. French lawmakers have also introduced a bill to ban it.

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The pushback is happening even though lab-grown meat and seafood are far from reaching the market in a meaningful way because they're so expensive to make. Cultivated products are grown in steel tanks using cells from a living animal, a fertilized egg or a storage bank. The cells are fed with special blends of water, sugar, fats and vitamins. Once they've grown, they're formed into cutlets, nuggets and other shapes.

Companies have been heavily focused on scaling production to bring down costs and on winning government approval to sell their products. Now, they're also trying to figure out how to respond to the state bans. Upside Foods launched a Change.org petition, inviting supporters to "tell politicians to stop policing your plate."

"It's a shame they are closing the door before we even get out of the gate," Tom Rossmeissl, the head of global marketing for Good Meat, said. The company is considering its legal options, he said.

Backers of the bans say they want to protect farmers and consumers. Cultivated meat has only been around for about a decade, they say, and they're concerned about its safety.

"Alabamians want to know what they are eating, and we have no idea what is in this stuff or how it will affect us," Republican state Sen. Jack Williams, the sponsor of Alabama's bill, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "Meat comes from livestock raised by hardworking farmers and ranchers, not from a petri dish grown by scientists."

But those within the cultivated meat industry say their products must meet rigorous government safety tests before going on sale. Their nascent industry isn't trying to replace meat, they say, but figure out ways to feed the world's growing need for protein.

Rossmeissl said the U.S. is currently leading the effort to develop cultivated meat and seafood, with 45 companies in the space, but that could change. In January, for example, an Israeli company received preliminary approval to sell the world's first steaks made from cultivated beef. China is also investing heavily in lab-grown meat.

"It should be startling and concerning to Americans that we're throwing up barriers to something that could be really important to our economy and food security," he said.

State Sen. Jay Collins, a Republican who sponsored the Florida bill, noted that the legislation doesn't ban research, just the manufacturing and sale of lab-grown meat. Collins said safety was his primary motivator, but he also wants to protect Florida agriculture.

"Let's not be in a rush to replace something," he said. "It's a billion-dollar industry. We feed a ton of people across the country with our cattle, beef, pork, poultry and fish industries."

Rossmeissl thinks the meat industry is trying to avoid what happened to the dairy industry after the introduction of plant-based alternatives like oat milk. Plant-based milk made up 15% of U.S. milk sales last year; that's up from around 6% a decade ago, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Good Food Institute, an advocacy group for plant-based and cultivated products.

Meat producers did back the bans in Florida and Alabama. The leaders of those states' cattlemen's associations – which are advocacy groups for ranchers – stood next to both governors as they signed the bans into law.

But the picture is more complicated at the national level, where the meat industry doesn't support bans on cultivated products. Some meat producers, like JBS Foods, are working on developing cultivated meat of their own.

"We do not support the route of banning these outright," Sigrid Johannes, the director of government affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said. "We're not afraid of competing with these products in the marketplace."

The Meat Institute – which represents JBS, Tyson and other big meat companies – sent a letter to Alabama lawmakers warning them that the state's ban was likely unconstitutional since federal law regulates meat processing and interstate commerce.

The founders of Wildtype, a San Francisco-based company that makes cultivated salmon, traveled to Florida and Alabama to testify against the bills but weren't able to sway the outcome. They hope someone will challenge the bans in court but say it's not realistic for their tiny company to take on that battle.

"We are David and on the other side of the aisle there is a gigantic Goliath," Wildtype co-founder Arye Elfenbein said.

NRA can sue ex-NY official it says tried to blacklist it after Parkland shooting, Supreme Court says

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A unanimous Supreme Court on Thursday cleared the way for a National Rifle Association lawsuit against a former New York state official over claims she pressured companies to blacklist it following the deadly 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Giving the NRA a new chance to prove its case, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that "the critical take-away is that the First Amendment prohibits government officials from wielding their power selectively to punish or suppress speech."

The NRA said ex-New York state Department of Financial Services Superintendent Maria Vullo violated its free-speech rights during her investigation of NRA-endorsed insurance policies. The group had been working with insurance companies to offer its members Carry Guard policies that covered losses caused by firearms, even when the insured person intentionally killed or hurt somebody. Critics have called the policies "murder insurance."

In an unusual alignment, the NRA was represented in the case by the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Biden administration argued some of its claims should go forward.

"This is a landmark victory for the NRA and all who care about our First Amendment freedom," NRA attorney William A. Brewer III said, accusing New York government officials of abusing their power to silence the group.

Neal Katyal, Vullo's attorney at the Supreme Court, predicted Vullo would ultimately win the case. "Ms. Vullo did not violate anyone's First Amendment rights. Ms. Vullo enforced the insurance law against admitted violations by insurance entities," Katyal said in a statement.

The Supreme Court ruling favoring the NRA, which is based in Fairfax, Virginia, reverses a lower-court decision tossing out the gun rights group's lawsuit against Vullo. The decision means the NRA's lawsuit can go forward, but it does not decide the merits of the claim. It also should not be read to shield the NRA and other advocacy groups from regulation, Sotomayor said.

But, she wrote, the NRA's complaint "plausibly alleges that Vullo threatened to wield her power against those refusing to aid her campaign to punish the NRA's gun-promotion advocacy. If true, that violates the First Amendment."

Vullo argued that she rightly investigated NRA-endorsed insurance policies. She said she did speak out about the risks of doing business with gun groups but didn't exert any improper pressure on companies, many of which were distancing themselves from the NRA on their own at the time.

The NRA said Vullo leveraged the state investigation into the legality of NRA-endorsed insurance products to pressure insurance companies, saying she would go easier on them if they cut ties with the group.

The products clearly violated state law, Vullo countered, including by covering intentional acts and criminal defense costs. The probe started before the Parkland massacre, which left 17 people dead, and the insurance providers ultimately agreed to pay multimillion-dollar fines.

Vullo also sent out guidance letters to banks and insurance companies warning about the "reputational risks" of working with the NRA. The NRA said her words had significant sway because of her position and several companies cut ties with the group, costing it millions of dollars in revenue.

Vullo said the letters were evenhanded, and her attorney argued that letting the lawsuit go forward would improperly muzzle public officials.

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 in meetings 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.

Among those registering Thursday was Saeed Jalili, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator who ran in 2013 and registered in 2021 before withdrawing to support Raisi.

"Today, we are in a historic opportunity," Jalili told journalists. "If we miss this, we will fall behind the path of progress."

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.

Gift registries after divorce offer a new way to support loved ones

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Lifestyles Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Monogrammed towels. A toothbrush holder for four, rather than three. Shared bedding. For people putting a life back together after divorce, mundane household objects can be painful marital reminders.

Also difficult can be the absence of items that departed with the ex-spouse.

Olivia Howell knows all too well how it felt, going through her own divorce in 2019 after eight years of marriage and two kids. Her husband decamped with his stuff and she donated other items that triggered unwelcome emotions to a thrift shop.

"What was left in the house was almost nothing," she said.

Howell then got busy replenishing, and trying to make the experience better for others through Fresh Starts. It's a gift registry specifically for rebuilding after divorce that's also packed with vetted experts if needed and other resources.

Divorce registries are part of a trend toward breaking the stigma of broken marriages, along with divorce parties and formal divorce announcements akin to wedding and marriage news.

Howell built Fresh Starts from the ground up with her sister, Jenny Dreizen, who found herself in a similar situation after the end of a long-term relationship. Nearly three years after launch, it remains a rare support resource offering divorce-specific registries for those starting over, and for loved ones who may struggle to find the right words and ways to reach out.

"I thought, you know, I had a baby registry and I had a wedding registry. This is when I actually need things to restock my life. I need the community support. I need new towels. I need new sheets, I need new utensils," the 39-year-old Howell said.

Today, Fresh Starts has between 50,000 and 70,000 monthly visitors. The sisters also host a podcast, "A Fresh Story," featuring guests discussing how they began again after divorce or navigated other huge life changes.

Erin Eloise Tulberg, a yoga teacher, actor and dancer in Brooklyn, has not yet finalized her divorce as she works out custody arrangements for her 9-year-old son. She started using Fresh Starts last summer at the suggestion of a friend.

"There was an immediate need for me to get my own apartment. I was moving into a place with absolutely nothing. I had no furniture. I had no kitchenware. I had my clothes and my books," said Tulberg, 37.

The situation, she said, was "kind of scary." Originally from Washington state, her closest family and friends are scattered around the country.

"It was a great way to have my friends rally behind me," Tulberg said of her registry.

Flowers, bottles of wine, and a pile of "I'm sorrys" or "congratulations," depending, are often how divorce news plays out. Those looking to support their friends or relatives don't often think about the need for a lamp or new sheets, Howell said.

They may also not understand the emotional impact that simple objects can take on. New household goods at a time of rupture and despair can draw community closer and become totems, a rebirth of sorts, said Leslie Jamison, a Brooklyn novelist and essayist whose latest book, "Splinters," is a personal exploration of her own divorce.

"Part of it is a kind of faith and hope and trust that a new version of one's life, household, family not only is possible but can be filled with beauty," she said.

Howell, among the first of her friends to get divorced, had loved ones who checked in daily to make sure she was eating and sleeping. They sent Mother's Day gifts after her separation just ahead of the holiday. And they reassured her with standing offers to assist in any way.

But there was a lot they didn't immediately understand.

"Every time I would go into the bathroom, I would feel horrible because I would see a toothbrush holder for a life that I thought I was going to have. It made me feel so much shame and guilt, and all of those other feelings that come with divorce," Howell said.

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One day, her sister showed up with a new one just for three.

"I still get emotional talking about it because it was really like, OK, this is happening. I'm going to be OK," Howell said.

For Tulberg, it was matching beds for her and her son. They share a studio apartment.

"Suddenly, I had things from all of my friends that are real and tangible and not ephemeral," she said. "I look at my plates and I know exactly who they're from. My friends say it feels good to be able to give something solid and real to us."

Many retail registries can be set up for a multitude of purposes, including divorce.

Fresh Starts uses Amazon. It suggests bundles of items ranging from \$99 to \$500. Among the bedroom, kitchen, home office and bathroom essentials are a shower curtain, a can opener, a bedside clock, a humidifier. The site also groups bundles by room, including child-size hangers and a night light that projects the stars for a young one's space.

Recipients can go the bundle route when choosing what to list, or they can pluck specific items from them. They can also select anything else on Amazon. Getting to the emotional place that allows someone newly separated to reach out for this kind of tangible help isn't always easy.

"It's about meeting people where they are," Howell said.

Divorce talk can be awkward. Fresh Starts offers text prompts covering how to introduce a registry to loved ones, along with suggestions for what friends and relatives can say.

Howell doesn't describe divorce registries as "gift registries" but rather "support registries." Some of her users create registries for other reasons, too.

Not everyone is on board with the idea. Howell hears from a lot of haters.

"There are some people that are very against it because they feel like divorce shouldn't be celebrated. We're saying that divorce is a brave decision and that you should be honored for that brave decision and supported," she said.

Angela Ashurst-McGee, 52, finalized her divorce in March after six kids and 32 years of marriage. She and her husband took turns choosing what they wanted in their 3,000-square-foot house about an hour south of Salt Lake City. She, too, heard about registries from a friend.

"So it was like, I want the sofa in the living room, I want the sofa in the sunroom, I want the hedge trimmer. I want the drill, you know, down to the waffle maker," she said. "Just on a practical level, I needed to replace various things. And also, I felt like this is a big life event that I think we should kind of rally around and celebrate."

One of her sisters set up her registry on Amazon, without using Fresh Starts. Ashurst-McGee chose a few just-for-fun things among her essentials, including twinkle lights for her backyard patio.

"Everybody who reached out said, I think this is a great idea, or I've suggested this to some other people I know. It's hard to know what to do for somebody who's getting divorced other than saying, you know, bummer. So it was kind of something concrete that people could do," she said.

Concrete, she said, and positive.

"I think one fear people have is in regards to taking sides," she said. "And this is something you can do without taking sides. It's forward-looking. It's not denigrating the other person. It's not blaming anyone. It's just practical support."

One Tech Tip: Want to turn off Meta AI? You can't — but there are some workarounds

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — If you use Facebook, WhatsApp or Instagram, you've probably noticed a new character pop up answering search queries or eagerly offering tidbits of information in your feeds, with varying degrees of accuracy.

It's Meta AI, and it's here to help, at least according to Meta Platforms' CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who calls

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it “the most intelligent AI assistant that you can freely use.”

The chatbot can recommend local restaurants, offer more information on something you see in a Facebook post, search for airline flights or generate images in the blink of an eye. If you’re chatting with friends to plan a night out, you can invite it into your group conversation by typing @MetaAI, then ask it to recommend, say, cocktail bars.

Meta’s AI tool has been integrated into chat boxes and search bars throughout the tech giant’s platforms. The assistant appears, for example, at the top of your chat list on Messenger. Ask it questions about anything or to “imagine” something and it will generate a picture or animation.

As with any new technology, there are, of course, hiccups, including bizarre exchanges when the chatbots first started engaging with real people. One joined a Facebook moms’ group to talk about its gifted child. Another tried to give away nonexistent items to confused members of a Buy Nothing forum.

Meta AI hasn’t been universally welcomed. Here are some tips if you want to avoid using it:

CAN I TURN IT OFF?

Some Facebook users don’t like the chatbot, complaining in online forums that they’re tired of having AI foisted on them all the time or that they just want to stick with what they know. So what if you don’t want Meta AI butting in every time you search for something or scroll through your social feeds? Well, you might need a time machine. Meta and other tech companies are in an AI arms race, churning out new language models and persuading — some might say pressuring — the public to use them.

The bad news is there’s no one button to turn off Meta AI on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger or WhatsApp. However, if you want to limit it, there are some (imperfect) workarounds.

MUTE...SORT OF

On the Facebook mobile app, tap the “search” button. You may get a prompt to “Ask Meta AI anything.” Tap the blue triangle on the right, then the blue circle with an “i” inside it. Here, you’ll see a “mute” button, with options to silence the chatbot for 15 minutes or longer, or “Until I change it.” You can do the same on Instagram.

Nonetheless, muting doesn’t get rid of Meta AI completely. Meta AI’s circle logo might still appear where the search magnifying glass used to be — and tapping on it will take you to the Meta AI field. This is now the new way to search in Meta, and just as with Google’s AI summaries, the responses will be generated by AI.

I asked the chatbot about searching Facebook without Meta AI results.

“Meta AI aims to be a helpful assistant and is in the search bar to assist with your questions,” it responded. Then it added, “You can’t disable it from this experience, but you can tap the search button after writing your query and search how you normally would.”

Then I asked a (human) Meta spokesperson.

“You can search how you normally would and choose to engage with a variety of results — ones from Meta AI or others that appear as you type,” the spokesperson said in a statement. “And when interacting with Meta AI, you have access to real-time information without having to leave the app you’re using thanks to our search partnerships.”

Like an over-eager personal assistant, Meta AI also pops up under posts on your Facebook news feed, offering more information about what’s discussed in the post — such as the subject of a news article. It’s not possible to disable this feature, so you’ll just have to ignore it.

USE OLD SCHOOL FACEBOOK

Tech websites have noted that one surefire way to avoid Facebook’s AI assistant is to use the social network’s stripped-down mobile site, mbasic.facebook.com. It’s aimed at people in developing countries using older phones on slower internet connections. The basic site has a retro feel that looks crude compared to the current version, and it looks even worse on desktop browsers, but it still works on a rudimentary level and without AI.

OTHER COUNTRIES

Meta AI is so far only available in the United States and 13 other countries including Australia, Canada,

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Ghana, Jamaica, Malawi, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. So if you don't live in any of those places, you don't have to worry about the chatbot because you don't get to use it. At least not yet.

Today in History: May 31 The Johnstown Flood kills more than 2000

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 31, the 152nd day of 2024. There are 214 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 31, 1889, some 2,200 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, perished when the South Fork Dam collapsed, sending 20 million tons of water rushing through the town.

On this date:

In 1790, President George Washington signed into law the first U.S. copyright act.

In 1859, the Big Ben clock tower in London went into operation, chiming for the first time.

In 1921, a race riot erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as white mobs began looting and leveling the affluent Black district of Greenwood over reports a Black man had assaulted a white woman in an elevator; hundreds are believed to have died.

In 1949, former State Department official and accused spy Alger Hiss went on trial in New York, charged with perjury (the jury deadlocked, but Hiss was convicted in a second trial).

In 1962, former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann was hanged in Israel a few minutes before midnight for his role in the Holocaust.

In 1970, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake in Peru claimed an estimated 67,000 lives.

In 1977, the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline, three years in the making despite objections from environmentalists and Alaska Natives, was completed.

In 1989, House Speaker Jim Wright, dogged by questions about his ethics, announced he would resign.

In 2009, Millvina Dean, the last survivor of the 1912 sinking of the RMS Titanic, died in Southampton, England at 97.

In 2013, a tornado in the Oklahoma City metro area claimed eight lives, including those of storm chasers Tim Samaras, his son, Paul, and Carl Young.

In 2014, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier held prisoner in Afghanistan, was freed by the Taliban in exchange for five Afghan detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (Bergdahl, who'd gone missing in June 2009, later pleaded guilty to endangering his comrades by walking away from his post in Afghanistan; his sentence included a dishonorable discharge, a reduction in rank and a fine, but no prison time.)

In 2018, President Donald Trump pardoned conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza, who had pleaded guilty to campaign finance fraud; Trump said D'Souza had been "treated very unfairly by our government."

In 2019, a longtime city employee opened fire in a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Virginia, killing 12 people on three floors before police shot and killed him; officials said DeWayne Craddock had resigned by email hours before the shooting.

In 2020, tens of thousands of people protesting in the wake of the killing of George Floyd again took to the streets across America, with peaceful demonstrations against police killings overshadowed by unrest; officials deployed thousands of National Guard soldiers and enacted strict curfews in major cities.

In 2021, China's ruling Communist Party announced that all couples would be allowed to have three children instead of two.

In 2023, jurors found "That '70s Show" star Danny Masterson guilty of two counts of rape in a Los Angeles court.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Clint Eastwood is 94. Singer Peter Yarrow is 86. Humanitarian and

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author Terry Waite is 85. Singer-musician Augie Meyers is 84. Actor Sharon Gless is 81. Football Hall of Famer Joe Namath is 81. Broadcast journalist/commentator Bernard Goldberg is 79. Actor Tom Berenger is 74. Actor Gregory Harrison is 74. Actor Kyle Secor is 67. Actor Roma Maffia (ma-FEE'-uh) is 66. Actor/comedian Chris Elliott is 64. Actor Lea Thompson is 63. Singer Corey Hart is 62. Actor Hugh Dillon is 61. Rapper Darryl "DMC" McDaniels is 60. Actor Brooke Shields is 59. TV host Phil Keoghan is 57. Jazz musician Christian McBride is 52. Actor Archie Panjabi is 52. Actor Merle Dandridge (TV: "Greenleaf") is 49. Actor Colin Farrell is 48. Rock musician Scott Klopfenstein (Reel Big Fish) is 47. Actor Eric Christian Olsen is 47. Rock musician Andy Hurley (Fall Out Boy) is 44. Country singer Casey James (TV: "American Idol") is 42. Actor Jonathan Tucker is 42. Rapper Waka Flocka Flame is 38. Pop singer Normani Hamilton (Fifth Harmony) is 28.