

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 1 of 80

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 Headline News](#)
- [3- Manhart Ad](#)
- [4- Charles Mix County Fatal Crash](#)
- [4- Christopher Reder Ad](#)
- [5- Jr. Teeners drop pair to Clark](#)
- [6- Groton Legion drops pair to Smittys](#)
- [7- JVT Annual Meeting Credit winners and Board of Directors](#)
- [8- Service Notice: Camelia \(Camie\) Rose Heminger](#)
- [8- Queen of Hearts](#)
- [8- Mosquito Control tonight](#)
- [8- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [9- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [10- Drought Monitor](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Homicide investigation sparks rare level of state-tribal cooperation](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Schwan's purchases Sioux Falls land for new food production facility](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: An obscure drug discount program stifles use of federal lifeline by rural hospitals](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: An angry Trump pledges to appeal 'this scam' conviction as Republicans vow resistance](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: Some providers will offer low-cost internet even as federal program ends, White House says](#)
- [21- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, June 1

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

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

## Sunday, June 2

Junior Legion at Mobridge 5:30 p.m. (2)  
United Methodist: Worship with communion, at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.

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

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



Let's thank God for bringing us safely through the month of May, and allowing us to experience another blessed June.

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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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 2 of 80

# 1440

## India's Elections Wrap Up

Voters in India have started casting their ballots in the last phase of the country's six-week general election process, which began April 19 and concludes today. The votes from the world's longest democratic elections will be tallied June 4.

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In this seventh and final phase of the election, the fate of 904 candidates is at stake, with voters determining those who will secure 57 open seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha is India's lower house of parliament and is responsible for nominating a prime minister. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 73, and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party are seeking a third consecutive term against a coalition of parties called the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance. Modi maintains a 75% approval rating and is expected to win.

Voters have braved soaring temperatures amid a heat wave in India that has led to more than 50 deaths in one week alone, including election officials on duty. The capital New Delhi recorded potentially the highest-ever temperature of 127.22 degrees Fahrenheit this week.

## Joint British-US airstrikes in Yemen kill at least 16 people.

The airstrikes were targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels and wounded at least 42 others. The strikes were carried out in response to attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea by Iran-backed militant groups protesting the Israel-Hamas war. Iran has funded Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and other groups in Iraq and Syria. Separately, President Joe Biden endorsed an Israeli-led cease-fire proposal; Hamas has not responded as of this writing.

## Ukraine, Russia exchange 75 soldiers each in prisoner swap.

A total of 150 prisoners of war were exchanged under the deal brokered by the United Arab Emirates. The prisoner swap is the first exchange in nearly four months between the two warring nations. Ukrainian officials said Russia also returned the bodies of 212 Ukrainian military members.

## Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia leaves Democratic Party.

Manchin officially switched his party affiliation to independent Friday, but will continue to caucus with Democrats. In explaining his decision, Manchin cited partisan rifts. Manchin has said he won't run for reelection in the Senate; however, the latest news raises questions about his next steps. Manchin now joins three other independent senators who caucus with Democrats.

## Vermont to require oil companies to pay for climate damage.

The state is the first in the US to enact a law requiring oil companies to contribute to a fund paying for damage from extreme weather fueled by the changing climate. The amount owed would take into account the total emissions of greenhouse gases a company generated between 1995 and 2024. The law is modeled after a federal law requiring companies to clean up pollution or reimburse the government to do so.

## Largest-ever known genome discovered inside a tiny plant.

Researchers in Spain have identified a species of fern (*T. oblancoolata*) that has the largest amount of DNA stored in its nucleus compared to any other living organism on Earth. Each cell of the fern, found in the South Pacific island nation of New Caledonia, has DNA that is over 328 feet long if unraveled. The measurement is 50 times more than the size of the human genome, which is 6 feet long.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 3 of 80

## Researchers link genetic mutation to neurodevelopmental disorders.

A range of intellectual disabilities appear to be related to rare mutations in a small noncoding gene called RNU4-2. Noncoding genes, also known as "junk DNA," do not encode proteins but often RNA molecules, which then translate into proteins or stand on their own. Roughly 6.5 million people in the US have an intellectual disability.

## Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Wyatt P. from Dallas, Texas.

"I am studying abroad in Italy and used a free weekend to visit a small town called Quercianella on the west coast. Upon arriving, my friends and I went to a cafe and I had some laundry in a duffel with me that I needed to dry. Upon asking the barista, Diana, where I might find a laundromat, she told me there was not one in town. Instead, she offered to welcome me to her home once she got off of work to help me dry my clothes. She was so kind, and I greatly appreciated her altruism."



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## Charles Mix County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 50, mile marker 268, two miles east of Academy, SD

When: 7:30 a.m. Friday, May 31, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 43, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2005 Chrysler PT Cruiser

Seatbelt Use: No

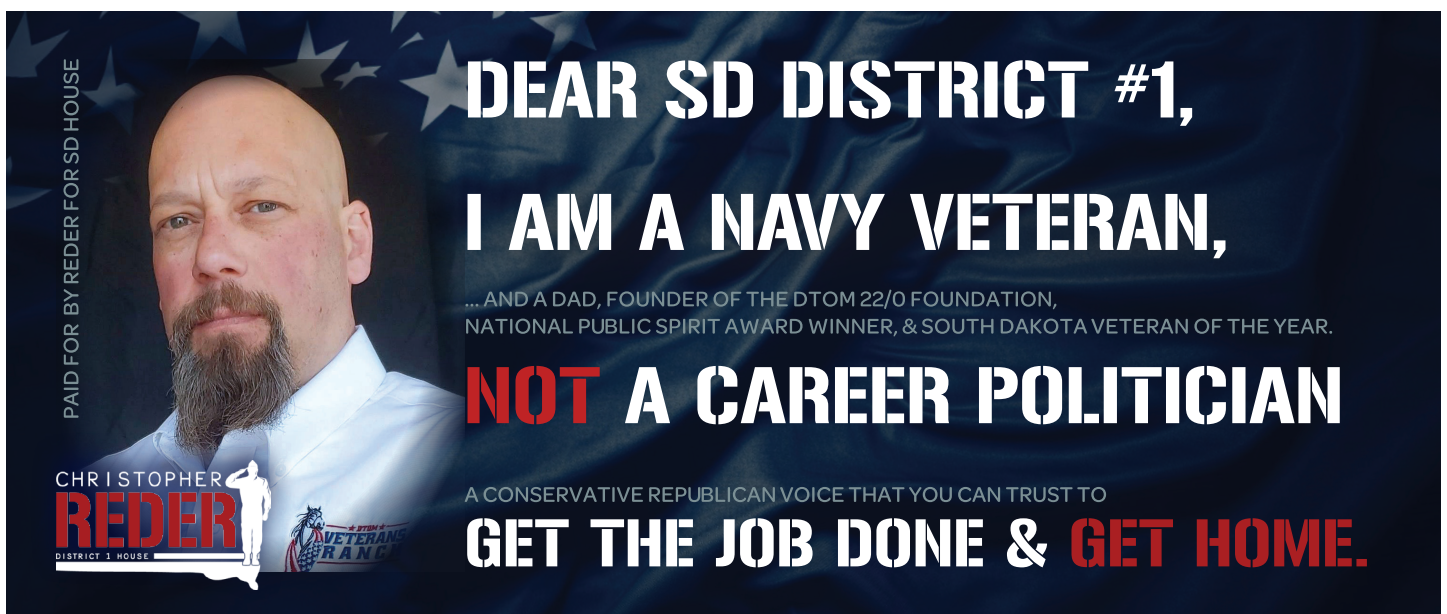
Charles Mix County, S.D.- A 43-year-old man died Friday morning in a single-vehicle crash near Academy, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2005 Chrysler PT Cruiser was westbound on SD Highway 50. The driver failed to negotiate a curve in the roadway and entered the ditch where the vehicle vaulted over a driveway and rolled. The driver was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. He was transported to a nearby health center where he was pronounced deceased.

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

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



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VETERAN OF THE YEAR

## Groton Jr Teeners 14U Defeated By Clark Area 14U

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr Teeners 14U lost to Clark Area 14U 7-3 on Friday.

Clark Area 14U got on the board in the first inning after Charlie Luvaas singled, scoring one run.

Xavior Ellenbecker singled, which helped Groton Jr Teeners 14U tie the game at one in the top of the second.

In the top of the third, Groton Jr Teeners 14U broke up the tie when an error scored one run. Then a single by Braeden Flihs followed to extend the lead to 3-1.

Clark Area 14U made the score 5-3 in the bottom of the third after Luvaas doubled, scoring one run, Logan Foster singled, scoring one run, and Carson Kelly singled, scoring two runs.

Luvaas earned the win for Clark Area 14U. They surrendered three hits and three runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out five and walking four. Ryder Schelle took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The righty went six innings, surrendering seven runs on 13 hits, striking out four and walking one.

Ellenbecker led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with one run batted in. The outfielder went 1-for-2 on the day. Alex Abeln, Flihs, and Ellenbecker each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Flihs paced Groton Jr Teeners 14U with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, amassing six walks for the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U turned one double play in the game.

Clark Area 14U amassed 13 hits in the game. Kelly, the number seven hitter for Clark Area 14U, led the way with two runs batted in. The infielder went 1-for-3 on the day. Cade Gaikowski, Luvaas, and Foster each collected three hits for Clark Area 14U. Kaden Wookey collected two hits for Clark Area 14U in four at bats.

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## Groton Jr Teeners 14U With Tough Game Against Clark Area 14U

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr Teeners 14U had trouble keeping up with Clark Area 14U in a 10-0 loss on Friday.

Clark Area 14U jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the second inning after Carson Kelly doubled, scoring one run, Ethan Zemlicka grounded out, scoring two runs, Aksel Gjerde singled, scoring one run, and Cade Gaikowski doubled, scoring one run.

Clark Area 14U scored five runs on three hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Charlie Luvaas singled, scoring one run, Logan Foster doubled, scoring two runs, and Kelly singled, scoring two runs.

Gaikowski earned the win for Clark Area 14U. The right-handed pitcher gave up four hits and zero runs over four innings, striking out two and walking one. Braeden Flihs took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. They went three innings, surrendering five runs on six hits, striking out none and walking four.

Layne Johnson, Flihs, Lincoln Shilhanek, and Kason Oswald each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U.

Kelly seized on their opportunities, leading Clark Area 14U with three runs batted in from the number seven spot in the lineup. They went 3-for-3 on the day. Miles Olson collected two hits for Clark Area 14U in three at bats. Wyatt Schlagel led Clark Area 14U with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying six walks for the game. Clark Area 14U turned one double play in the game.

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## Groton Post 39 Fall After Strong Showing By Smittys Legion

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 had trouble keeping up with Smittys Legion in a 16-2 loss on Friday.

Smittys Legion got on the board in the top of the first inning after Phillip Zens singled, scoring one run, and Casey Vining tripled, scoring two runs.

A line out by Zens extended the Smittys Legion lead to 4-0 in the top of the second inning.

Smittys Legion added to their early lead in the top of the third inning when an error scored one run, Cooper Eisenbeisz doubled, scoring two runs, and Zane Backous tripled, scoring one run.

Smittys Legion scored eight runs on one hit in the top of the sixth inning. Jaxon Ladner drew a walk, scoring one run, Lance Siefken was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Talan Dutenhoeffer drew a walk, scoring one run, Drew Salfrank drew a walk, scoring one run, Siefken scored after tagging up, Vining singled, scoring two runs, and Ladner was struck by a pitch, driving in a run.

Jared Klootwyk earned the win for Smittys Legion. The reliever surrendered two hits and one run (zero earned) over two innings, striking out none and walking one. Ryan Groeblichhoff took the loss for Groton Post 39. The starting pitcher went five innings, surrendering eight runs (four earned) on nine hits, striking out four and walking two. Charlie Phillips led things off on the mound for Smittys Legion. The starting pitcher gave up one hit and one run (zero earned) over four innings, striking out two and walking three.

Braxton Imrie, Gavin Englund, and Brevin Fliehs each collected one hit for Groton Post 39. Groton Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Smittys Legion accumulated 10 hits in the game. Vining provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Smittys Legion with four runs batted in. They went 3-for-4 on the day. Eisenbeisz collected two hits for Smittys Legion in four at bats. Smittys Legion had a strong eye at the plate, collecting nine walks for the game. Backous, Brendan Livermont, and Dutenhoeffer led the team with two walks each. Smittys Legion turned one double play in the game.

## Groton Post 39 With Tough Game Against Smittys Legion

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 had trouble keeping up with Smittys Legion in a 14-2 loss on Friday.

Smittys Legion jumped out to the lead in the top of the first inning after Jaxon Ladner doubled, scoring two runs, and Donnie Soderlund singled, scoring one run.

Smittys Legion added one run in the second. Casey Vining singled after a 6-pitch at-bat, making the score 4-1.

Smittys Legion scored five runs on three hits in the top of the third inning. Brevin Fliehs induced Grant Beyer to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, Phillip Zens singled, scoring one run, Vining singled, scoring two runs, and an error scored one run.

Smittys Legion scored five runs on one hit in the top of the fourth inning. An error scored two runs, Vining was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Ladner singled, scoring one run, and Soderlund drew a walk, scoring one run.

Jackson Welke earned the win for Smittys Legion. They allowed six hits and two runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out two and walking three. Fliehs took the loss for Groton Post 39. The right-handed pitcher went three innings, giving up nine runs (eight earned) on eight hits, striking out four and walking three.

Leadoff hitter Fliehs led Groton Post 39 with two hits in three at bats. Bradin Althoff and Fliehs each drove in one run for Groton Post 39.

Vining provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Smittys Legion with four runs batted in. They went 2-for-3 on the day. Vining, Soderlund, and Ladner each collected two hits for Smittys Legion. Smittys Legion had a strong eye at the plate, amassing seven walks for the game. Zane Backous and Beyer led the team with two free passes each.

Next up for Groton Post 39 is a game at Badger Post 260 on Monday.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 7 of 80



## JVT Credit Winners

James Valley Telecommunications held its annual meeting on Thursday. Credit winners are pictured above from left to right: Joe Gustafson \$500 credit; Kara Anderson \$250 credit; Terry Kenny \$250 credit; Patricia Dennert \$100 credit; and Beverly Sombke \$100 credit. (Courtesy Photo)



## JVT Board of Directors

JVT Board of Directors are pictured above from left to right: Jim Cremer, Attorney; Wendell Rye, District 2; Duane Jark, District 5; Mark Wattier, District 6; Garrett Rahm, District 7; Bob Wegner, District 3; Bill Ewalt, District 4; Roger Zastrow, District 1; and James Groft, CEO. (Courtesy Photo)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 8 of 80

## Camelia (Camie) Rose Heminger 1971 - 2024

A service of remembrance will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2024. Following her request Camie was cremated. A meal, service and urn burial will take place at the Big Coulee District Center with burial in Ascension Church Cemetery. The meal will start at noon (12:00), service shortly afterwards and then proceed to the cemetery for burial.



The City of Groton will be doing adult mosquito control Tonight.

## Queen of Hearts

Week 13 of the Queen of Hearts drawing was held Thursday with the jackpot of \$19,281. Ticket sales for the were \$1,575. The name drawn was Laurel Hearnen with chose card number 16, it was the Queen of Spades. She won the consolation prize of \$157.

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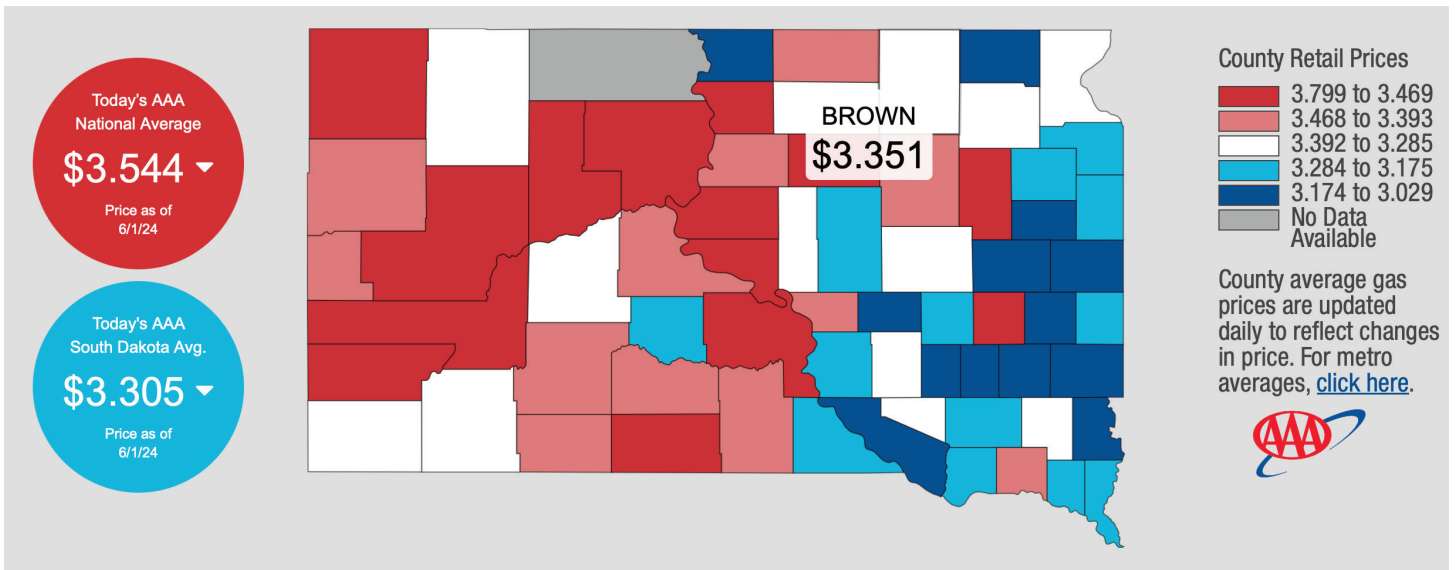
# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 9 of 80

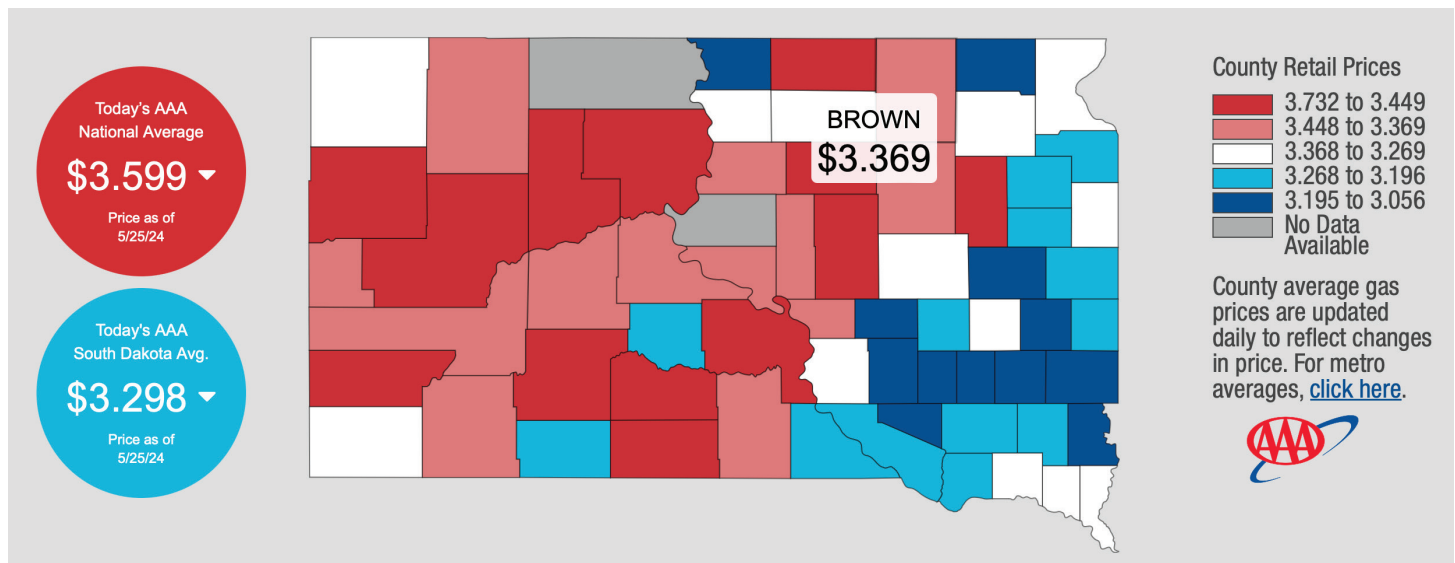
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.305	\$3.487	\$3.926	\$3.461
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.306	\$3.480	\$3.925	\$3.465
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.298	\$3.473	\$3.902	\$3.501
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.379	\$3.531	\$3.955	\$3.659
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.466	\$3.614	\$4.077	\$3.763

### This Week



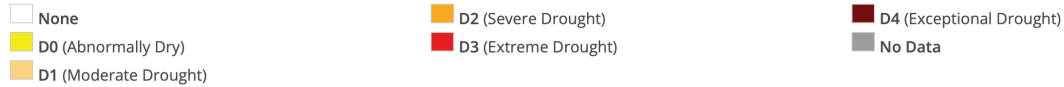
### Last Week



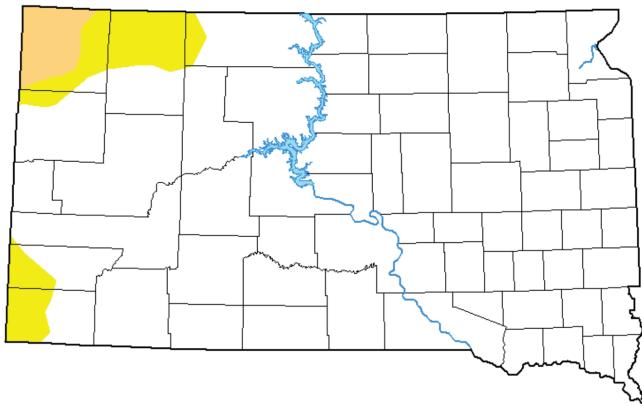
# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 10 of 80

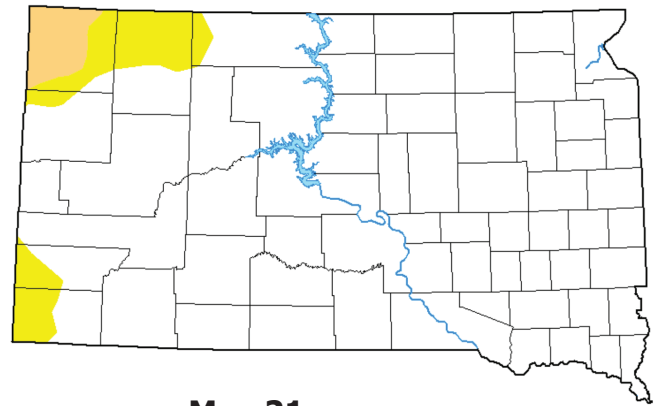
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



May 28



May 21

Precipitation fell across much of the region this week, which was enough to prevent further degradation but not enough to warrant large improvements. The heaviest rainfall amounts fell across much of North Dakota and along eastern portions of the region, where rainfall totals were up to 600% of normal and ranged between 1 to 4 inches this week. Severe drought (D2) was improved in south-central Kansas, while improvements to moderate drought (D1) and abnormal dryness (D0) were made in northern Kansas and southeast Nebraska. Abnormal dryness was also removed from northern Wyoming and northeast North Dakota due to heavy precipitation and improvement shown in soil moisture and short-term SPI/SPEI indicators this week. Conversely, dry conditions persisted in eastern portions of the High Plains this week. Deteriorating conditions shown in short-term SPI/SPEI, streamflow, soil moisture and snow water equivalent (SWE) data justified degradations in Colorado and eastern portions of Nebraska and Kansas. Extreme drought (D3) and severe drought were expanded in eastern Kansas, while moderate drought was introduced into southeast Wyoming where precipitation amounts were 50% of normal over the past month. Abnormal dryness was expanded in parts of Colorado, eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska this week.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Homicide investigation sparks rare level of state-tribal cooperation**

**Lake Andes incident speaks to operational difficulties of cross-border policing**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 31, 2024 4:55 PM**

A double stabbing that left one man dead and another hospitalized led to a rare extradition order to state custody from the Yankton Sioux Tribe this week.

Mackenzie Antelope, 18, of Lake Andes, is charged with alternate counts of first- and second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter in the death of 22-year-old Lake Andes resident Quinlan Ream.

Antelope is accused of stabbing Ream and 33-year-old Dylan Oulette of Lake Andes in a motel in that Charles Mix County town. He's facing an aggravated assault charge for the Oulette stabbing.

Oulette stumbled into the Lake Andes Gus Stop on May 21 at 10:41 p.m. with multiple stab wounds and reported the stabbing, according to an affidavit signed Tuesday in Antelope's criminal case file. He was soon taken to a hospital in Sioux Falls.

Sheriff's deputies followed a trail of blood to the Landing Strip hotel, located across a highway from the Gus Stop, to find Ream's body on the floor of one of the rooms.

Police later interviewed two witnesses who'd been drinking with the victims and suspect that evening, the affidavit says, and heard a description of a verbal altercation that ended with Antelope stabbing the victims. From his hospital room, Oulette identified Antelope as his assailant.

Antelope fled from the scene onto Yankton Sioux tribal land after the stabbing. State and county officers typically cannot arrest those suspected of committing state crimes if the suspect crosses onto Native land, and tribal officers cannot arrest suspects on state charges.

The Yankton Sioux Tribe's jurisdiction is "checkerboard," meaning tribal and other lands intermingle. Some of South Dakota's nine tribal nations, including Rosebud and Oglala, are situated on larger reservations with encompassing boundaries.

### **Recent controversies over jurisdictional challenges**

Jurisdictional challenges have framed controversies between Gov. Kristi Noem and tribal leaders in recent months. Noem has called upon tribal leaders to ink memoranda of understanding with the state to allow outside law enforcement to assist tribal law enforcement.

Tribal officials, meanwhile, have bristled at Noem's accusations that some of them are "personally benefiting" from an infiltration of drug cartels onto tribal lands – something many tribal leaders dispute, even though drugs originally produced by cartels are widely available.

Attorney General Marty Jackley and Noem collaborated to launch a tribal law enforcement academy recently as a way to encourage more recruits to join tribal agencies. That basic certification course begins in Pierre on Monday.

Noem also recently called a tribal law enforcement summit and invited tribal leaders, even as the governments of all nine tribes have voted to banish her from their lands.

On Thursday, Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out said in a press release that the summit is a "divide and conquer tactic," and said he would not attend.

Jackley, meanwhile, has begun meeting with tribal officials on law enforcement issues. He met with the Lower Brule Tribal Council on Thursday.

In a recent opinion column, Jackley stressed that state and tribal law enforcement work together when necessary to overcome jurisdictional challenges.

"I do not accept 'jurisdiction' as an impediment to the ability and responsibility of law enforcement to collectively protect everyone in South Dakota, on and off reservations," Jackley wrote, in part. "We can always strive to do better. Recent publicity has shed light on the importance to build upon and strengthen what law enforcement is already doing to protect all South Dakotans."

## Stabbings prompt rare level of cooperation

Antelope's arrest stands as an example of how such collaborations play out in the absence of formal agreements between state and tribal agencies.

To facilitate Antelope's Wednesday arrest across the jurisdictional border, the tribe's chairman first needed to sign an extradition order, Yankton Sioux Tribal Police Chief Edwin Young said Friday.

That order, once ratified in tribal court, allowed Young's department to apprehend Antelope on Wednesday. Antelope waived an extradition hearing and will make his first appearance in court next week in Lake Andes.

Young, who started with the YST police in 2016, says he can only recall two other times when such an extradition order was signed. Misdemeanors and lower-level felonies typically don't see intervention from the tribe's chairman, he said.

"The county government and tribal government don't always see eye-to-eye, but on a major incident like this we have to work together," Young said.

In a press release, Charles Mix County State's Attorney Steve Cotton said the Charles Mix County Sheriff's Office, the state Division of Criminal Investigation and Yankton Sioux Tribal Police worked together to conduct interviews on both sides of the state-tribal border and across two counties.

Cotton lauded the cooperation.

"This case is a prime example of tribal, state, and county governments working together," Cotton wrote. "Due to this collaborative effort, law enforcement officers from multiple agencies were able to act swiftly in order to protect the public."

Ream, according to his obituary, attended college in Kansas after graduating high school in Montana. He had worked at Fort Randall Casino, and recently became a father.

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

## Schwan's purchases Sioux Falls land for new food production facility

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 31, 2024 3:05 PM

Three years after it was first announced, Schwan's Co. is taking the next step in its investment in South Dakota after closing on 142 acres of land in northwest Sioux Falls.

The company plans to construct a 700,000-square-foot Asian food production facility at Foundation Park, including a wastewater treatment facility on the manufacturing site. The wastewater treatment facility will allow the company to discharge water to the city "with the least amount of impact on the city's operations," according to a news release.

The company, based in Minnesota and a subsidiary of South Korea-based CJ foods, originally announced its plans in 2021. The project at that time would have cost about \$500 million and created 600 jobs in South Dakota's largest city. Gov. Kristi Noem called it "the largest project in the history of the Governor's Office of Economic Development" at the time. A similar description has since been applied to a potential \$1 billion sustainable aviation fuel facility in Lake Preston.

The newest Schwan's announcement does not have an official estimate for the cost of the facility, though

it'll still employ 600 people.

Noem welcomed the news Friday in a press release, saying, "South Dakota just keeps growing. Our 'Open for Business' mindset is transforming our state into an economic powerhouse."

South Dakota's unemployment rate in April 2024 stood at 2%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. South Dakota tied with North Dakota for the lowest unemployment rate in the nation at the time.

The new manufacturing facility will produce Asian-style foods, primarily for the Schwan's bibigo brand, using automated production lines. The campus will also include a warehouse and distribution center, shipping and receiving docks, and office space.

The company also plans to open a regional office in downtown Sioux Falls "to support its continued expansion and operations at the new manufacturing facility," according to a news release from the company. That office will employ another 50 people initially with potential to grow to 100 employees.

Schwan's outgoing CEO Dimitrios P. Smyrniotis said state and local officials helped the company "make great progress" on the project, which will increase production capacity for Schwan's. The company's bibigo brand is sold nationwide, including at Costco stores. The facility will join Asian food facilities for CJ Foods on the East and West coasts.

"I want to personally thank Governor Kristi Noem and her team for their leadership and commitment to our plans," Smyrniotis said in the news release. "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.'"

State officials did not immediately respond to South Dakota Searchlight messages seeking information on any assistance offered to Schwan's. The company directed questions about that topic to state officials.

Bob Mundt, president and CEO of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation, told Searchlight the organization does not disclose incentives given to potential business partners unless the company does.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

## 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 14 of 80

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 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.*

## An angry Trump pledges to appeal 'this scam' conviction as Republicans vow resistance

**Noem rushes to ex-president's defense;**

**SD congressional delegates speak critically of verdict**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, JACOB FISCHLER AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 31, 2024 4:20 PM**

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump, now a convicted felon, vowed to launch an appeal based "on many things" he considered unfair during his New York trial, he said Friday in the lobby of Trump Tower in Midtown Manhattan.

Meanwhile Friday, legal and political analysts predicted he will spend little if any time in jail depending on the outcome of that appeal, fundraising among supportive Republicans appeared to surge and eight GOP members of the U.S. Senate pledged they will not support any Democratic priorities or nominations.

The reactions came as Americans continued to digest the news that on Thursday, a jury in Lower Manhattan found the Republican Party's presumed 2024 presidential nominee guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records in the first degree, a felony in New York.

The roughly seven-week proceeding marked the first-ever criminal trial of a former U.S. president.

"We're going to be appealing this scam," Trump said at his late-morning press conference, referring to New York Justice Juan Merchan as a "tyrant."

Over about 30 minutes of often misleading or false comments delivered in his familiar stream-of-consciousness style that jumped from topic to topic, Trump complained about aspects of the trial, said the case shouldn't have been prosecuted at all and made campaign-style appeals on immigration and crime.

Trump has centered his public relations defense on the idea that the prosecution was politically motivated, often blaming the Biden administration, and he repeated the theme throughout his Friday remarks.

"If they can do this to me, they can do this to anyone," he said.

President Joe Biden said Friday that Trump "was given every opportunity to defend himself."

"It was a state case, not a federal case. It was heard by a jury of 12 citizens, 12 Americans, 12 people like you, like millions of Americans who've served on juries. This jury was chosen the same way every jury in America is chosen. It was a process that Donald Trump's attorney was part of," Biden said from the White House before delivering remarks on the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Biden said Trump now has the opportunity "as he should" to appeal, just like anyone else who is tried

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 16 of 80

in the U.S.

"That's how the American system of justice works," Biden said. "It's reckless, it's dangerous, it's irresponsible for anyone to say this was rigged just because they don't like the verdict."

## Jail time?

Trump told the crowd Friday morning he could spend "187 years" in jail for being found guilty of falsifying business records. It was not clear how he arrived at that number.

Most observers of his trial and the New York justice system disagree with that estimate.

Merchan set Trump's sentencing for July 11 at 10 a.m. Eastern, just four days before the Republican National Convention kicks off in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the GOP will officially nominate Trump for president in November's election.

Trump is convicted of class E felonies, the lowest level felony in New York state, and each carries the possibility of probation to up to four years in prison.

Any incarceration sentence up to a year would be served in the city's Rikers Island jail or another local facility. Incarceration beyond that time frame would be served at a state facility.

"If that jail sentence happens, it probably will be less than a year," said Norm Eisen, former White House special counsel in the Obama administration, who has been commenting on the indictment and trial for months.

Eisen spoke during a virtual press conference hosted by the Defend Democracy Project.

New York state law experts say Merchan may not be inclined to imprison a former, and possibly future, U.S. president. And, if he sentences Trump to any length of incarceration, it will likely be stayed — a temporary stop to the action — pending appeal.

Trump could remain free on bail conditions set by the court, or no bail conditions, subject to a decision by the appeals court and potentially any other review if an appeals judge sends the case to the state's highest court.

"When there is a stay pending appeal, generally, the process is expedited more quickly than it would be if the defendant was at liberty and there was no stay. But even so, this is going to go beyond the election," said retired New York Supreme Court Judge Michael Obus at the press conference with Eisen.

## Appeal strategy?

While Trump said Friday morning he plans to appeal the verdict based on "many things," legal observers speculate his team's approach may come down to a few options.

In New York, falsifying a business record is illegal in the first degree when the "intent to defraud includes an intent to commit another crime or to aid or conceal the commission thereof."

While the jurors had to unanimously agree on an intent to commit another crime, they did not have to agree unanimously on what that underlying crime was, according to Merchan's instructions to the jury prior to deliberations.

Merchan said jurors could consider three options for the other crime: violations of the Federal Election Campaign Act; falsification of other business records; or, violation of tax laws.

Obus said a "non-frivolous argument" that Trump's team might use is that one of those underlying crimes was a federal, not a state crime.

"That's the kind of argument that we might see on appeal — the argument being that New York courts don't have the authority to prosecute the case with that being the object crime because it's a federal crime," Obus said. "I don't think that'll be successful."

In addition to the challenge regarding federal election law, Shane T. Stansbury of Duke Law told States Newsroom in an interview Friday that he expects to see Trump's legal team challenge evidentiary issues.

"For example, I would expect that the defense would make a claim that the salacious testimony by Stormy Daniels about the details of her sexual encounter with Donald Trump was unfairly prejudicial," Stansbury said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 17 of 80

Also, Trump's lawyers might challenge the judge's decision to strike from defense attorney Todd Blanche's closing statement a plea he made to the jury, asking them to not send Trump "to prison."

The charge against Trump could, or could not, result in prison time.

"You can imagine the defense saying that that correction may have prejudiced the jury. Now, I should say that those kinds of evidentiary issues are a much steeper climb for the defense," Stansbury said.

## 'A legal expense'

Trump remains under a gag order imposed by Merchan in March to keep the former president from further attacking court staff and potential witnesses online.

Trump violated the order 10 times, leading Merchan to fine him \$9,000 on April 30, and again \$1,000 on May 6.

During his comments Friday morning, Trump complained of having to pay "thousands of dollars" because of his "nasty gag order."

Still, Trump spent several minutes during his remarks talking about one of the prosecution's star witnesses, his former personal lawyer Michael Cohen.

According to testimony and document evidence presented during trial, Cohen wired \$130,000 of his own money to porn star Stormy Daniels days before the 2016 presidential election to silence her about an alleged affair with Trump. Trump then reimbursed Cohen the following year under the guise of "legal expenses."

Prosecutors never should have brought the case accusing him of falsifying business records, Trump said.

The payments to Cohen were for Cohen to create a nondisclosure agreement with Daniels and secure her signature, which is legal, Trump said Friday. That was a legal service, and the payments were properly recorded that way, he said.

"I paid a lawyer a legal expense," he said.

"The whole thing is legal expense was marked down as legal expense," he said. "Think of it: This is the crime that I committed that I'm supposed to go to jail for 187 years for."

Trump, who wouldn't say Cohen's name Friday because of the gag order, said Cohen was not a "fixer" as he is often described, but a lawyer in good standing.

"By the way, this was a highly qualified lawyer," Trump said. "Now I'm not allowed to use his name because of the gag order. But, you know, he's a sleazebag. Everybody knows that. Took me a while to find out. But he was effective. He did work. But he wasn't a fixer. He was a lawyer."

Trump said he wanted to testify at his trial, but was advised not to by his lawyers.

## Attacks on Biden

Trump pivoted nearly immediately after his remarks began to campaign-style attacks on Biden's administration and the anti-immigration positions that comprise Trump's most consistent policy message since his political career began in 2015.

He focused on immigrants from predominantly non-white countries and made false claims that many had been institutionalized in prison and mental hospitals.

"Millions and millions of people are flowing in from all parts of the world, not just South America, from Africa, from Asia and from the Middle East, and they're coming in from jails and prisons, and they're coming in from mental institutions and insane asylums," he said. "And we have a president and a group of fascists that don't want to do anything about it."

He also called crime "rampant in New York." He added that Biden wanted to quadruple taxes and "make it impossible for you to get a car," neither of which are based on Biden's actual policy positions.

In a statement, Biden campaign spokesperson Michael Tyler called Trump's remarks "unhinged."

"America just witnessed a confused, desperate, and defeated Donald Trump ramble about his own personal grievances and lie about the American justice system, leaving anyone watching with one obvious conclusion: This man cannot be president of the United States," Tyler wrote. "Unhinged by his 2020 election loss and spiraling from his criminal convictions, Trump is consumed by his own thirst for revenge

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 18 of 80

and retribution.”

## **GOP convention in less than two months**

The Republican National Convention begins July 15. The Republican National Committee, which called Thursday’s verdict “rigged,” did not immediately respond to questions Friday about whether it will adjust plans in the event Trump is placed under any restrictions during his July 11 sentencing.

Trump encouraged supporters to continue backing his campaign as a response to the verdict, calling Nov. 5 – Election Day – “the most important day in the history of our country.”

Throughout his remarks Friday, he touted an online poll conducted by J.L. Partners and published in the conservative British tabloid The Daily Mail on Friday that showed Trump’s approval rating gained points after the verdict.

There were signs that showed Republican support, at least, consolidated even more behind Trump following the verdict.

The National Republican Senatorial Committee, the campaign organization for U.S. Senate Republicans, said it had its highest fundraising day of the cycle Thursday, bringing in \$360,000 in donations that the group directly attributed to the verdict in Manhattan.

Other official GOP channels, including the Republican National Committee social media accounts, echoed Trump’s message that the former president was the victim of a political prosecution and predicted the conviction would push voters toward Trump.

Elected Republicans throughout the country continued Friday to almost universally reject the verdict and defend Trump.

A group of eight U.S. Senate Republicans – Mike Lee of Utah, J.D. Vance of Ohio, Tommy Tuberville of Alabama, Eric Schmitt of Missouri, Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, Rick Scott and Marco Rubio of Florida and Roger Marshall of Kansas – signed a letter Friday pledging to increase their resistance to administration priorities in response to the verdict.

“Those who turned our judicial system into a political cudgel must be held accountable,” Lee said in a post to X. “We are no longer cooperating with any Democrat legislative priorities or nominations, and we invite all concerned Senators to join our stand.”

The Biden administration and congressional Democrats played no role in the trial, which was in New York state court.

## **‘No one is above the law’**

The top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York, said that Thursday’s verdict shows that “no one is above the law.”

Nadler was joined by Eisen, along with accountability advocates and historians, on a Friday webinar for the press hosted by watchdog group Public Citizen. Eisen participated in multiple press appearances Friday.

Nadler said that Republicans are attempting to sow distrust in the verdict, as the chair of the Judiciary Committee, Jim Jordan of Ohio, has already sent a letter to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg requesting that he testify in a hearing before the panel’s Weaponization of the Federal Government Subcommittee on June 13.

Nadler said he disagreed with Jordan’s decision to request testimony from the DA who prosecuted Trump.

“It’s a continuing attempt to bully the prosecutors into abandoning prosecutions and to tell the country the false story of persecution of the president (Trump) and to help undermine confidence in the criminal justice system,” Nadler said.

Nadler said the New York trial was important because it’s likely going to be the only trial that finishes before the November elections. Trump faces two federal criminal cases, and another criminal case in Georgia.

“It is very important for the American people to know, before an election, that they’re dealing with a convicted felon,” Nadler said.

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a history professor at New York University who specializes in authoritarianism, propaganda

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 19 of 80

and democracy protection, said during the virtual press conference that the trial was a demonstration of American democracy being upheld.

"The fact this trial took place at all and was able to unfold in the professional way it did is a testament to the worth and functioning of our democracy," she said.

## Noem, Thune, Rounds, Johnson react

Republican South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem rushed to Trump's defense immediately after his guilty verdict was announced. Noem issued a string of tweets, including one saying Trump "did nothing wrong."

The three members of South Dakota's all-Republican congressional delegation spoke critically of the verdict.

Sen. John Thune tweeted, "This case was politically motivated from the beginning, and today's verdict does nothing to absolve the partisan nature of this prosecution. Regardless of outcome, more and more Americans are realizing that we cannot survive four more years of Joe Biden. With President Trump in the White House and a Republican majority in the U.S. Senate, we can finally end the disastrous Biden-Schumer agenda that's crushing American families and businesses."

Sen Mike Rounds issued a statement: "This verdict probably helps former President Trump grow his support politically. The left is so disconnected from the pulse of America. They've underestimated the disgust with Washington, D.C. and the bureaucracy that is crushing families and the economy. Now, they've opened a Pandora's box. A good portion of the country believes the only way to save our country is to swing back just as hard, with the same weaponization of the legal system and bureaucracy. As Americans, we are better than this. I pray we keep our wits and do it at the ballot box. Unfortunately, I fear this will only divide our country even further."

Rep. Dusty Johnson did not issue a statement, but he spoke to South Dakota Public Broadcasting during a Friday event in Rapid City: "Now, obviously the facts matter: the jury knows the evidence far better than I do, but there's a reason we have an appeals process. A number of legal experts that I trust have indicated they think there is some reversible error in this proceeding. We have to let the process work. One of the strengths of the American system is that we do have an appeals process. I expect that these convictions are going to be overturned."

— South Dakota Searchlight staff

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

## Some providers will offer low-cost internet even as federal program ends, White House says

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MAY 31, 2024 11:31 AM

WASHINGTON — With Friday marking the official last day of the pandemic-era Affordable Connectivity Program, the Biden administration is spotlighting commitments from over a dozen internet service providers to offer plans at \$30 or less to low-income households through 2024.

This comes as Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said the short-term program had to end due to a lack of funding, which both she and President Joe Biden are continuing to urge Congress to restore.

For over 23 million households, the Affordable Connectivity Program has provided up to \$30 in monthly discounts on internet bills for eligible families and as much as \$75 a month for those on qualifying tribal lands.

"The (Affordable Connectivity Program) filled an important gap that provider low-income programs, state and local affordability programs, and the Lifeline program cannot fully address," Rosenworcel wrote in letters to congressional leaders on Thursday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 20 of 80

"Millions of ACP households nationwide, and households that may be eligible but have not yet enrolled, are looking to Congress to provide the funding needed to keep the ACP up and running."

Separately, the Lifeline program provides a \$9.25 monthly broadband service benefit for eligible households, according to the FCC.

But the commission said this is not an ACP replacement, and that "not all ACP households will qualify for Lifeline, and by statute, many ACP providers are not eligible to participate in the Lifeline program."

Rosenworcel has sent monthly letters to congressional leaders outlining the need for additional funding to keep the low-cost internet program running.

Her additional letters on Thursday went to the chairs and ranking members of House and Senate appropriations panels, including Reps. David Joyce of Ohio and Steny Hoyer of Maryland and Sens. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Bill Hagerty of Tennessee.

Rosenworcel also sent another round of letters to the chair and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Sens. Maria Cantwell of Washington and Ted Cruz of Texas, and the chair and ranking member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington and Frank Pallone of New Jersey.

In her most recent letter, Rosenworcel said it was "regrettable" that the FCC must end the "most successful broadband affordability program in our Nation's history."

She highlighted some of the possible impacts of the program ending for many military families and millions of households with school-aged children enrolled in the program.

Additionally, Rosenworcel said "the end of ACP will also impact approximately 3.4 million rural households and over 300,000 households in Tribal areas."

Meanwhile, the administration said over a dozen providers committed to offering "their current ACP subscribers and other eligible households a high-speed internet plan for \$30 per month or less, with no fees and data caps, until the end of 2024."

The providers include: Allo Fiber; Altafiber (and Hawaiian Telcom); Astound Broadband; AT&T; Comcast; Cox; IdeaTek; Mediacom; MLGC; Optimum; Spectrum (Charter Communications); Starry; Verizon; and Vermont Telephone Company, per the administration, which noted that, together, the providers cover up to 10 million households enrolled in the program.

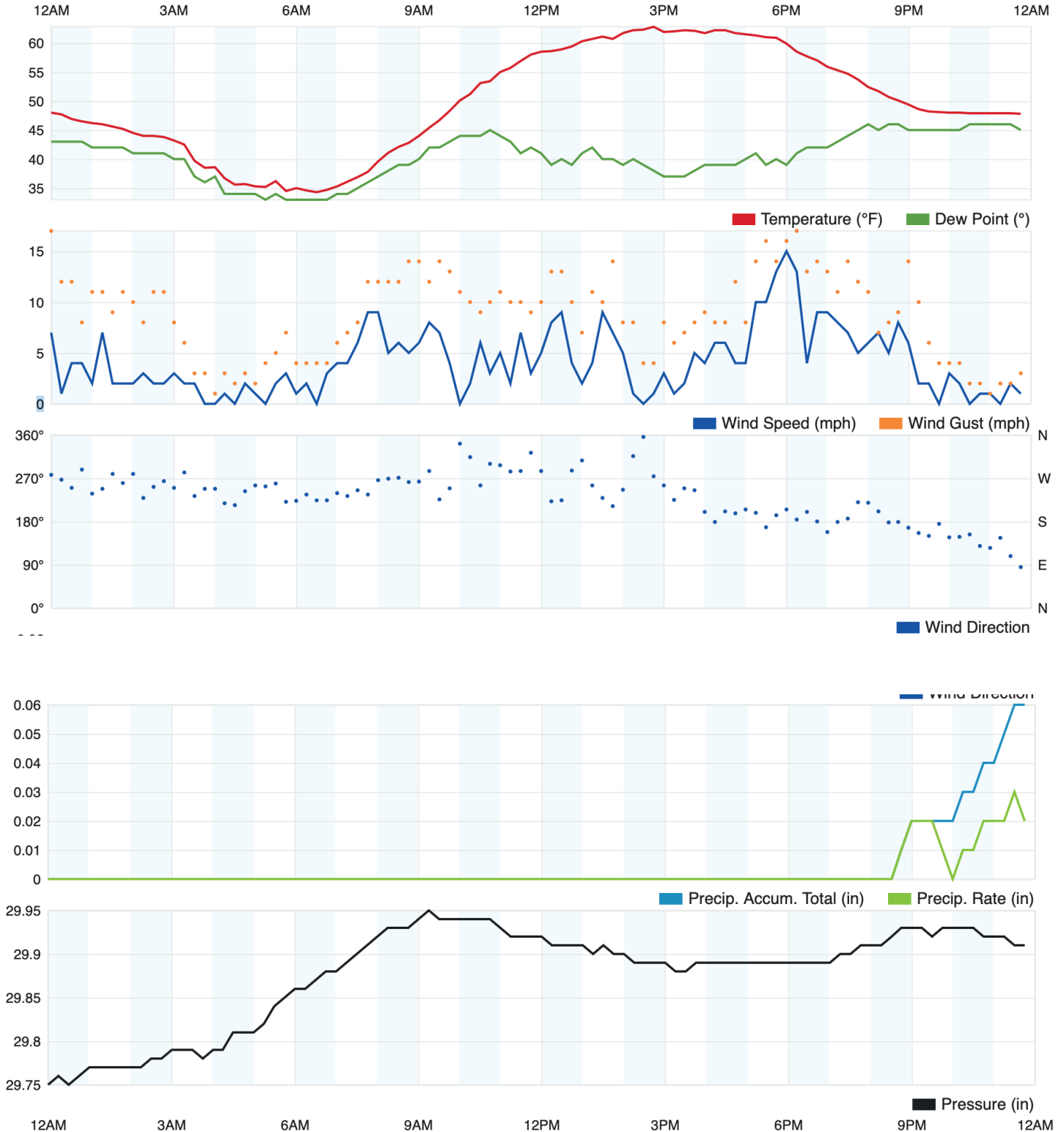
In October, Biden asked Congress for \$6 billion in a supplemental funding request to keep the ACP funding running through the end of 2024.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 21 of 80

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 22 of 80

Today



High: 79 °F

Sunny

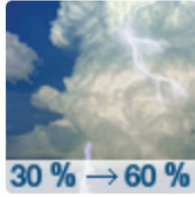
Tonight



Low: 54 °F

Partly Cloudy  
then Chance  
T-storms

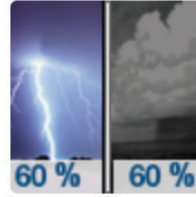
Sunday



High: 81 °F

Chance  
T-storms then  
T-storms  
Likely

Sunday Night



Low: 56 °F

T-storms  
Likely then  
Showers  
Likely

Monday



High: 82 °F

Mostly Sunny

## Weekend Forecast

Saturday



73 to 80°

Sunday

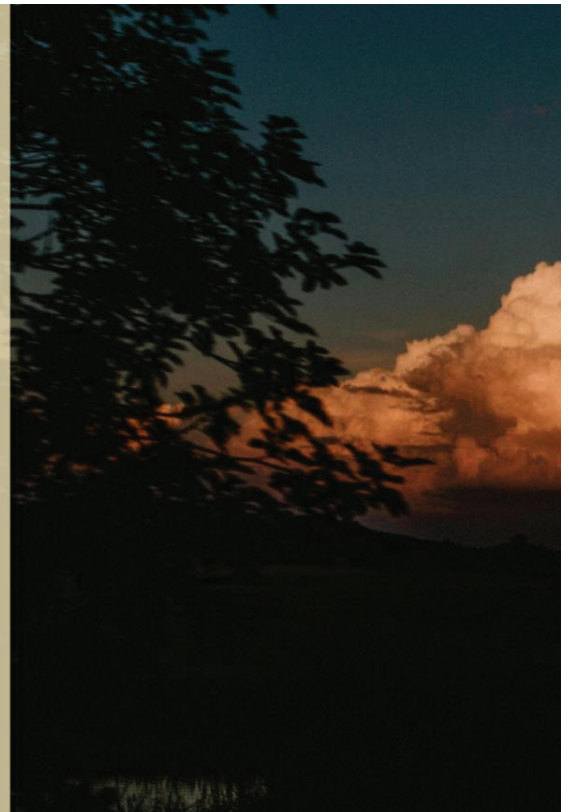


76 to 84°

A few light showers this afternoon will dissipate later this evening, with dry conditions lasting through most of Saturday. A stronger storm system will track across the area on Sunday, bringing the potential for **severe storms**.



NWS Aberdeen, SD



Above average temperatures are expected this weekend with highs in the upper 70s to mid 80s. Thunderstorms are also possible both today and Sunday. Today, storms are expected mainly in south central SD with areas south of Pierre in a MARGINAL (1 of 5) risk for severe storms. Sunday, thunderstorms are expected mainly east of the Missouri River with areas east of a line from Mobridge to Philip in a SLIGHT (2 of 5) risk for severe storms.



## Severe Weather Threat Overview

June 1, 2024  
4:04 AM

Sunday afternoon and evening

### Timing/Location

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

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

### Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

### Max Hail Size

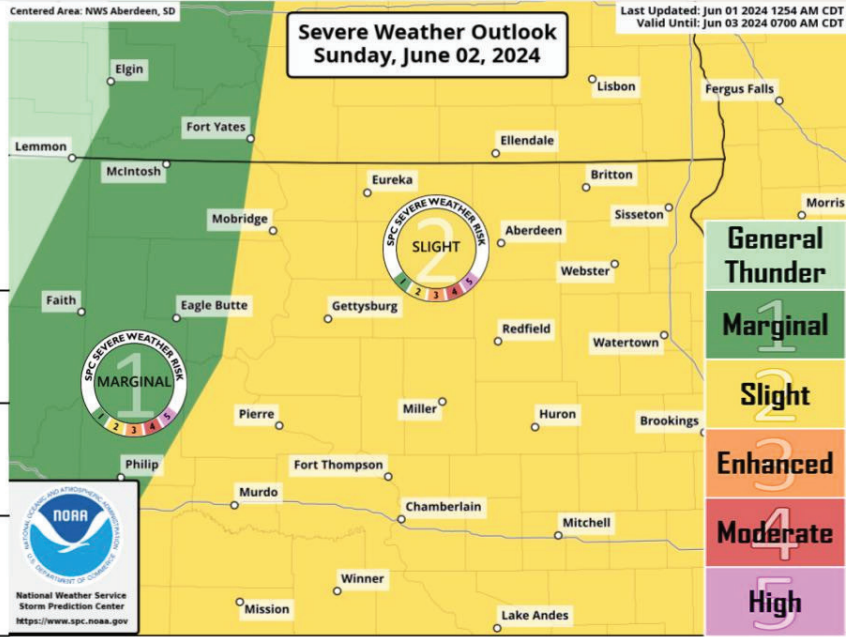
Dimes Quarters **Golfball** Baseball

### 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 24 of 80

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 3:15 PM

Low Temp: 47 °F at 5:28 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 5:44 PM

Precip: : 0.06

Day length: 15 hours, 30 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1946

Average High: 76

Average Low: 51

Average Precip in June.: .10

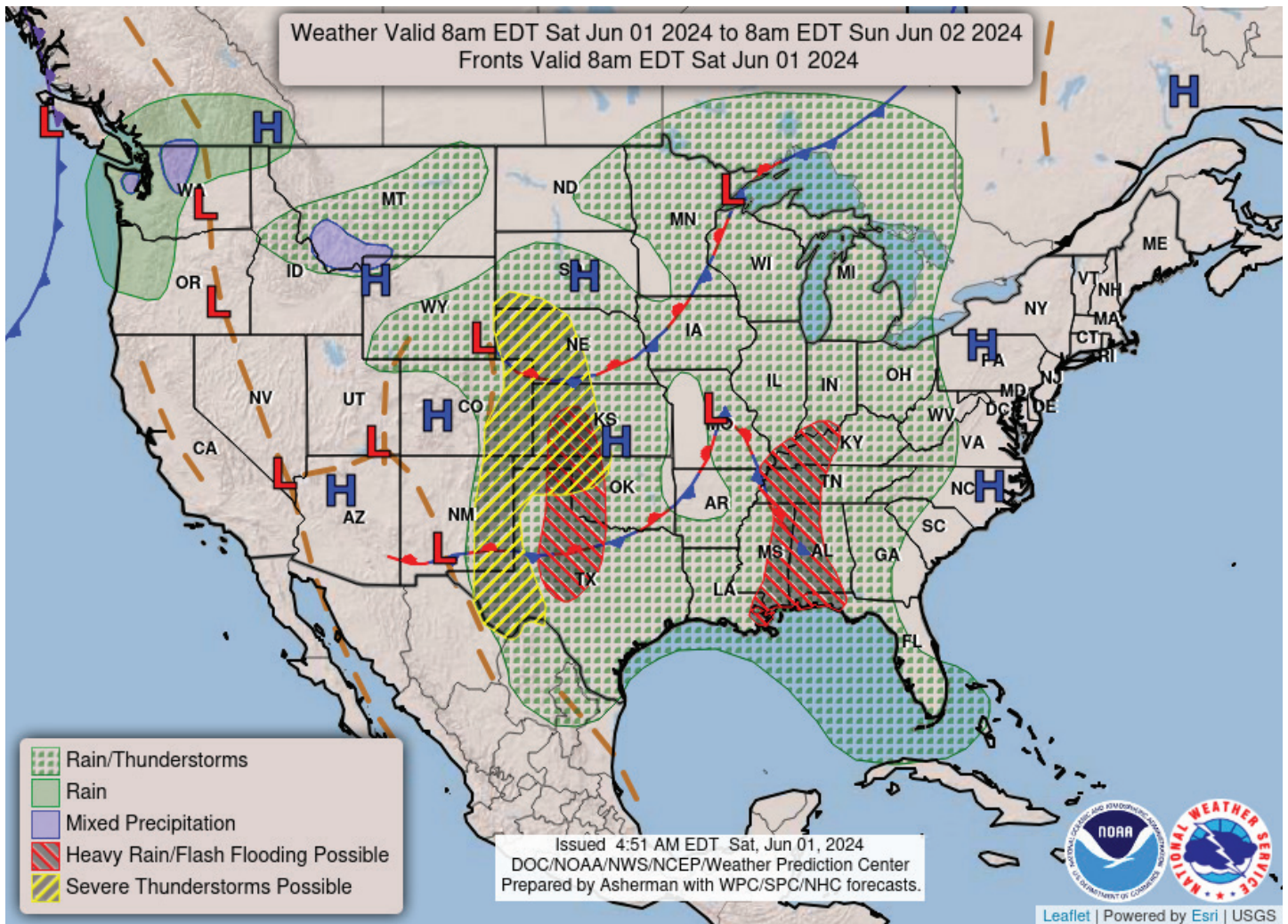
Precip to date in May: 2.53

Average Precip to date: 7.35

Precip Year to Date: 7.07

Sunset Tonight: 9:15:46 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:28 am





# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 25 of 80

## Today in Weather History

June 1, 1990: A small F0 tornado blew over two mobile homes on the north side of Groton. Numerous trees were either blown down or lost limbs. Also, high winds of 65 mph occurred 5 miles south and 1 mile east of Mellette.

June 1, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed along the eastern slopes of the Black Hills and dropped large hail and heavy rain over eastern Custer and Shannon Counties. Softball sized hail was reported south of Hermosa.

June 1, 2011: High water levels coming into June along with above average June rainfall kept water levels up on Blue Dog, Bitter, Rush, and Waubay Lakes in Day County throughout the month. The high lake levels continued to cause extensive road and property damage. Many families remained away from their homes and cabins. Also, hundreds of acres of farmland remained flooded along with many roads. Road and property damage would be in the several millions of dollars. The high lake levels and flooding would continue for the next several months. In Hamlin County, Lake Poinsett, including several other lakes, continued to flood and damage several homes along with several county and township roads. High lake levels and flooding would continue for the next several months.

1812 - Apple trees at New Haven CT did not blossom until the first of June, the latest such occurrence during the period beginning in 1794. Snow whitened the ground in Cleveland OH and Rochester NY. (David Ludlum)

1903: During the early afternoon, one of the most destructive tornadoes in the history of Georgia up to this time, struck the outskirts of Gainesville. The track of the storm was about four miles in length and varied between 100 to 200 feet in width. The tornado touched down about one mile southwest of Gainesville, striking a large cotton mill at 12:45 pm, Eastern Time, just 10 minutes after 750 employees filed into the great structure from dinner. On the top floor of the mill were employed 250 children, and it was here that the greatest loss of life occurred.

1919: Snowfall of almost a half-inch fell at Denver, Colorado. This storm produced their greatest 24-hour snowfall recorded in June. Two temperature records were set: The low temperature of 32 degrees was a record low for the date, and the high of only 40 degrees was a record low maximum. Cheyenne, Wyoming recorded 1.6 inches of snow, which is one of only six times that at least one inch of snow has fallen at Cheyenne in June.

1934: June started off on a warm note as high temperatures surpassed the century mark across parts of the Midwest. Several locations tied or set a record high temperatures for June including: Rockford, IL: 106°, Mather, WI: 105°, Hatfield, WI: 103°, Mondovi, WI: 102°, Chicago, IL: 102° and Grand Rapids, MI tied their June record high with 102°.

1980 - A man from Falmouth ME was struck by lightning restoring his eyesight. The man had been blind and partially deaf since a truck accident in 1971. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Lower Ohio Valley produced wind gusts to 81 mph at Albert Lea Airport in southern Minnesota, and baseball size hail around Otterbein IN, Saron WI, and Danville IL. Two inches of hail totally destroyed 5000 acres of corn and soybean north of Danville. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1999: A tornado with an intermittent damage path destroyed 200 homes, businesses, and other buildings in the southern portion of St. James, Missouri. Of these, 33 homes were destroyed along with the St. James Golf Course clubhouse and two Missouri Department of Transportation buildings. The tornado then moved east, south of the downtown St. James area and intensified. F2 to F3 damage occurred with a 200 to 300-yard damage path. Several homes and farm buildings were severely damaged or destroyed. Further north, severe thunderstorms produced many tornadoes around central Illinois. The most intense tornado touched down in Montgomery County south of Farmersville and moved into southwest Christian County. One person was killed when a semi-trailer overturned at a rest area on I-55. Across eastern parts of the state, high winds up to 70 mph caused damage to trees, power lines, and some buildings. The Mattoon area also reported flooding from these storms, producing \$3 million dollars in damage.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 26 of 80

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### ACCIDENTS OR APPOINTMENTS

A rough-and-ready cowboy applied for a large insurance policy. Worried about his lifestyle, the agent was careful and cautious to ask questions to make sure that the cowboy would not take any foolish chances.

"Have you had any accidents?" asked the agent.

"No, not really," he answered. "Come to think of it, though, a rattlesnake bit me and a horse kicked me once."

"Well," questioned the agent, "aren't those accidents?"

"Oh no," he responded. "They did it on purpose!"

There are no accidents in the life of the Christian - only appointments from God to let us know He is with us and working out His will in our lives. Fortunately, God is working in "everything" not as though He was bored and wanted something to do. Many things that happen to us are not good in themselves, but they are good for us because they bring us closer to God.

God through His power and love is able to take every event and turn it into an experience that will fulfill His purpose for our lives. Wherever we are and whatever occurs is because of the fact that Christ is in us preparing us for that time when we will be with Him. We need a heavenly "mindset" that enables us to see beyond the moment and into our future with Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to develop an eternal vision that allows us to see that You are active in our lives preparing us for life with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 27 of 80

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 28 of 80



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.31.24

4 11 23 33 49 23

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$560,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 16 Hrs 35 Mins 26  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.31.24

10 31 34 42 46 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 26  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

18 24 27 28 29

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 26  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.29.24

23 29 35 36 39 22

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 19 Mins 26  
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: 17 Hrs 19 Mins 27  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### AP Decision Notes: What to expect in the South Dakota presidential and state primaries

By LEAH ASKARINAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — South Dakota Republicans' tug-of-war over their party identity continues in Tuesday's election, with district-level primaries the main event.

South Dakota may be best known for Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's no-apologies approach to politics, earning her the favor of former President Donald Trump, but her brand hasn't extended to the entire state party. Sen. John Thune, whose name is regularly tossed around as the next Republican Senate leader, won election to a fourth term in 2022 without an endorsement from Trump. When Sen. Mike Rounds said that Trump lost the 2020 election, the former president called him a "jerk." Meanwhile, Rep. Dusty Johnson, the state's lone representative in the U.S. House, is chair of the Main Street Caucus, whose members describe themselves as "pragmatic conservatives."

On Tuesday, voters won't get a chance to take a stand on Trump, who was convicted in New York of trying to illegally influence the 2016 election by falsifying business records to hide a hush money payment to a porn actor. When nobody challenged him for the Republican nomination, the state removed the presidential race from the ballot, as is its standard procedure for uncontested races. But voters will have a chance to decide what a Republican majority in the state legislature looks like.

While there are just two Democratic primaries on the ballot — one for the presidential race, the other for a state Senate seat — the remaining 44 contested races are all Republican primaries. In the 34th District, Jason Green is running as a "voice of reason" against Taffy Howard, who waged a primary challenge from the right against Johnson in 2022. Republican State Rep. Trish Ladner is also running an ad as a "common sense voice," as she faces a crowded primary that includes a conservative talk radio host who quoted former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin on his campaign website.

Even without Trump on the ballot, his influence looms. In a few counties, voters will decide whether to count votes by hand instead of using ballot-tabulating machines in the future. A supporter of the group that backed that initiative is waging a challenge against the majority leader of the state Senate.

Here's what to expect:

#### PRIMARY DAY

South Dakota will hold its primary election Tuesday. Polls close at 7 p.m. local time, across two time zones. Results cannot be reported until the last polls close in the Mountain time zone at 9 p.m. ET.

#### WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT

South Dakota is divided into 35 legislative districts, each of which elects one state Senator and two state House members. However, only contested races appear on the primary ballot in South Dakota, meaning just 45 state legislative races appear on Tuesday's ballot. Johnson is running unopposed for the state's lone House seat.

Most districts with contested primaries will send two candidates from Tuesday's primary ballot to compete in the general election in November.

On the presidential ballot, Democrats will choose from three candidates in addition to President Joe Biden: Dean Phillips, Marianne Williamson and Armando Perez-Serrato. There is no "uncommitted" or write-in option.

#### WHO GETS TO VOTE

The state Republican Party allows only Republican voters to participate in its primaries. The Democratic Party, however, is opening its primary to unaffiliated and independent voters in addition to registered Democrats.

In the general election, voters will decide through a ballot initiative whether to revamp the primary process, replacing the current system with an all-party primary ballot in which the top two vote-getters,

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 30 of 80**

regardless of party, qualify for the general election.

## DELEGATE ALLOCATION RULES

South Dakota's 16 pledged Democratic delegates are allocated according to the national party's standard rules. Four at-large delegates are allocated in proportion to the statewide vote, as are two PLEO delegates, or "party leaders and elected officials." South Dakota has only one congressional district, meaning the 10 district-level delegates are also allocated in proportion to the statewide vote total. Candidates must receive at least 15% of the statewide vote to qualify for any statewide delegates, and 15% of the vote in a congressional district to qualify for delegates in that district.

There are 29 delegates at stake in the Republican presidential primary, though they are not bound to a particular candidate because the race takes place within 45 days of the Republican National Convention. State Party Chairman John Wiik told the AP that although the 29 delegates are technically unbound, there is "no doubt who the next President will be," referring to Trump.

## DECISION NOTES

The largest share of South Dakota's votes come from Minnehaha County, which includes Sioux Falls. However, most of the elections Tuesday are for state House and state Senate in seats spread throughout the state.

In Pennington County, home to Rapid City, outgoing Senate Assistant Majority Leader Mike Diedrich endorsed Jason Green as his successor in the 34th District. In the 8th District, Majority Leader Casey Crabtree faces a challenge from Rick Weible. The 8th District spans over four counties near the eastern border of the state.

The 8th District is also hosting a primary for state House, where state Rep. John Mills is term-limited. Incumbent Tim Reisch faces former Lake County Sheriff Tim Walburg and Matt Wagner, who is from Volga in Brookings County.

The only Democratic primary for the legislature is a race for the state Senate in the 27th legislative district, which includes the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Democratic incumbent Red Dawn Foster, a member of the Navajo and Oglala Lakota nations, is facing a challenge from Gerald Cournoyer, also a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

The AP does not make projections and will declare a winner only when it's determined there is no scenario that would allow the trailing candidates to close the gap. If a race has not been called, the AP will continue to cover any newsworthy developments, such as candidate concessions or declarations of victory. In doing so, the AP will make clear that it has not yet declared a winner and explain why.

Elections go to an automatic recount if the vote is tied, except for in school or township elections. For legislative and local races, candidates may request a recount if the margin is 2% of the total vote cast or less.

## WHAT DO TURNOUT AND ADVANCE VOTE LOOK LIKE

As of May 1, there were 666,596 registered voters in South Dakota. Of those, 22% were Democrats and 46% were Republicans.

In the 2022 Republican primary for Senate, turnout was 18% of 645,384 registered voters. In 2020, turnout was 9% of 609,043 voters for the Democratic presidential primary. That year, about 20% of all primary ballots were cast before Election Day.

## HOW LONG DOES VOTE-COUNTING USUALLY TAKE?

In the 2022 Republican primary for Senate, the AP first reported results at 9:02 p.m. ET, or two minutes after polls closed. The election night tabulation ended at 3:26 a.m. ET with about 92% of total votes counted.

## 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.

## US defense secretary says war with China neither imminent nor unavoidable, stressing need for talks

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a gathering of top security officials Saturday that war with China was neither imminent nor unavoidable, despite rapidly escalating tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, stressing the importance of renewed dialogue between him and his Chinese counterpart in avoiding “miscalculations and misunderstandings.”

Austin’s comments at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore came the day after he met for more than an hour on the sidelines with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the first in-person meeting between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing.

Neither side budged from their longstanding positions on Taiwan — which China claims as its own and has not ruled out using force to take — and on China’s sweeping claims in the South China Sea, which has led to direct confrontations between China and other nations in the region, most notably the Philippines.

While declining to detail the specifics of their conversation, Austin said the most important thing was that the two were again talking.

“As long as we’re talking, we’re able to identify those issues that are troublesome and that we want to make sure that we have placed guardrails to ensure there are no misperceptions and no miscalculations ... that can spiral out of control,” he said.

“You can only do that kind of thing if you are talking.”

Addressing the same forum on Friday night, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. bluntly outlined what could be at stake, saying that if a Filipino were killed as China confronts his country’s coast guard and merchant fleet to press its claims in the South China Sea, it would be “very, very close to what we define as an act of war and therefore we will respond accordingly.”

Marcos added that he assumed the Philippines’ treaty partners, which include the U.S., “hold the same standard.”

In his own speech, Austin lauded how Marcos “spoke so powerfully last night about how the Philippines is standing up for its sovereign rights under international law.” But when pressed later, he would not say how the U.S. might react if a Filipino were killed in a confrontation with China, calling it hypothetical.

He did say the U.S. commitment to the Philippines as a treaty partner is “ironclad,” while again stressing the importance of dialogue with China.

“There are a number of things that can happen at sea or in the air, we recognize that,” he said. “But our goal is to make sure that we don’t allow things to spiral out of control unnecessarily.”

Beijing in recent years has been rapidly expanding its navy and is becoming growingly assertive in pressing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea.

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles noted that not only had Philippine ships been rammed and hit with water cannons by China, but said a Chinese warplane dropped flares above an Australian helicopter earlier in the year, and in November a Chinese navy ship injured Australian divers in Japanese waters with sonar.

“In the face of these multiple sources of tension, it’s even more imperative that every country plays its part in managing increasing strategic risk,” he said.

In his own meeting with Dong, Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara expressed “serious concerns” about China’s increasing military activities in the sea and airspace around Japan, including joint exercises with Russia, the Japanese Defense Ministry said in a statement.

To counter the Chinese activity, the U.S. has been ramping up military exercises in the region with its allies to underscore its “free and open Indo-Pacific” concept, meant to emphasize freedom of navigation through the contested waters, including the Taiwan Strait.

Chinese Senior Col. Cao Yanzhong, a researcher at China’s Institute of War Studies, asked Austin whether the U.S. was trying to create an Asian version of NATO with its emphasis on partnerships and alliances, a

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 32 of 80

common Chinese claim. He suggested that could trigger conflict with China, citing ally Russia's claim that NATO's eastward expansion was a threat, which President Vladimir Putin has used as an excuse for his invasion of Ukraine.

"The eastern expansion of NATO has led to the Ukraine crisis," Cao said. "What implications do you think the strengthening of the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific will have on this region's security and stability?"

Austin said the U.S. is simply cooperating with "like-minded countries with similar values" and not trying to create a NATO-type alliance, while rejecting Cao's interpretation of the cause of the Ukraine war.

"The Ukraine crisis obviously was caused because Putin made a decision to unlawfully invade his neighbor," Austin said.

Expressing the concerns of some in the region, Indonesian academic Dewi Fortuna Anwar said any de-escalation of tensions "would be very welcome to this part of the world," but wondered whether the U.S. would allow China's assertive military posture to grow uncontested if Washington's main emphasis was now dialogue.

"We are also worried if you guys get too cozy, we also get trampled," she said.

Austin said that many of those issues were best addressed through talks, but also assured that Washington will continue to ensure that the rights of nations in the region were protected and that they continued to have access to their exclusive economic zones.

"War or a fight with China is neither imminent, in my view, or unavoidable," Austin said.

"Leaders of great power nations need to continue to work together to ensure that we're doing things to reduce the opportunities for miscalculation and misunderstandings," he said. "Every conversation is not going to be a happy conversation, but it is important that we continue to talk to each other. And it is important that we continue to support our allies and partners on their interests as well."

## Voting begins in the last round of India's election, a referendum on Modi's decade in power

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — A six-week-long national election in India that is a referendum on Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decade in power neared its end Saturday as the last phase of voting began.

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

The seventh round of polls covers 57 constituencies across seven states and one union territory. It will complete a national election to fill all 543 seats in the powerful lower house of parliament. Nearly 970 million voters — more than 10% of the world's population — were eligible to elect a new parliament for five years. More than 8,300 candidates ran for the office.

Most polls show Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party leading over the broad opposition alliance that's challenging them, led by the Congress party. The votes will be counted Tuesday, with results expected by the end of the day.

Modi's campaign, vying for a third-straight term, began on a platform of economic progress. He has promised to uplift the poor and turn India into a developed nation by 2047. But the campaign has turned increasingly shrill in recent weeks as he escalated polarizing rhetoric in back-to-back incendiary speeches that targeted the country's Muslim minority, who make up 14% of India's 1.4 billion people.

After campaigning ended on Thursday, Modi went to a memorial site honoring a famous Hindu saint to meditate on national television. The opposition Congress party called it a political stunt and said it violates election rules as the campaigning period has ended.

When the election kicked off in April, Modi and his BJP were widely expected to clinch another term.

Since first coming to power in 2014, Modi has enjoyed immense popularity. His supporters see him as a self-made, strong leader who has improved India's standing in the world, and credit his pro-business



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 33 of 80

policies with making the economy the world's fifth-largest.

At the same time, his rule has seen brazen attacks and hate speech against minorities, particularly Muslims. India's democracy, his critics say, is faltering and Modi has increasingly blurred the line between religion and state.

But as the campaign ground on, his party has faced stiff resistance from the opposition alliance and its main face, Rahul Gandhi of the Congress party. They have attacked Modi over his Hindu nationalist politics and are hoping to benefit from growing economic discontent.

Pre-poll surveys showed that voters were increasingly worried about unemployment, the rise in food prices and an overall sentiment that only a small portion of Indians have benefitted despite brisk economic growth under Modi, making the contest appear closer than initially anticipated.

In Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, voters lined up outside polling stations early Saturday morning to avoid the scorching heat, with temperatures expected to reach 34 degrees Celsius (93.2 Fahrenheit). Modi is challenged there by the state's chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, who heads the regional Trinamool Congress party.

"There is a crunch for jobs now in the present market. I will vote for the government that can uplift jobs. And I hope those who cannot get jobs, they will get jobs," said Ankit Samaddar.

In this election, Modi's BJP — which controls much of India's Hindi-speaking northern and central parts — sought to expand their influence by making inroads into the country's eastern and southern states, where regional parties hold greater sway.

The BJP also banked on consolidating votes among the Hindu majority, who make up 80% of the population, after Modi opened a long-demanded Hindu temple on the site of a razed mosque in January. Many saw it as the unofficial start of his campaign, but analysts said the excitement over the temple may not be enough to yield votes.

Instead, Modi ramped up anti-Muslim rhetoric after voter turnout dipped slightly below 2019 figures in the first few rounds of the 2024 polls.

This was seen as a tactic to energize his core Hindu voter base. But analysts say it also reflected the lack of any big-ticket national issue to help Modi propel his BJP to electoral victory, as he has done previously.

In 2014, Modi's status as a political outsider cracking down on deep-rooted corruption won over voters disillusioned with decades of dynastic politics. And in 2019, he swept the polls on a wave of nationalism after his government launched airstrikes into rival Pakistan in response to a suicide bombing in Kashmir that killed 40 Indian soldiers.

But things are different this time, analysts say, giving Modi's political challengers a potential boost.

"The opposition somehow managed to derail his plan by setting the narrative to local issues, like unemployment and the economy. This election, people are voting keeping various issues in mind," said Rasheed Kidwai, a political analyst.

## **Israel maintains a shadowy hospital in the desert for Gaza detainees. Critics allege mistreatment**

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Patients lying shackled and blindfolded on more than a dozen beds inside a white tent in the desert. Surgeries performed without adequate painkillers. Doctors who remain anonymous.

These are some of the conditions at Israel's only hospital dedicated to treating Palestinians detained by the military in the Gaza Strip, three people who have worked there told The Associated Press, confirming similar accounts from human rights groups.

While Israel says it detains only suspected militants, many patients have turned out to be non-combatants taken during raids, held without trial and eventually returned to war-torn Gaza.

Eight months into the Israel-Hamas war, accusations of inhumane treatment at the Sde Teiman military field hospital are on the rise, and the Israeli government is under growing pressure to shut it down. Rights

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 34 of 80

groups and other critics say what began as a temporary place to hold and treat militants after Oct. 7 has morphed into a harsh detention center with too little accountability.

The military denies the allegations of inhumane treatment and says all detainees needing medical attention receive it.

The hospital is near the city of Beersheba in southern Israel. It opened beside a detention center on a military base after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel because some civilian hospitals refused to treat wounded militants. Of the three workers interviewed by AP, two spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared government retribution and public rebuke.

"We are condemned by the left because we are not fulfilling ethical issues," said Dr. Yoel Donchin, an anesthesiologist who has worked at Sde Teiman hospital since its earliest days and still works there. "We are condemned from the right because they think we are criminals for treating terrorists."

The military this week said it formed a committee to investigate detention center conditions, but it was unclear if that included the hospital. Next week Israel's highest court is set to hear arguments from human rights groups seeking to shut it down.

Israel has not granted journalists or the International Committee of the Red Cross access to the Sde Teiman facilities.

Israel has detained some 4,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7, according to official figures, though roughly 1,500 were released after the military determined they were not affiliated with Hamas. Israeli human rights groups say the majority of detainees have at some point passed through Sde Teiman, the country's largest detention center.

Doctors there say they have treated many who appeared to be non-combatants.

"Now we have patients that are not so young, sick patients with diabetes and high blood pressure," said Donchin, the anesthesiologist.

A soldier who worked at the hospital recounted an elderly man who underwent surgery on his leg without pain medication. "He was screaming and shaking," said the soldier.

Between medical treatments, the soldier said patients were housed in the detention center, where they were exposed to squalid conditions and their wounds often developed infections. There was a separate area where older people slept on thin mattresses under floodlights, and a putrid smell hung in the air, he said.

The military said in a statement that all detainees are "reasonably suspected of being involved in terrorist activity." It said they receive check-ups upon arrival and are transferred to the hospital when they require more serious treatment.

A medical worker who saw patients at the facility in the winter recounted teaching hospital workers how to wash wounds.

Donchin, who largely defended the facility against allegations of mistreatment but was critical of some of its practices, said most patients are diapered and not allowed to use the bathroom, shackled around their arms and legs and blindfolded.

"Their eyes are covered all the time. I don't know what the security reason for this is," he said.

The military disputed the accounts provided to AP, saying patients were handcuffed "in cases where the security risk requires it" and removed when they caused injury. Patients are rarely diapered, it said.

Dr. Michael Barilan, a professor at the Tel Aviv University Medical School who said he has spoken with over 15 hospital staff, disputed accounts of medical negligence. He said doctors are doing their best under difficult circumstances, and that the blindfolds originated out of a "fear (patients) would retaliate against those taking care of them."

Days after Oct. 7, roughly 100 Israelis clashed with police outside one of the country's main hospitals in response to false rumors it was treating a militant.

In the aftermath, some hospitals refused to treat detainees, fearful that doing so could endanger staff and disrupt operations. They were already overwhelmed by people wounded during the Hamas attack and expecting casualties to rise from an impending ground invasion.

As Israel pulled in scores of wounded Palestinians to Sde Teiman, it became clear the facility's infirmary was not large enough, according to Barilan. An adjacent field hospital was built from scratch.

Israel's Health Ministry laid out plans for the hospital in a December memo obtained by AP.

It said patients would be treated while handcuffed and blindfolded. Doctors, drafted into service by the military, would be kept anonymous to protect their "safety, lives and well-being." The ministry referred all questions to the military when reached for comment.

Still, an April report from Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, drawing on interviews with hospital workers, said doctors at the facility faced "ethical, professional and even emotional distress." Barilan said turnover has been high.

Patients with more complicated injuries have been transferred from the field hospital to civilian hospitals, but it has been done covertly to avoid arousing the public's attention, Barilan said. And the process is fraught: The medical worker who spoke with AP said one detainee with a gunshot wound was discharged prematurely from a civilian hospital to Sde Teiman within hours of being treated, endangering his life.

The field hospital is overseen by military and health officials, but Donchin said parts of its operations are managed by KLP, a private logistics and security company whose website says it specializes in "high-risk environments." The company did not respond to a request for comment.

Because it's not under the same command as the military's medical corps, the field hospital is not subject to Israel's Patients Rights Act, according to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel.

A group from the Israeli Medical Association visited the hospital earlier this year but kept its findings private. The association did not respond to requests for comment.

The military told AP that 36 people from Gaza have died in Israel's detention centers since Oct. 7, some of them because of illnesses or wounds sustained in the war. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel has alleged that some died from medical negligence.

Khaled Hammouda, a surgeon from Gaza, spent 22 days at one of Israel's detention centers. He does not know where he was taken because he was blindfolded while he was transported. But he said he recognized a picture of Sde Teiman and said he saw at least one detainee, a prominent Gaza doctor who is believed to have been there.

Hammouda recalled asking a soldier if a pale 18-year-old who appeared to be suffering from internal bleeding could be taken to a doctor. The soldier took the teenager away, gave him intravenous fluids for a few hours, and then returned him.

"I told them, 'He could die,'" Hammouda said. "They told me this is the limit."

## **Donald Trump's attorney was 'shocked' the former president took the verdict with 'solemnness'**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's lawyer told The Associated Press he was surprised at Trump's stoic demeanor as he listened to the verdict that made him the first former U.S. president convicted of a crime. Todd Blanche was sitting to Trump's left in the Manhattan courtroom as the verdict was read — the jury foreman repeating the word "guilty" 34 times.

"I was shocked at how he took the verdict," Blanche said. "He just stood there and just kind of took it. And I think had a lot of appropriate solemnness for the moment that made me very proud to be sitting next to him when it, when it was happening," said Blanche, adding that he thought Trump was still handling himself well on Friday, the day after the verdict, even as the presumptive Republican presidential nominee railed that the trial was unfair.

"He's not happy about it, but there's no defendant in the history of our justice system who's happy about a conviction the day after. But I think he knows there's a lot of fight left and there's a lot of opportunity to fix this and that's what we're going to try to do," said Blanche, Trump's lead attorney in the New York case and his classified documents federal criminal case in Florida.

A jury of a dozen New Yorkers convicted Trump on all counts of falsifying business records, a felony punishable by either incarceration, probation or a fine. As the foreman read the verdict, Trump shook his head slightly, but didn't vent his frustration until he left the courtroom. Trump has vowed to appeal.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 36 of 80

Speaking to reporters Friday, Trump portrayed himself as a victim of a "rigged" trial, which he claimed was orchestrated by Democrats to stop his presidential campaign. Afterward, President Joe Biden said it was "reckless," "dangerous" and "irresponsible for anyone to say this is rigged just because they don't like the verdict."

Blanche pushed back on Biden's comments, saying it was natural for Trump to believe the law was being used unfairly against him. He cited the three other criminal cases pending against Trump: two cases in Georgia and Washington where he is accused of trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election and the one in Florida, where he is charged with illegally possessing classified records after he left the White House.

"I believe in the justice system, and I always will. And I don't think that that one case should change anybody's view," said Blanche, a former federal prosecutor who left his job at an elite law firm to represent Trump. "But if you were Donald J. Trump and you have four indictments ... you don't think you would say you thought it was rigged? OK."

"I think it's easy to say, 'Oh, that's dangerous. Just keep on showing up at your four indicted cases, sir. Stop saying it's rigged.' You know. 'Nothing to see here. Totally normal.' I don't think it's dangerous. I think it makes the system better," Blanche said.

The jury reached its verdict around 4:20 p.m. on Thursday, just as it appeared deliberations were going to be stretching into a third day. Just a few minutes earlier, Judge Juan M. Merchan had returned to the courtroom to announce that, in lieu of a decision, he'd be sending jurors home for the evening at 4:30 p.m.

"I'm a trial attorney and I've had a lot of trials and I had a lot of verdicts. And this one was by far the most kind of surprising in the timing of it," Blanche said. "We were all ready to go home. I think it was pretty clear that they were going to keep on working. There hadn't been any notes. The first note was a pretty complicated one about testimony, and then asking to have the charge read back to them. So that's a jury that's kind of in it for the long haul."

Blanche and Trump were having a pleasant conversation as they sat at the defense table waiting out what they thought were the last few minutes of the court day.

"We were kind of getting our minds right," Blanche said. "Having a jury deliberate is stressful for everybody involved, but for sure for President Trump. And so we're trying to get his mind right, that everything was proceeding like it should. And then the judge said we have a verdict."

Asked about his handling of the case, Blanche said the defense team had done its best.

On Trump's decision not to testify, Blanche said that decision ultimately fell to the former president.

"He definitely wanted to testify," Blanche said. But he said they knew that prosecutors were going to be able to cross examine Trump on areas "that are very complicated," because they are the subject of legal appeals.

"There would have been a lot of sideshows if he were to testify that would have, I think, made it a challenge for him," Blanche said. "He was elected president and he's running again, and so he obviously connects with people and connects with voters, and I think certainly can connect with a jury as well. But it wasn't quite as simple as that in reaching that decision."

Among the things Trump could have been asked about by prosecutors were a \$455 million judgment pending against him in a fraud lawsuit brought by New York's attorney general and other judgments against him in lawsuits brought by E. Jean Carroll, who accused Trump of sexual assault.

Blanche acknowledged there was a chance Trump might be sentenced to jail time.

"On the one hand, it would be extraordinary to send a 77-year-old to prison for a case like this. A first-time offender who was also president of United States, I mean, I think almost unheard of," Blanche said.

On the other hand, Blanche said, "this is a very highly publicized case" in which some might argue Trump deserves a harsher punishment because he faces charges elsewhere. "So it's going to be a very, I think, contentious sentencing where we're going to obviously argue strenuously for a non-incarceratory sentence."

Trump's sentencing is scheduled for July 11.

## Who is Alvin Bragg? District attorney who prosecuted Trump says he was just doing his job

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Alvin Bragg took office as Manhattan district attorney in 2022, he stunned the public and his own staff by pausing an investigation into former President Donald Trump that appeared to be hurtling toward an indictment.

Two top prosecutors were so upset with the decision, they quit. One called Bragg's hesitation to bring a case against Trump "a grave failure of justice."

Now, Bragg has cemented his place in history as the first prosecutor to win a criminal conviction of a former U.S. president.

Speaking after the verdict Thursday, Bragg summed up his role by saying, simply, "I did my job."

"Our job is to follow the facts and the law without fear or favor, and that's exactly what we did here," he told reporters.

Trump and his supporters insist Bragg, a Democrat, had a vendetta against the former president and presumptive Republican nominee. He has relentlessly accused Bragg of manufacturing a baseless case for political reasons.

Here's a look at Bragg's background, his time in office and his history regarding Trump.

### A child of Harlem

Bragg, 50, grew up in Harlem when New York City struggled with high crime. He once had a knife held to his throat and has talked about being held at gunpoint six times while growing up, including three times by police officers.

When he was 15, one officer stuck a gun in his face and wrongly accused him of being a drug dealer as the teen walked to buy groceries for his father. Bragg filed a complaint over the incident.

Bragg went on to graduate from Harvard Law School. He began his career as a criminal defense and civil rights lawyer, went on to the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan and then worked at the New York attorney general's office, where he had his first legal tussles with Trump.

### Suing Trump

Bragg was a senior lawyer in the state attorney general's office in 2018, when it was engaged in multiple battles with Trump, related both to his White House policies and his stewardship of his private charitable foundation. Bragg directly oversaw a lawsuit against the foundation. Trump settled, agreeing to the foundation's dissolution, and a judge fined him \$2 million.

Bragg left the attorney general's office in late 2018 and became a professor at New York Law School.

### Campaign for district attorney

Bragg ran for Manhattan district attorney in 2021, campaigning on a platform of "justice and public safety" in a crowded Democratic primary.

In some ways, he was the perfect candidate for predominantly Democratic Manhattan a year after the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd had started a national reckoning with how the criminal justice system has treated Black people and others of color. Bragg, who is Black, had worked as a prosecutor but had personal experience with over-policing of the city's Black community.

He was also, he suggested at the time, well positioned to take over the criminal investigation into Trump and his company from Cyrus Vance Jr., the outgoing DA.

During the race, Bragg was asked repeatedly how he would handle the probe. His standard answer was to cite his work on Trump-related lawsuits while he was in the attorney general's office, and his willingness to hold powerful figures accountable.

"I don't know where this investigation will go. I don't want to prejudge it. But, these types of investigations — white-collar investigations — I've been involved with for years, both doing them myself and also supervising them," Bragg told The Associated Press at the time.

Vance's investigation was focused then on whether Trump had committed fraud by lying about the value

of his assets on financial statements given to banks and others.

After winning the primary, Bragg cruised to victory in the general election.

Clashes over crime

Bragg became Manhattan's first Black district attorney in January of 2022. He was challenged over his approach to the job nearly from the start.

One of his first steps was a memo that, among other things, instructed prosecutors not to seek jail time for some low-level offenses, such as minor marijuana possession and sale (the state later legalized such possession) and to charge some armed robberies in commercial settings as misdemeanor petit larcenies.

Police leaders, conservative media and some centrist Democrats accused him of being soft on criminals during a pandemic-era crime spike. Bragg's staff said the memo had been mischaracterized, but his office later walked back portions of the directive.

During the 2022 governor's race, Republican candidate Lee Zeldin promised that, if elected, he would try to remove Bragg from office.

Bragg faced criticism again this year when he declined to seek pretrial detention for some men accused of brawling with police officers in Times Square.

The decision drew criticism from Gov. Kathy Hochul, a fellow Democrat. Bragg defended himself, telling reporters, "the only thing worse than failing to bring perpetrators to justice would be to ensnare innocent people in the criminal justice system."

His investigators later determined that several men initially arrested played only a minor role in the fight or weren't even there.

Investigating Trump

Bragg's most surprising early move as district attorney was to halt the investigation into whether Trump had lied on financial statements.

The lead prosecutor on that probe, Mark Pomerantz, resigned in anger.

But the investigation wasn't over. It was just changing.

In 2022, Bragg's office persuaded the Trump Organization's longtime chief financial officer, Allen Weiselberg, to plead guilty to evading taxes on fringe benefits, including a luxury car and rent-free apartment. Later that year, the DA's office won a conviction of Trump's company on similar tax charges.

Emboldened by those victories, Bragg convened another grand jury, which indicted Trump in April of 2023 on charges that he falsified records at his company to conceal a scheme to pay hush money to keep a sex scandal from damaging his run for president in 2016. Trump denied any wrongdoing.

A jury convicted Trump on those charges Thursday.

Trump's attacks on Bragg

Trump and his allies have slammed Bragg as a partisan in the guise of a prosecutor, claiming he brought the case solely to damage Trump's chances of regaining the White House.

Trump has called Bragg an "animal" and a "degenerate psychopath," once made a social media post of himself holding a baseball bat next to a picture of Bragg, and described him Friday as "a failed D.A."

He has shrugged off Trump's accusations.

"Many voices out there," Bragg said Thursday. "The only voice that matters is the voice of the jury. And the jury has spoken."

## Republicans join Trump's attacks on justice system and campaign of vengeance after guilty verdict

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Embracing Donald Trump's strategy of blaming the U.S. justice system after his historic guilty verdict, Republicans in Congress are fervently enlisting themselves in his campaign of vengeance and political retribution in the GOP bid to reclaim the White House.

Almost no Republican official has stood up to suggest Trump should not be the party's presidential candidate for the November election — in fact, some have sought to hasten his nomination. Few others

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 39 of 80

dared to defend the legitimacy of the New York state court that heard the hush money case against the former president, or the 12 jurors who unanimously rendered their verdict.

In fact, any Republicans who expressed doubts about Trump's innocence or political viability, including his former hawkish national security adviser John Bolton or top-tier Senate candidate Larry Hogan, were instantly bullied by the former president's enforcers and told to "leave the party."

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., said she's voting for Trump "whether he is a free man or a prisoner of the Biden regime."

The firebrand congresswoman also posted the upside-down American flag that has come to symbolize the "Stop the Steal" movement Trump started with allies before the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The swift, strident and deepening commitment to Trump despite his felony conviction shows how fully Republican leaders and lawmakers have been infused with his unfounded grievances of a "rigged" system and dangerous conspiracies of "weaponized" government into their own attacks on President Joe Biden and the Democrats.

Rather than shunning Trump's escalating authoritarian language or ensuring they will provide checks and balances for a second Trump term, the Republican senators and representatives are upturning long-standing faith in U.S. governance and setting the stage for what they plan to do if Trump regains power.

On Friday, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan demanded the prosecutors Alvin Bragg and Matthew Colangelo appear for a June hearing on the "weaponization of the federal government" and "the unprecedented political prosecution" of Trump — despite the fact that Biden, as president, has no authority over the state courts in New York.

"What we're gearing up for is if Trump wins, he's going to use the apparatus of the state to target his political opponents," said Jason Stanley, a professor at Yale and the author of "How Fascism Works."

Stanley said history is full of examples of people not believing the rhetoric of authoritarians. "Believe what they say," he said. "He's literally telling you he's going to use the apparatus of the state to target his political opponents."

At his Trump Tower on Friday in New York, the former president returned to the kinds of attacks he has repeatedly lodged in campaign speeches, portraying Biden as the one who is a "corrupt" and the U.S. as a "fascist" nation.

Trump called the members of the bipartisan House committee that investigated the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol "thugs" and said Biden was a "Manchurian candidate," a phrase inspired by the 1960s movie portraying a puppet of a U.S. political enemy.

A Trump campaign memo contained talking points for Republican lawmakers, suggesting they call the case a "sham," "hoax," "witch hunt," "election interference" and "lawfare" designed by Biden, whom it called "crooked."

Biden faces no such charges, and the House GOP's efforts to impeach the president over his son Hunter Biden's business dealings, have largely stalled out. Hunter Biden is due in court next week on an unrelated firearms charge in Wilmington, Delaware.

President Biden said Friday that "it's reckless, it's dangerous, it's irresponsible, for anyone to say this is rigged just because they don't like the verdict."

Asked later at the White House if this could happen to him, Biden said: "Not at all. I didn't do anything wrong. The system still works."

As for Trump's claims the case is being orchestrated by the Democratic president to hurt him politically, Biden quipped: "I didn't know I was that powerful."

In the hush money case, Trump was found guilty of trying to influence the 2016 election by falsifying payment to a porn actor to bury her story of an affair. He faces three other felony indictments, including the federal case over his effort to overturn the 2020 election. But they are not likely to be heard before November's expected election rematch with Biden.

Thursday's verdict came after a jury in 2023 found Trump to be liable for sexual abuse against advice columnist E. Jean Carroll and a judge in a 2024 business fraud case determined that Trump lied about his

wealth for years, ordering him to pay a staggering \$355 million in penalties.

Almost to a person, the Republicans in Congress who spoke out provided a singular voice for Trump.

Speaker Mike Johnson on "Fox & Friends" amplified the claim, without evidence, that Democrats are trying to hurt Trump. He said he thinks the Supreme Court should "step in" to resolve the case.

"The justices on the court, I know many of them personally, I think they're deeply concerned about that as we are," the Republican speaker said.

The outgoing Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, said he expected Trump would win the hush money case on appeal, but the three senators seeking to replace him as leader echoed Trump with stronger criticisms of the judicial system.

South Dakota Sen. John Thune said the case was "politically motivated." Texas Sen. John Cornyn called the verdict "a disgrace." Sen. Rick Scott of Florida said that everyone who calls themselves a party leader "must stand up and condemn" what he called "lawless election interference."

And Sen. Susan Collins, the Maine Republican who is known as a bipartisan leader, said the prosecutor "brought these charges precisely because of who the defendant was rather than because of any specified criminal conduct."

With sentencing in the hush money case expected in July before the Republican National Convention, Republican Rep. Chip Roy of Texas said the GOP should move up the convention to speed up Trump's nomination as the party's presidential pick.

Republican judicial advocate Mike Davis, a former top Senate aide mentioned for a future Trump administration position, circulated a letter outlining the next steps.

"Dear Republicans," he said in a Friday post. If their response to the guilty verdict was "we must respect the process" or "we are too principled to retaliate," he suggested they do two things: One was an expulsive, the other: "Leave the party."

Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican, circulated his own letter in which he suggested it was the White House that "made a mockery" of the rule of law and altered politics in "un-American" ways. He and other senators threatened to stall Senate business until Republicans take action.

"Those who turned our judicial system into a political cudgel must be held accountable," Lee said.

## **Sexist tropes and misinformation swirl online as Mexico prepares to elect its first female leader**

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

Mexican voters are poised to elect their first female president, a cause of celebration for many that has also touched off a flurry of false and misogynist online claims, blurring the lines behind fact and fiction.

The two leading candidates, both women, have had to respond to demeaning attacks about their appearance, their credentials and their ability to lead the nation.

The candidate considered the favorite in Sunday's contest, former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, has also faced slurs about her Jewish background as well as repeatedly debunked claims she was born in Hungary. This week, in an apparent bid to undermine her candidacy, a social media account impersonating a legitimate news outlet posted fake, AI-generated audio of Sheinbaum admitting that her campaign was failing in a key Mexican state.

The wave of election misinformation facing voters in Mexico is the latest example of how the internet, social media and AI are fueling the spread of false, misleading or hateful content in democracies around the world, warping public discourse and potentially influencing election outcomes.

"We have a general atmosphere of disinformation here in Mexico, but it's slightly different from what is happening in India, or the U.S.," said Manuel Alejandro Guerrero, a professor and communications researcher at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.

In Mexico's case, that misinformation is the result of growing distrust of the news media, violence committed by drug cartels, and rapid increases in social media usage coupled with a lag in digital literacy. Guerrero added one more contributing factor now familiar to Americans: political leaders who willingly



spread disinformation themselves.

Sheinbaum is a member of the Morena party, led by current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. She faces opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez and Jorge Álvarez Máynez of the small Citizen Movement party.

Compared with election misinformation spread about male candidates, the attacks against Gálvez and Sheinbaum often take a particularly personal nature and focus on their gender, according to Maria Calderon, an attorney and researcher from Mexico who works with the Mexico Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., that studies online politics.

"I was surprised by how cruel the comments could be," said Calderon, whose analysis found that attacks on female candidates like Sheinbaum and Gálvez typically focus on their appearance, or their credentials, whereas misinformation about male candidates is more often about policy proposals.

"A lot of direct attacks on their weight, their height, how they dressed, the way they behave, the way they talk," Calderon said.

She suggested that some of the sexism can be traced back to Mexico's "machismo" culture and strong Catholic roots. Women only received the right to vote in Mexico in 1953.

Lopez Obrador has spread some of the false claims targeting Gálvez, as he did last year when he erroneously said she supported plans to end several popular social programs if elected. Despite her efforts to set the record straight, however, the narrative continues to dog her campaign, showing just how effective political misinformation can be even if debunked.

Con artists have also gotten in on the misinformation business in Mexico, using AI deepfake videos of Sheinbaum in an effort to peddle investment scams, for instance.

"You'll see that it's my voice, but it's a fraud," Sheinbaum said after one deepfake of her supposedly pitching an investment scam went viral.

As they have in other nations, the tech companies that operate most of the major social media platforms say they have rolled out a series of programs and policies designed to blunt the effect of misinformation ahead of the election.

Meta and other U.S.-based tech platforms have been criticized for focusing most of their efforts on misinformation in English while taking a "cookie-cutter" approach to the rest of the globe.

"We are focused on providing reliable election information while combating misinformation across languages," according to a statement from Meta, the owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, about its election plans.

The specter of violence has haunted the election since the first campaigns began. Dozens of candidates for smaller offices have been killed or abducted by criminal gangs. Drug cartels have spread terror in the lead up to the election, spraying campaign rallies with gunfire, burning ballots and preventing polling places from being set up.

"This has been the most violent election that Mexico has had since we started recording elections," Calderon said.

## **LGBTQ+ Pride Month is starting to show its colors around the world. What to know**

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Pride Month, the worldwide celebration of LGBTQ+ culture and rights, kicks off Saturday with events around the globe.

But this year's festivities in the U.S. will unfold against a backdrop of dozens of new state laws targeting LGBTQ+ rights, particularly transgender young people.

Here are things to know about the celebrations and the politics around them.

**WHY IS JUNE PRIDE MONTH?**

The monthlong global celebration began with Gay Pride Week in late June 1970, a public celebration that marked the first anniversary of the violent police raid at New York's Stonewall Inn, a gay bar.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 42 of 80

At a time when LGBTQ+ people largely kept their identity or orientation quiet, the June 28, 1969, raid sparked a series of protests and catalyzed the movement for rights.

The first pride week featured marches in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco, and it has grown ever since. Some events fall outside of June: Tokyo's Rainbow Pride was in April and Rio de Janeiro has a major event in November.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton proclaimed June as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month.

**WHAT'S BEING CELEBRATED?**

Pride's hallmark rainbow-laden parades and festivals celebrate the progress the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement has made.

In the U.S. in April, a federal appeals court ruled North Carolina and West Virginia's refusal to cover certain health care for transgender people with government-sponsored insurance is discriminatory.

In one compromise in March, a settlement of legal challenges to a Florida law critics called "Don't Say Gay" clarifies that teachers can have pictures on their desks of their same-sex partners and books with LGBTQ+ themes. It also says books with LGBTQ+ characters and themes can remain in campus libraries and gay-straight alliance chapters at schools need not be forced underground.

Greece this year legalized same-sex marriage, one of three dozen nations around the world to do so, and a similar law approved in Estonia in June 2023 took effect this year.

**WHAT'S BEING PROTESTED?**

Rights have been lost around the world, including heavy prison sentences for gay and transgender people in Iraq and the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality" in Uganda. More than 60 countries have anti-LGBTQ+ laws, advocates say.

Tightening of those laws has contributed to the flow of people from Africa and the Middle East seeking asylum in Europe.

In recent years, Republican-controlled U.S. states have been adopting policies that target LGBTQ+ people, and particularly transgender people, in various ways.

Twenty-five states now have laws banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. Some states have taken other actions, with laws or policies primarily keeping transgender girls and women out of bathrooms and sports competitions that align with their gender.

GOP state attorneys general have challenged a federal regulation, set to take effect in August, that would ban the bathroom bans at schools. There also have been efforts to ban or regulate drag performances.

Most of the policies are facing legal challenges.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022, leading to restrictive abortion laws in most GOP-controlled states, LGBTQ+ advocates are worried about losing ground too, said Kevin Jennings, CEO of nonprofit civil rights organization Lambda Legal. On the eve of Pride, the organization announced a \$180 million fundraising goal for more lawyers to challenge anti-LGBTQ+ laws.

Progress such as the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide could be lost without political and legal vigilance, Jennings said.

"Our community looks at what happened to reproductive rights thanks to the *Dobbs* decision two years ago and has enormous anxiety over whether we're about to have a massive rollback of what we've gained in the 55 years since Stonewall," Jennings said.

**WHAT ABOUT BUSINESSES?**

While big businesses from Apple to Wells Fargo sponsor events across the U.S., a pushback made ripples last year at one major discount retailer.

Target was selling Pride-themed items last June but removed some from stores and moved displays to the back of some locations after customers tipped them over and confronted workers. The company then faced additional backlash from customers who were upset the retailer gave in to people prejudiced against LGBTQ+ people.

This year, the store has said it would not carry the items at all its stores. But the company remains a major sponsor of NYC Pride.

## ARE EVENTS SAFE?

Keeping the events safe is the top priority, organizers said, but there could be challenges.

The FBI and U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued an advisory in May that foreign terrorist organizations could target events associated with Pride. The same month, the State Department renewed a security warning for Americans overseas, especially LGBTQ+ people and events globally.

Law enforcement officials noted ISIS sympathizers were arrested last year for attempting to attack a June 2023 Pride parade in Vienna and that ISIS messaging last year called for followers to attack "soft targets."

The agencies say people should always watch out for threats made online, in person or by mail. People should take note if someone tries to enter a restricted area, bypass security or impersonate law enforcement and call 911 for emergencies and report threats to the FBI.

NYC Pride has a heavy security presence and works with city agencies outside the perimeter, said Sandra Perez, the event's executive director. The group expects 50,000 people marching in its June 30 parade and more than 1.5 million people watching.

"The fight for liberation isn't over," Perez said. "The need to be visible and the need to be mindful of what we need to do to ensure that the future generations don't have these struggles is really top of mind."

## Ohio explosion caused by cut gas line thought to be turned off, investigators say

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio (AP) — A crew working in the basement area of an Ohio building intentionally cut a gas line not knowing it was pressurized before a deadly explosion this week, the National Transportation Safety Board said Friday.

NTSB board member Tom Chapman said preliminary investigation shows workers were in the basement to clear out piping and other outdated infrastructure and debris from the basement and vault area — which extends underneath the sidewalk next to the building — in anticipation of a city project to fill in the area and replace the sidewalks. A crew of five people and a supervisor had been on site that day and four of the workers were there when it happened, he said.

"It was an apparently abandoned service line coming off the main, which ran parallel to the street," Chapman said.

He said workers smelled no gas before they started cutting the pipe and knew there was a problem when they made the third cut.

At that point, workers pulled the fire alarm and alerted residents and bank employees to evacuate. Chapman said the explosion happened six minutes later. He also said all indications are that it was accidental.

Investigators will try to determine why the pipe was pressurized and how long it had been that way.

Chapman said the investigation would continue without access to the inside of the building until engineers can determine if the building is safe to enter. He said the NTSB has gotten security video from inside the bank and other video evidence.

The explosion Tuesday afternoon blew out much of the ground floor of Realty Tower, killing a bank employee and injuring several others. It collapsed part of the ground floor into its basement and sent the façade across the street. Bricks, glass and other debris littered the sidewalk outside the 13-story building, which had a Chase Bank branch at street level and apartments in upper floors.

Investigators are also trying to discern whether people in the bank heard the fire alarm.

Youngstown Mayor Jamael Tito Brown said in a news release Friday that the city had contracted with a construction company called GreenHeart to perform private utility relocation in the basement of the Realty Tower. He said "there is no evidence" that cutting the gas line the NTSB mentioned was necessary to complete that work.

Greenheart did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday evening.

The bank employee, 27-year-old Akil Drake, had been seen inside the building just before the blast, police have said. Firefighters rescued others as they cleared the building.

Seven injured people were taken to a Youngstown hospital. One woman remained hospitalized as of

Thursday in critical condition, but her name and further details on her injuries have not been disclosed. Three others were in stable condition, and the other three were released.

## **Oregon defendants without a lawyer must be released from jail, US appeals court says**

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A federal appeals court on Friday upheld a ruling that Oregon defendants must be released from jail after seven days if they don't have a defense attorney.

In its decision, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals called Oregon's public defense system a "Sixth Amendment nightmare," OPB reported, referring to the part of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees people accused of crimes the right to a lawyer. The opinion said Oregon is responsible for upholding legal protections for criminal defendants.

Oregon has struggled for years to address its public defender crisis. As of Friday, more than 3,200 defendants did not have a public defender, a dashboard from the Oregon Judicial Department showed. Of those, about 146 people were in custody, but fewer people were expected to be impacted by Friday's ruling, according to OPB.

An Office of Public Defense Services draft report from March found that Oregon needs 500 additional attorneys to meet its obligations, OPB reported. State officials have sought to address the issue, including by taking such steps as providing additional funding, but structural issues remain.

Next year, the Oregon Public Defense Commission will move from the judiciary to the executive branch under the governor. State lawmakers hope the move will provide more support to the agency.

The 9th Circuit's decision upheld a preliminary injunction issued by U.S. District Court Judge Michael McShane last year. The case came from Washington County, where 10 people charged with crimes and held at the county jail while not having court-appointed attorneys filed a class action habeas corpus petition through the state's federal public defender's office.

Oregon's federal public defender, Fidel Cassino-DuCloux, said Friday's decision "breathes life into the Sixth Amendment right to counsel, which have been an empty promise for too many presumptively innocent Oregonians charged with crimes."

"We hope that the state authorities heed the Ninth Circuit's instruction that no one remains in jail without counsel and implements the decision without delay," Cassino-DuCloux wrote in a statement.

When asked by OPB whether the state would appeal, a spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Justice said they're reviewing the decision.

## **Mexico's drug cartels and gangs appear to be playing a wider role in Sunday's elections than before**

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ and ARMANDO SOLÍS Associated Press

COTIJA, Mexico (AP) — Mexico's drug cartels and gangs appear to be playing a wider role than before in Sunday's elections that will determine the presidency, nine governorships and about 19,000 mayorships and other local posts.

The country's powerful drug cartels have long staged targeted assassinations of mayoral and other local candidates who threaten their control. Gangs in Mexico depend on controlling local police chiefs, and taking a share of municipal budgets; national politics appear to interest them less.

But in the runup to Sunday's vote, gangs have increasingly taken to spraying whole campaign rallies with gunfire, burning ballots or preventing the setting up of polling stations, and even putting up banners seeking to influence voters.

Security analyst David Saucedo says it's likely some drug gangs will try to force voters to cast ballots for their favored candidates.

"It is reasonable to assume that the cartels will mobilize their support bases during Sunday's elections," Saucedo said. "They have loyal voters who they have won over through the distribution of food packages,

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 45 of 80

cash, medicine and infrastructure projects. They will use them to support narco-candidates.”

In some places, it appears the gangs are encouraging people to vote while discouraging voting in areas controlled by their rivals.

On Friday, electoral authorities reported that assailants burned a house where ballots were being stored ahead of Sunday in the violence-wracked town of Chicomuselo, in the southern state of Chiapas. While they did not say who was behind the attack, the town is completely dominated by two warring drug cartels, Jalisco and Sinaloa.

On May 14, gunmen apparently linked to a cartel shot and killed 11 people in a single day in Chicomuselo. On May 17, five people were killed along with a mayoral candidate when gunmen opened fire on a crowd in the town of La Concordia, Chiapas, about 45 miles (75 kilometers) east of Chicomuselo.

Targeted assassinations of local candidates continued. On Wednesday, dramatic video images showed a mayoral candidate in the southern state of Guerrero being shot in the head at point-blank range with a pistol. A total of 31 candidates, almost all running for mayorships, have been killed this year.

But mass attacks on campaign rallies, once exceedingly rare in Mexico, are becoming common, and have killed many more supporters than candidates this year. The effect is intimidating.

On Wednesday, the last official day of campaigning, unidentified gunmen opened fire a couple of blocks away from a mayoral candidate's final campaign rally in the western state of Michoacan, sending hundreds of people scrambling for safety.

“It seemed like a normal evening, like the campaign closers of other candidates,” said Angélica Chávez, a homemaker who was at the rally in Cotija. “Then there were gunshots, several rounds of gunfire very close. And then people started running and diving to the ground, crouching.”

Chávez was hurt in the stampede and had to take refuge in a local church.

In Celaya, a city in Guanajuato, gunmen opened fire on a campaign event in April, killing a mayoral candidate and wounding three of her supporters.

Saucedo, the analyst, sees the shootings as a sign that narco gangs are no longer willing to see their handpicked candidates lose.

“Rather than allow the victory of a candidate who is not in line with their criminal interests, or allow a candidate linked to a rival drug gang to win, they use this tactic,” Saucedo said. “What we're seeing in the final stretch is pretty desperate strategy on the part of some groups of drug traffickers.”

Saucedo said that such attempts at narco-control of local politics had been seen previously in some particularly violent states, like Tamaulipas. “What was once limited ... is now spreading to include the whole country,” he said.

The National Electoral Institute says it has had to cancel plans for 170 polling places, mostly in Chiapas and Michoacan and mostly because of security problems. In Chiapas, electoral authorities say there are places they can't even go to. While that's a tiny fraction of the country's 170,858 polling places, it's disturbing.

And in the northern border city of Nuevo Laredo, a shadowy group that local media reports link to the dominant Northeast drug cartel has put up posters claiming one mayoral candidate is linked to the rival Gulf drug cartel.

Authorities have not confirmed the origin of the crude poster, which includes a photoshopped image of the candidate waving an assault rifle and wearing a bulletproof vest with the Gulf cartel's insignia.

In the state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City, residents awoke this week to find a banner strung over a road claiming a gubernatorial candidate was tied to rival drug gangs. The banner was signed by a local drug boss whose name is unknown, “the Commander of the Three Letters.”

Another apparently gang-related banner threatened that anyone trying to buy votes would be “punished severely.” That banner was signed by “Those who have always called the shots here.”

Such events appear to indicate that past calculations by the cartels — take out the strongest candidate you don't like, and the remaining major-party candidate will win by default — have become more complicated.

In one town in Michoacan, Maravatio, the gangs apparently tried to eliminate any doubts as to who will win this year; they killed off three candidates for town mayor who were apparently not to their liking.

## Killing of Minneapolis police officer stuns a department that's been struggling to fill its ranks

By STEVE KARNOWSKI, MARK VANCLEAVE AND JOSH FUNK Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The shooting death of a Minneapolis police officer has stunned a department that has struggled to fill its ranks since the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing turmoil.

Officer Jamal Mitchell's death Thursday came days after the fourth anniversary of Floyd's killing by a city officer, which sparked sometimes violent unrest across the country and forced a reckoning with police brutality and racism. Minneapolis became ground zero for the "defund the police" movement, and while that didn't succeed in eliminating the city's police department, the force remains well below full strength.

On Friday, visiting a memorial that has popped up at Mitchell's former station in south Minneapolis, Mayor Jacob Frey paid tribute to the fallen officer and to officers who, like Mitchell, have joined or stayed despite everything.

"They're committed to protecting and serving," the mayor said. "They're committed to the change that we've talked about. They're committed to upholding these values that we all want to see."

"Right now we are seeing people enter this force that really care. We're seeing heroes that are deciding to step up, to wear the badge that they do, to wear the uniform that they do, to make the city a better place," Frey said. "Officer Mitchell was clearly a prime example of exactly that."

Mitchell, 36, was killed while responding to a double shooting at an apartment building. Mitchell stopped to aid a man who appeared to be an injured victim, but that man shot him instead.

The shooter's name and other details about him have not yet been made public. The state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is leading the investigation of what its leader said was clearly an ambush. In an update Friday, the bureau said it is still working to establish a clear timeline of events but three people were killed: Mitchell, the gunman and a person in the apartment.

The BCA also said four people were injured — another responding officer, a second person in the apartment, a bystander in a vehicle and a firefighter. The officer and firefighter were treated and released, and the others remained hospitalized.

Investigators confirmed that two officers fired their guns, the BCA added.

Police Chief Brian O'Hara said the gunman "assassinated" Mitchell while the officer was attempting to help him, and continued to shoot him after he fell to the ground.

"I am angry and deeply hurt by such a senseless and violent attack on Minneapolis' Finest," O'Hara told officers Friday, according to a statement released by the department.

The confrontation did not come as a total shock to Reuben Molina — who heard the initial shots at his apartment upstairs and witnessed the shootout with police a few minutes later. Molina and other nearby residents said they believe crime is a problem in their neighborhood, and police presence feels sparse.

"Honestly, I'm surprised it hasn't happened sooner," Molina said.

Mitchell, a father who was engaged to be married, had been with the department just shy of 18 months when he was killed.

He was the kind of officer the department really wants to recruit, showing his courage just three days into the job when he rescued an older adult couple from their burning home, an incident that Chief O'Hara and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz both cited in mourning his death.

Minneapolis' police department had 560 officers in March when it launched a \$1 million recruiting campaign, down from more than 800 before the pandemic. Many retired or went on disability after Floyd's death, claiming post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from the unrest.

The metro area has seen other recent deaths of first responders: In the suburb of Burnsville, two officers and a firefighter-paramedic were killed, and a third officer was wounded, while responding to a domestic violence call. Their funeral drew thousands of officers, paramedics and firefighters.

Retired New York City Police Sgt. Joe Giacalone, who is now an adjunct professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said anytime an officer is killed it affects everyone in the department because it drives home the reality that it can happen to any of them. And some of the police accountability measures

enacted in the wake of Floyd's death may have made it harder for police to do their jobs, he said.

"Unfortunately we're dealing with for the last couple of years, an anti-cop environment in this country, coming from many politicians and many members of the community, and when you have a blow like this, it kind of hits morale even more," Giacalone said.

"Recruitment is just not a problem in Minneapolis. It's a problem in every police department across the country. And stories like this, in situations like this, certainly don't help with recruitment," he added said.

Former Minneapolis Police Chief Janeé Harteau, who led the department from 2012 to 2017, said the events of the last four years, and probably going back before that, made recruiting challenging to begin with, and Mitchell's death will only make it harder.

"When you get a young hero taken unnecessarily and tragically, and then when you couple that with today's polarized and divided climate, it adds to that challenge of recruitment," Harteau said. "Because there's a multitude of things people can do to serve, and policing isn't anyone's first choice anymore, it seems."

While it's important to hold police accountable, she said, it's also important for officers to know they have the support of their leadership, elected officials and the public.

"We know when we take the job, we know that we might not come home. We know it's truly life and death," she said. "But when an event like this occurs, that's when the public can begin to understand what it's like."

City Council Member LaTrisha Vetaw on Friday recalled meeting Mitchell at his badge ceremony in 2022.

"When I asked him why he joined the department, he said he wanted to 'be the change' he wanted to see in policing," Vetaw said in an email to constituents. "He selflessly gave his life to this mission while protecting the city he served."

## Florida sheriff's office fires deputy who fatally shot airman at home

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

A Florida Panhandle sheriff on Friday fired a deputy who fatally shot an airman at his home while holding a handgun pointed to the ground, saying the deputy's life was never in danger and he should not have fired his weapon.

Okaloosa County Sheriff Eric Aden fired Deputy Eddie Duran, who fatally shot Senior Airman Roger Fortson on May 3 after responding to a domestic violence call and being directed to Fortson's apartment.

Duran shot Fortson, 23, multiple times two seconds after he opened his door. Fortson was holding his legally owned gun in his right hand, body camera video shows. It was pointed directly at the ground. Fortson was Black. Duran, 39, listed himself as Hispanic on his voter registration.

A sheriff's internal affairs investigation released Friday concluded that, "Mr. Fortson did not make any hostile, attacking movements, and therefore, the former deputy's use of deadly force was not objectively reasonable." Outside law enforcement experts have also said that an officer cannot shoot simply because a possible suspect is simply holding a gun if there is no threat.

"This tragic incident should have never occurred," Aden said in the statement. "The objective facts do not support the use of deadly force as an appropriate response to Mr. Fortson's actions. Mr. Fortson did not commit any crime. By all accounts, he was an exceptional airman and individual."

No criminal charges have been filed, but a Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigation is ongoing.

Duran did not return a voicemail left at a number listed to him. Email and phone messages seeking comment from his attorney John Whitaker were not immediately returned.

According to the internal affairs report, Duran told investigators that when Fortson opened the door, he saw aggression in the airman's eyes. He said he fired because, "I'm standing there thinking I'm about to get shot, I'm about to die."

"It is him or me at this point and I need to, I need to act as opposed to react," he told investigators.

Attorney Ben Crump, who is representing Fortson's family, said in a statement that Duran's firing "is a step forward, but it is not full justice for Roger and his family."

"The actions of this deputy were not just negligent, they were criminal," Crump said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 48 of 80

Sabu Williams, president of the Okaloosa County NAACP, applauded Aden's action.

"We appreciate what the internal investigation has shown and what the sheriff has done to this point," Williams told The Associated Press. "We don't think this is the end of it, obviously."

He said the NAACP has a good relationship with the Republican sheriff.

"Some of us may have wanted things to happen a lot quicker, but I know due diligence has to take place," Williams said.

Duran is a law enforcement veteran, his career beginning as a military police officer in the Army. He was hired by an Oklahoma police department in 2015 after his military discharge. He joined the Okaloosa County sheriff's office in July 2019, but resigned two years later. He rejoined the sheriff's office 11 months ago.

The apartment where Fortson lived is about 8 miles (13 kilometers) from Hurlburt Field, where Fortson was assigned to the 4th Special Operations Squadron as a special missions aviator serving on an AC-130J Ghost Rider gunship. One of his roles was to load the plane's 30mm and 105mm cannons during battles. He earned an Air Medal with combat device, which is typically awarded after 20 flights in a combat zone or for conspicuous valor or achievement on a single mission.

The events leading to the shooting began shortly after 4 p.m. on May 3 when a tenant who lived near Fortson in Fort Walton Beach's Elan Apartments called the management office to say she heard what sounded like an argument coming from his apartment.

The woman, whose name has not been released, told investigators after the shooting she believed Fortson was in a relationship because she often heard a woman's voice coming from the apartment. She said she had heard previous arguments, but none like the one that Friday afternoon.

"Before it was just, usually banter back and forth," she told investigators. "Nothing was ever to the extent it was on (May 3)." She also thought a child was present.

But Fortson, who had no criminal record, lived alone and had no guests that afternoon. He was on a video call with his girlfriend, who told investigators they had not been arguing. She said Fortson was playing a video game.

An apartment complex manager called the sheriff's office at 4:24 p.m. and Duran arrived three minutes later. He met the manager in the parking lot and she directed him to Fortson's fourth-floor apartment, telling him there are frequent arguments, body camera video shows.

However, 911 records show deputies had never been called to Fortson's apartment previously but they had been called to a nearby unit 10 times in the previous eight months, including once for a domestic disturbance.

When Duran arrived outside Fortson's door, he stood silently for 20 seconds outside and listened, but no voices inside are heard on his body camera.

He then pounded on the door, but didn't identify himself. He then moved to the side of the door, about 5 feet away (1.5 meters). He told investigators he feared that the person inside might fire through the door or open the door and push him over the rail and to the ground about 40 feet (12 meters) below.

He waited 15 seconds before pounding on the door again. This time he yelled, "Sheriff's office — open the door!" He again moved to the side. A muffled voice can be heard on the video — Duran said he heard someone cursing at the police.

Less than 10 seconds later, Duran moved back in front of the door and pounded again, announcing himself once more.

Fortson's girlfriend told investigators that the airman asked who was there but did not get a response. She said Fortson told her he was not going to answer the door because no one comes to his apartment. She said neither of them heard the deputy yell that he was with the sheriff's office.

After the third knock, she said Fortson told her, "I'm gonna go grab my gun because I don't know who that is."

When Fortson opened the door holding his gun, Duran said "Step back," and then immediately began firing. Fortson fell backward onto the floor.

Only then did the deputy yell, "Drop the gun!"



Fortson replied, "It's over there."

The deputy called for paramedics, but Fortson died a short time later at the hospital.

When other deputies arrived, Duran walked into the breezeway outside the unit and struck a wall with his right fist, the internal affairs report said.

"F—," he yelled.

## Canadian serial killer Robert Pickton, who brought victims to pig farm, is dead after prison assault

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian serial killer Robert Pickton, who took female victims to his pig farm during a crime spree near Vancouver in the late 1990s and early 2000s, has died after being assaulted in prison, authorities said Friday. He was 74.

The Correctional Service of Canada said in statement that Pickton, an inmate of Port-Cartier Institution in the province of Quebec, died in hospital following injuries in the May 19 assault involving another inmate. He was one of Canada's most notorious serial killers and his case made international headlines.

A 51-year-old inmate was in custody for the assault on Pickton, police spokesman Hugues Beaulieu said earlier this month.

Robert "Willie" Pickton was convicted of six counts of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison in 2007, with the maximum parole ineligibility period of 25 years, after being charged with the murders of 26 women.

Police began searching the Pickton farm in the Vancouver suburb of Port Coquitlam more than 22 years ago in what would be a years-long investigation into the disappearances of dozens of women from Vancouver's seediest streets, sex workers and users of drugs abandoned on the margins of society.

The remains or DNA of 33 women were found on the farm. Pickton once bragged to an undercover police officer that he killed a total of 49 women.

During his trial, prosecution witness Andrew Bellwood said Pickton told him how he strangled his victims and fed their remains to his pigs. Health officials once issued a tainted meat advisory to neighbors who might have bought pork from Pickton's farm, concerned the meat might have contained human remains.

Cynthia Cardinal, whose sister Georgina Papin was murdered by Pickton, said Pickton's death means she can finally move on from her sister's murder.

"This is gonna bring healing for, I won't say all families, I'll just say most of the families," she said. "I'm like — wow, finally. I can actually move on and heal and I can put this behind me."

Vancouver police were criticized for not taking the cases seriously because many of the missing were sex workers or users of drugs.

Canada's correctional service said it was conducting an investigation into the attack on Pickton.

"The investigation will examine all of the facts and circumstances surrounding the assault, including whether policies and protocols were followed," the service said in the statement. "We are mindful that this offender's case has had a devastating impact on communities in British Columbia and across the country, including Indigenous peoples, victims and their families. Our thoughts are with them."

Pickton's confirmed victims were six: Sereena Abotsway, Mona Wilson, Andrea Joesbury, Brenda Ann Wolfe, Papin and Marnie Frey.

"Earlier today, I was made aware of the death of an inmate at Port-Cartier Institution," Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc said in statement. "At this time, my thoughts are with the families of the victims of this individual's heinous crimes."

At the time of Pickton's sentencing, British Columbia Supreme Court Justice James Williams said it was a "rare case that properly warrants the maximum period of parole ineligibility available to the court."

## Marian Robinson, mother of Michelle Obama, dies at 86

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Marian Shields Robinson, the mother of Michelle Obama who moved with the first family to the White House when son-in-law Barack Obama was elected president, has died. She was 86.

Mrs. Robinson's death was announced by Michelle Obama and other family members in a statement that said "there was and will be only one Marian Robinson. In our sadness, we are lifted up by the extraordinary gift of her life."

She was a widow and lifelong Chicago resident when she moved to the executive mansion in 2009 to help care for granddaughters Malia and Sasha. In her early 70s, Mrs. Robinson initially resisted the idea of starting over in Washington, and Michelle Obama had to enlist her brother, Craig, to help persuade their mother to move.

"There were many good and valid reasons that Michelle raised with me, not the least of which was the opportunity to continue spending time with my granddaughters, Malia and Sasha, and to assist in giving them a sense of normalcy that is a priority for both of their parents, as has been from the time Barack began his political career," Mrs. Robinson wrote in the foreword to "A Game of Character," a memoir by her son, formerly the head men's basketball coach at Oregon State University.

"My feeling, however, was that I could visit periodically without actually moving in and still be there for the girls," she said.

Mrs. Robinson wrote that her son understood why she wanted to stay in Chicago but still used a line of reasoning on her that she often used on him and his sister. He asked her to see the move as a chance to grow and try something new. As a compromise, she agreed to move, at least temporarily.

Granddaughters Malia and Sasha were just 10 and 7, respectively, when the White House became home in 2009. In Chicago, Mrs. Robinson had become almost a surrogate parent to the girls during the 2008 presidential campaign. She retired from her job as a bank secretary to help shuttle them around.

At the White House, Mrs. Robinson provided a reassuring presence for the girls as their parents settled into their new roles, and her lack of Secret Service protection made it possible for her to accompany them to and from school daily without fanfare.

"I would not be who I am today without the steady hand and unconditional love of my mother, Marian Shields Robinson," Michelle Obama wrote in her 2018 memoir, "Becoming." "She has always been my rock, allowing me the freedom to be who I am, while never allowing my feet to get too far off the ground. Her boundless love for my girls, and her willingness to put our needs before her own, gave me the comfort and confidence to venture out into the world knowing they were safe and cherished at home."

Mrs. Robinson gave a few media interviews but never to White House press. Aides guarded her privacy, and, as result, she enjoyed a level of anonymity openly envied by the president and first lady. It allowed her to come and go from the White House as often as she pleased on shopping runs around town, to the president's box at the Kennedy Center and for trips to Las Vegas or to visit her other grandchildren in Portland, Oregon.

She attended some White House events, including concerts, the annual Easter Egg Roll and National Christmas Tree lighting, and some state dinners.

White House residency also opened up the world to Mrs. Robinson, who had been a widow for nearly 20 years when she moved to a room on the third floor of the White House, one floor above the first family. She had never traveled outside the U.S. until she moved to Washington.

Her first flight out of the country was aboard Air Force One in 2009 when the Obamas visited France. She joined the Obamas on a trip to Russia, Italy and Ghana later that year, during which she got to meet Pope Benedict, tour Rome's ancient Colosseum and view a former slave-holding compound on the African coast. She also accompanied her daughter and granddaughters on two overseas trips without the president: to South Africa and Botswana in 2011, and China in 2014.

Craig Robinson wrote in the memoir that he and his parents doubted whether his sister's relationship with Barack Obama would last, though Fraser Robinson III and his wife thought the young lawyer was a

worthy suitor for their daughter, also a lawyer. Without explanation, Craig Robinson said his mother gave the relationship six months.

Barack and Michelle Obama were married on Oct. 3, 1992.

One of seven children, Marian Lois Shields Robinson was born in Chicago on July 30, 1937. She attended two years of teaching college, married in 1960 and, as a stay-at-home mom, stressed the importance of education to her children. Both were educated at Ivy League schools, each with a bachelor's degree from Princeton. Michelle Obama also has a law degree from Harvard.

Fraser Robinson was a pump operator for the Chicago Water Department who had multiple sclerosis. He died in 1991.

## Trump tries to move past his guilty verdict by attacking the criminal justice system

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump sought to move past his historic criminal conviction on Friday and build momentum for his bid to return to the White House with fierce attacks on the judge who oversaw the case, the prosecution's star witness and the criminal justice system as a whole.

Speaking from his namesake tower in Manhattan in a symbolic return to the campaign trail, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee delivered a message aimed squarely at his most loyal supporters. Defiant as ever, he insisted without evidence that the verdict was "rigged" and driven by politics.

"We're going to fight," Trump said from the atrium of Trump Tower, where he descended a golden escalator to announce his 2016 campaign nine years ago next month. The machinations during the final, dramatic weeks of that campaign ultimately led to the charges that made Trump the first former president and presumptive presidential nominee of a major party to be convicted of a crime, exposing him to potential prison time.

While the guilty verdict has energized Trump's base, fueling millions of dollars in new campaign contributions, it's unclear how the conviction and his rambling response will resonate with the kinds of voters who are likely to decide what is expected to be an extremely close November election. They include suburban women, independents, and voters turned off by both candidates.

Speaking before dozens of reporters and cameras that carried his remarks live, Trump cast himself as a martyr, suggesting that if this could happen to him, "They can do this to anyone."

"I'm willing to do whatever I have to do to save our country and save our Constitution. I don't mind," he said, as he traded the aging lower Manhattan courthouse where he spent much of the last two months for a backdrop of American flags, rose marble and brass.

"It's a very unpleasant thing, to be honest," he added. "But it's a great, great honor."

President Joe Biden, responding to the verdict at the White House, said Trump "was given every opportunity to defend himself" and blasted his rhetoric.

"It's reckless, it's dangerous, it's irresponsible for anyone to say this is rigged just because they don't like the verdict," Biden said.

Trump has made his legal woes the centerpiece of his campaign message as he has argued, without evidence, that Biden orchestrated the four indictments against him to hobble his campaign. The hush money case was filed by local prosecutors in Manhattan who don't work for the Justice Department or any White House office.

A Manhattan jury on Thursday found Trump guilty of 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.

Despite the historic ruling, a convicted Trump sounded much the same as a pre-convicted Trump, as he delivered what amounted to a truncated version of his usual rally speech. He argued the verdict was illegitimate and driven by politics and sought to downplay the facts underlying the case. He said he would appeal.

"It's not hush money. It's a nondisclosure agreement," he said. "Totally legal, totally common."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 52 of 80

When Trump emerged from the courtroom immediately after the verdict Thursday, he had appeared tense and deeply angry, his words pointed and clipped. But by Friday, he seemed more relaxed — if a little congested — especially as he moved on to other topics. He did not take questions from reporters, marching off as supporters assembled in the lobby cheered.

His lawyer, Todd Blanche, who was with him at Trump Tower but didn't speak, said in an interview later Friday that he had been "shocked" by how well Trump took the verdict.

"He's not happy about it, but there's no defendant in the history of our justice system who's happy about a conviction the day after," he said. "But I think he knows there's a lot of fight left and there's a lot of opportunity to fix this and that's what we're going to try to do."

Trump has portrayed himself as a passionate supporter of law enforcement and has even talked favorably of officers handling suspects roughly. But he has spent the last two years attacking parts of the criminal justice system as it applies to him and raising questions about the honesty and motives of agents and prosecutors.

In his disjointed remarks, Trump attacked Biden's immigration and tax policies before pivoting to his case, growling that he was threatened with jail time if he violated a gag order. He cast intricate parts of the case and trial proceedings as unfair, making false statements and misrepresentations as he went.

Trump said he had wanted to testify in his trial, a right that he opted not to exercise. Doing so would have allowed prosecutors to cross-examine him under oath. He raised the specter on Friday of being charged with perjury for a verbal misstep, saying, "The theory is you never testify because as soon as you testify — anybody, if it were George Washington — don't testify because they'll get you on something that you said slightly wrong."

Testing the limits of the gag order that continues to prohibit him from publicly critiquing witnesses including Michael Cohen, Trump called his former fixer, the star prosecution witness in the case, "a sleazebag," without referencing him by name.

He also blasted the judge in the case, saying his side's chief witness had been "literally crucified by this man who looks like an angel, but he's really a devil."

He also circled back to some of the same authoritarian themes he has repeatedly focused on in speeches and rallies, painting the U.S. under Biden as a "corrupt" and "fascist" nation.

His son Eric Trump and daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, joined him, but his wife, Melania Trump, who has been publicly silent since the verdict, was not seen.

Outside, on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, supporters gathered across the street flew a giant red "TRUMP OR DEATH" sign that flapped in front of a high-end boutique. A small group of protesters held signs saying "Guilty" and "Justice matters."

Trump's campaign announced Friday evening it had raised \$52.8 million in the 24 hours after the verdict. The campaign said one-third of those donors had not previously given to him.

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 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, instead of the usual red, 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.

In the next two months, Trump is set 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 prison time.

## **Russia and Ukraine exchange POWs for the first time in months. Bodies of fallen are also swapped**

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

SUMY REGION, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine and Russia exchanged prisoners of war on Friday, each sending back 75 POWs in the first such swap in the past three months, officials said. A few hours earlier and at the same location, the two sides also handed over bodies of their fallen soldiers.

The Ukrainian POWs, including four civilians, were returned on several buses that drove into the northern Sumy region. As they disembarked, they shouted joyfully and called their families to tell them they were home. Some knelt and kissed the ground while many wrapped themselves in yellow-blue flags and hugged one another, breaking into tears. Many appeared emaciated and poorly dressed.

The exchange of the 150 POWs in all was the fourth swap this year and the 52nd since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The United Arab Emirates said it helped negotiate this latest exchange.

The two sides have traded blame for what they say is a slowdown in the swaps.

Ukraine has in the past urged Russia to swap "all for all" and rallies calling for the release of POWs take place across Ukraine weekly. A Ukrainian official at the headquarters coordinating the exchanges, Vitalii Matviienko said that "Ukraine is always ready."

Tatyana Moskalkova, Russia's human rights ombudsperson, said earlier this week that Kyiv was making "new artificial demands," without elaborating.

Among those who were returned home to Ukraine on Friday was Roman Onyschuk, an IT worker who joined Ukrainian forces as a volunteer at the start of the Russian invasion. He was captured in March 2022 in the Kharkiv region.

"I just want to hear my wife's voice, my son's voice. I missed his three birthdays," he said. In the more than 800 days he spent in captivity, he never communicated with his family and he doesn't know what city they are in now, he said.

"It's a little bit overwhelming," Onyschuk added.

With the exchanges, including Friday's, Ukraine has gotten back a total of 3,210 members of the Ukrainian military and civilians since the outbreak of the war, according to Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for Treatment of POWs.

Neither Ukraine nor Russia disclose how many POWs there are in all.

Dmytro Kantypenko was captured on Snake Island in the Black Sea in the first days of the war. He was among those freed Friday and said he called his mother to tell her he was back in Ukraine.

"I'll be home soon," he said, wiping away his tears. He learned that his wife had fled to Lithuania with their son.

The Russians woke him up in the middle of the night without any explanation, he said, giving him a short time to change his clothes before they were on their way. Kantypenko said they were tortured with electroshock shortly before the exchange, and his fellow POWs standing beside him confirmed that.

According to U.N. reports, the majority of Ukrainian POWs are subject to routine medical neglect, severe and systematic mistreatment, and even torture while in detention. There have also been isolated reports of abuse of Russian soldiers, mostly during capture or transit to internment sites.

At least one-third of Ukrainians who returned home suffered "injuries, severe illnesses, and disabilities," according to the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of POWs. Among those returned Friday were 19 Ukrainian fighters from Snake island, 14 people captured at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and 10 fighters from the city of Mariupol that was captured by Russia.

Five women were among the returned Ukrainians, including Nataliia Manuilova, who was a cook in the Azov regiment and spent more than two years in captivity. The Russians took her from her home in Mari-

upol, pulling a bag over her head and tying her hands, she recounted.

"I hate them. They took away two years of my beautiful life," she said, hugging her son on Friday. "I can't believe he's grown up like this."

The POWs traveled through small villages before reaching Sumy, from where they were taken to hospitals for two weeks of rehabilitation. The buses moved past green fields with newly dug defense lines preparing for Russian attacks in the area following Moscow's offensive in the neighboring Kharkiv region.

Ukrainians with blue and yellow flags took to the streets and loudly welcomed the POWs home.

Earlier in the day and at the same location, Ukraine and Russia also swapped bodies of their fallen soldiers — Ukraine returned 212 bodies and Russia 45.

Bohdan Okhrimenko, another official at the Ukrainian POWs offices, explained the sharp difference in numbers. "This time, the negotiators agreed to bring back more of our heroes," he said.

The warring sides only meet when they swap their dead and POWs, which require considerable preparation and diplomacy.

Vitalii Matviienko, another Ukrainian official from the POW headquarters, said there were days when the exchanges didn't happen because the Russian side would change their mind at the last minute.

Since the outbreak of the war, Ukraine got back nearly 3,000 bodies, mostly of servicemen, according to Ukraine's missing persons office. About 1,300 of them have been identified.

Sometimes it takes weeks before the bodies are identified and returned to their families for burial.

"They haven't returned home alive, but their memory allows us to continue fighting," said Okhrimenko. "And it gives their families a possibility for proper burial".

## **Biden details a 3-phase hostage deal aimed at winding down the Israel-Hamas war**

By AAMER MADHANI, CHRIS MEGERIAN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday detailed a three-phase deal proposed by Israel to Hamas militants that he says would lead to the release of the remaining hostages in Gaza and could end the grinding, nearly 8-month-old Mideast war.

Biden added that Hamas is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel as he urged Israelis and Hamas to come to a deal to release the remaining hostages for an extended cease-fire.

The Democratic president in remarks from the White House called the proposal "a road map to an enduring cease-fire and the release of all hostages."

Biden said the first phase of the proposed deal would last for six weeks and would include a "full and complete cease-fire," a withdrawal of Israeli forces from all densely populated areas of Gaza and the release of a number of hostages, including women, the elderly and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

American hostages would be released at this stage, and remains of hostages who have been killed would be returned to their families. Humanitarian assistance would surge during the first phase, with 600 trucks being allowed into Gaza each day.

The second phase would include the release of all remaining living hostages, including male soldiers, and Israeli forces would withdraw from Gaza.

"And as long as Hamas lives up to its commitments, the temporary cease-fire would become, in the words of the Israeli proposal, 'the cessation of hostilities permanently,'" Biden said.

The third phase calls for the start of a major reconstruction of Gaza, which faces decades of rebuilding from devastation caused by the war. The 4-1/2 page Israeli proposal was transmitted to Hamas on Thursday.

Meanwhile, congressional leaders on Friday invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deliver an address at the U.S. Capitol. The invitation from House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Democrat, has been in the works for some time though there is great concern, especially among the Democrats, about Israel's pursuit of the war.

No date for the speech was set.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 55 of 80

Biden acknowledged that keeping the Israeli proposal on track would be difficult, saying there were a number of "details to negotiate" to move from the first phase to the second.

One roadblock to overcome during the first phase would involve the two sides agreeing on the ratio of hostages to prisoners to be released during the next phase, according to a senior Biden administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity.

Biden's remarks came as the Israeli military confirmed that its forces are now operating in central parts of Rafah in its expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city. Biden called it "a truly a decisive moment." He added that Hamas said it wants a cease-fire and that an Israeli-phased deal is an opportunity to prove "whether they really mean it."

But even as Biden pressed for the "war to end and for the day after to begin," Israeli officials have made clear they remain committed to a military defeat of Hamas. The Democrat is in the midst of a tough reelection battle and has faced backlash from some on the political left who want to see him put greater pressure on Netanyahu's government to end the war.

Netanyahu's office in a statement following Biden's speech said that he authorized Israel's hostage negotiating team to find a way to release the remaining hostages.

But the Israelis maintain "the war will not end until all of its goals are achieved, including the return of all our abductees and the elimination of Hamas' military and governmental capabilities." The prime minister's office also called for the "exact outline" proposed by Israel to be followed.

Matt Duss, executive vice president for the Center for International Policy in Washington, said the Netanyahu reaction suggested the "possibility of daylight between a proposal Israel would accept and what President Biden outlined."

Hamas said in a statement it viewed the proposal presented by Biden "positively" and called on the Israelis to declare explicit commitment to an agreement that includes a permanent ceasefire, a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, a prisoner exchange and other conditions.

Israel has faced growing international criticism for its strategy of systematic destruction in Gaza, at a huge cost in civilian lives. Israeli bombardments and ground offensives in the besieged territory have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Biden also addressed those in Israel who resist ending the war. Some members of Netanyahu's far-right coalition have opposed any deal that falls short of eradicating Hamas and they have called for an enduring occupation of Gaza.

"They want to keep fighting for years, and the hostages are not a priority to them," Biden said. "I've urged leadership of Israel to stand behind this deal."

Biden in his remarks made no mention of establishing Palestinian statehood, something that he has repeatedly said is key to achieving long-term peace in the region. The U.S. administration has also been working to forge normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the region's two biggest powers. But the Saudis are opposed to any agreement that does not include concrete steps toward creation of a Palestinian state.

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.

Ceasefire talks ground to a halt at the beginning of the month after a major push by the U.S. and other mediators to secure a deal, in hopes of averting a planned Israeli invasion of the southern city of Rafah.

The talks were stymied by a central sticking point: Hamas demands guarantees that the war will end and Israeli troops will withdraw from Gaza completely in return for a release of all the hostages, a demand Israel rejects.

The outline of the new Israeli proposal is "nearly identical to Hamas's own proposals of only a few weeks ago," according to the Biden administration official.

## Answers to your questions about Donald Trump's historic hush money trial conviction

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Will Donald Trump go to prison? Could he pardon himself? What about the election? The first criminal conviction of a former American president raises a host of legal and political questions. Trump was convicted by a Manhattan jury Thursday of 34 felony counts related to a scheme during his 2016 presidential campaign to pay off a porn actor who said the two had sex. The presumptive Republican presidential nominee denies having sex with Stormy Daniels, has said he did nothing wrong and slammed the jury's verdict.

Here are answers to some of the biggest questions surrounding Trump's conviction:

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Trump remains free on his own recognizance. He will have to be back in the Manhattan courtroom on July 11, when he is set to be sentenced. That is just days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where GOP leaders — who remain steadfast in their support of Trump — are expected to formally make him their nominee for the November election.

Before sentencing, Trump will be interviewed for a presentence report that Judge Juan M. Merchan will use to help decide his punishment. The report is typically prepared by a probation officer, a social worker or a psychologist working for the probation department who interviews the defendant and possibly that person's family and friends, as well as people affected by the crime. Presentence reports include a defendant's personal history, criminal record and recommendations for sentencing. Trump has no prior convictions.

Trump is charged in three other criminal cases, but it's possible none of them will go to trial before the election. The 2020 election interference case in Washington, for example, remains on hold while the U.S. Supreme Court weighs Trump's claim that he is immune from prosecution for actions taken as commander in chief.

### WILL HE GO TO PRISON?

It's not clear. That will be up to the judge, who Trump has repeatedly accused of being biased against him. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who brought the case, refused to say Thursday whether prosecutors will seek prison time.

Each count of falsifying business records is punishable by up to four years behind bars, but it's possible that Trump will get only fines or probation. New York court records and newspaper archives show defendants convicted of the charge are seldom sentenced to prison for that offense alone. Often, the charge is coupled with more serious felonies such as grand larceny.

And even if the judge sentences him to time behind bars, his lawyers would almost certainly push the judge to allow the former president to remain free until he exhausts his appeals.

Trump faces the threat of more serious prison time in the three other cases. For example, the most serious charges in Trump's Washington and Georgia election interference cases carry maximum 20-year sentences.

### CAN HE STILL RUN FOR PRESIDENT?

Yes. There's nothing barring Trump from continuing his bid to reclaim the White House or from becoming president. There are only three qualifications for president spelled out in the Constitution: Candidates must be at least 35 years old, be natural born citizens and must have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years. There are no restrictions on his travel at this point either, so he can continue to campaign normally.

### CAN HE APPEAL?

Trump attorney Todd Blanche said on the "Today" show Friday: "We're going to appeal, and we're going to win on appeal." Trump's lawyers laid the groundwork throughout the trial to challenge the verdict on multiple issues.

Blanche suggested they will challenge the judge's decision not to recuse himself. Trump has repeatedly argued Merchan should not have presided over the case, citing cash he's given to Democrats and the fact



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 57 of 80

that his daughter is a party consultant. Merchan has acknowledged making several small donations to Democratic causes during the 2020 campaign, including \$15 to Trump's Democratic rival, Joe Biden, but rejected Trump's claims he cannot fairly preside over the case.

Trump's lawyers may also challenge rulings from the judge they claim unfairly hampered his defense, including limiting the testimony of an expert witness they wanted to put on the stand.

**COULD HE PARDON HIMSELF?**

No. It's a state conviction, so Trump would not be able to pardon himself if he were to become president again. Presidential pardons apply only to federal crimes. And it's a legally untested question as to whether Trump would even have the power to pardon himself if he's convicted in the federal cases. No president has attempted to do so while in office because no president before Trump had ever been charged or convicted.

**CAN HE VOTE IN NOVEMBER?**

He can, as long as he is not in prison. Trump's home state of Florida defers to other states' disenfranchisement rules for residents convicted of out-of-state felonies. And New York law removes the right to vote for people convicted of felonies only while 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.

**WILL IT HURT HIM POLITICALLY?**

Trump said Thursday that "the real verdict is going to be Nov. 5 by the people," referring to Election Day.

It's unclear to what extent his guilty verdict will impact his bid to unseat Biden. The election is expected to be incredibly tight, and it's not clear how voters who are on the fence — especially independents and other key voting blocs — will feel when they go to the polls.

Republican lawmakers who have been divided in the past over their support for Trump lined up behind him in the wake of the conviction, slamming the judge and prosecutors.

Trump's campaign hopes his supporters will be similarly galvanized by the case, which Trump has cast as an effort to tank his White House bid. His campaign immediately began fundraising off the conviction with messages such as: "I WAS JUST CONVICTED IN A RIGGED TRIAL!" Another message to supporters read: "If they can do this to me, they can do this to anyone."

Trump's campaign said Friday morning that it raised a record \$34.8 million in small online contributions off his conviction — nearly double its previous largest haul.

## **Trump Media shares swing wildly and then tumble a day after former president was convicted**

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Shares of Trump Media & Technology Group closed lower Friday after swinging wildly over the course of the day following the conviction of former President Donald Trump in his hush money trial.

After the U.S. stock markets closed Thursday, a New York jury found Trump guilty 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.

After rising more than 2% at the opening of trading Friday, the shares ended the day down 5.3%.

The stock, which trades under the ticker symbol "DJT," has been extraordinarily volatile since its debut in late March, joining the group of meme stocks that are prone to ricochet from highs to lows as small-pocketed investors attempt to catch an upward momentum swing at the right time.

The stock has tripled this year, in the process frequently making double-digit percentage moves either higher or lower on a single day. It peaked at nearly \$80 in intraday trading on March 26. For context, the S&P 500 is up almost 10% year to date.

In a filing with the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission before going public, Trump Media warned investors of the potential pitfalls faced by the former president and the adverse affect it might have on the stock.

"President Donald J. Trump is the subject of numerous legal proceedings, the scope and scale of which

are unprecedented for a former President of the United States and current candidate for that office. An adverse outcome in one or more of the ongoing legal proceedings in which President Donald J. Trump is involved could negatively impact TMTG and its Truth Social platform."

Earlier this month, Trump Media reported that it lost more than \$300 million last quarter, according to its first earnings report as a publicly traded company.

For the three-month period that ended March 31, the company posted a loss of \$327.6 million, which it said included \$311 million in non-cash expenses related to its merger with a company called Digital World Acquisition Corp. DWAC was an example of what's known as a special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC, which can give young companies quicker and easier routes to getting their shares trading publicly, but with much less scrutiny.

Trump Media & Technology fired an auditor this month that federal regulators recently charged with "massive fraud." The media company dismissed BF Borgers as its independent public accounting firm on May 3, delaying the filing of its quarterly earnings report.

Trump Media had previously cycled through at least two other auditors — one that resigned in July 2023, and another that was terminated by its board in March, just as it was rehiring BF Borgers.

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

The charge, a felony, arose from reimbursements paid to then-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen after he made a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to silence her claims of an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump in 2006. Trump was accused of misrepresenting Cohen's reimbursements as legal expenses to hide that they were tied to a hush money payment.

Trump's defense contended that the Cohen payments were for legitimate legal services.

## **Trump carries the stain of conviction like a crown. Will the verdict matter to voters?**

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The bravado behind Donald Trump's boastful hypothesis in 2016 — "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters" — is headed for a real-world reckoning.

Until now, at least, he's been uncannily right. Through his two impeachments, his desperate agitations to stay in power after losing the last election and the far-ranging series of criminal charges against him from Florida to Georgia to Washington to New York, Trump has held sway with his acolytes and the bulk of the Republican Party.

But now he's the first president in history to carry the stain of felony conviction. Will it matter in the November election?

After the damning verdict, everyone seemed to rush for the partisan ramparts. But this is untraveled territory for Americans — this finding of criminal behavior signed, sealed and delivered by unanimous jurors against the only man who has been the subject both of a presidential portrait and a mug shot.

Even some firm anti-Trumpers aren't counting on the convictions making a difference. "Get ready for a felonious president," said Joan Marks, a 58-year-old Democrat who offered her glum prediction of a Trump victory while standing outside Manuel's Tavern, a popular liberal hangout near Jimmy Carter's presidential library in Atlanta.

Contributions flowed in to the Trump campaign — more than \$1 million for each for the 34 convictions, his people said.

The case will go down in history as "The People of the State of New York vs. Donald J. Trump." But after the verdict, just as before it, leading Republicans and a variety of likeminded voters wrote it off as just another egregious example of Us vs. Them.

"Political persecution at the highest level," said West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, the

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 59 of 80

Republican nominee for governor. Republican party chairs in South Carolina, Illinois and New York each assailed "banana republic" justice.

There was plenty of talk from other high places in the party about a "sham" trial, "rigged verdict," "kangaroo court" and Soviet-style shenanigans, as if apparatchiks had delivered the 34 convictions, not a jury whose 12 members were selected by the defense as well as the prosecution.

Even Moscow weighed in, on Trump's side. "As regards Trump, it's quite obvious that the effective removal of political opponents by all lawful and unlawful means is going on and the entire world can see it with a naked eye," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Trump's early reaction to the verdict suggested he will wear his conviction like a crown, and there were already signs of retribution against any Republican who dared to stand up for the trial.

Shortly before the verdict, Larry Hogan, the anti-Trump Republican Senate candidate in Maryland and a former governor, posted an appeal for all Americans to accept the jury's decision, whatever the outcome, and added: "At this dangerously divided moment in our history, all leaders — regardless of party — must not pour fuel on the fire with more toxic partisanship."

Chris LaCivita, a senior Trump campaign adviser, shot back on X: "You just ended your campaign."

Among voters, Justin Gonzalez, a 21-year-old student and tutor in the border city of McAllen, Texas, said he did learn something quite troubling about Trump in the trial. "He's a lot of things, but I never personally thought of him as a liar," he said. "I guess this would change my perception of him."

Yet as he prepares to vote in his first presidential election, Gonzalez cares more about immigration enforcement than the icky business centered on the cover-up of payments to silence a porn actor. "Out of all the other issues, this is still bad but it's not enough to sway me to vote for Biden."

An ABC-Ipsos poll conducted in late April found that 80% of Trump's supporters said they would stick with him even if he were convicted of a felony in the hush-money case. Only 4% said they would withdraw their vote, though 16% said they would reconsider it. In an election that is expected to be close, even small shifts in support could make a difference.

In the Lower Manhattan courthouse, the first president to come to power propelled by tabloid fame and reality TV faced the ultimate tabloid kind of charges and yet, in a story of our time, he is the Republicans' presumptive nominee for president.

With his ever-present sense of spectacle — though there was no televising of the proceedings — Trump turned the trial into a campaign stage for reelection as best he could.

He has succeeded in other contexts by the use of his bullhorn — shouting down his opponents, savaging them on social media, branding them with humiliating nicknames — but this time some of his normal moves weren't available to him. He did not have control of the situation. He couldn't simply hector away the constraints of a courtroom and the clear language of the law. He tried on occasion and the judge ordered him to be silent, slapped him with fines and the threat of worse. Mostly he glowered and, at times, looked Zen or sleepy.

New Yorkers weren't used to seeing this happen to Trump. Love him or hate him — and there's little in between — they have long considered him an escape artist through career-spanning thickets of legal, business and political thorns.

This time he didn't get away.

"Finally, some accountability," said Nadine Striker, who celebrated the verdict at a public pond across the street from the courthouse, a mile from Fifth Avenue. She held up a big banner reading "TRUMP CONVICTED" and wore a headband propping up a hand-sized cutout of Alvin Bragg, the prosecutor.

Back in November 1973, Richard Nixon famously declared to a meeting of newspaper managing editors in The Associated Press cooperative: "I am not a crook." At the time, in the Watergate scandal that ultimately consumed his presidency, it looked like he might be just that.

But for Nixon that question was never put to the test in court. With Trump, it has been.

Still, with Trump, you never ever know. He may have some Harry Houdini left in him.

"Anybody else would go to jail," Striker said. "I don't expect him to."

## 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 migration activists as "black holes" of human rights violations. And yet the far-right 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 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 seven 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 rhyming 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 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 the deadliest migration crossings in the world; more than 2,500 people died or went missing last year alone.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 61 of 80

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 Aug. 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 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 62 of 80

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 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 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 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 63 of 80

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 detention 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.

## Vermont becomes 1st state to enact law requiring oil companies pay for damage from climate change

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

Vermont has become the first state to enact a law requiring fossil fuel companies to pay a share of the damage caused by climate change after the state suffered catastrophic summer flooding and damage from other extreme weather.

Republican Gov. Phil Scott allowed the bill to become law without his signature late Thursday, saying he is very concerned about the costs and outcome of the small state taking on "Big Oil" alone in what will likely be a grueling legal fight. But he acknowledged that he understands something has to be done to address the toll of climate change.

"I understand the desire to seek funding to mitigate the effects of climate change that has hurt our state in so many ways," Scott, a moderate Republican in the largely blue state of Vermont, wrote in a letter to lawmakers.

The popular governor who recently announced that he's running for reelection to a fifth two-year term, has been at odds with the Democrat-controlled Legislature, which he has called out of balance. He was expected by environmental advocates to veto the bill but then allowed it to be enacted. Scott wrote to lawmakers that he was comforted that the Agency of Natural Resources is required to report back to the Legislature on the feasibility of the effort.

Last July's flooding from torrential rains inundated Vermont's capital city of Montpelier, the nearby city Barre, some southern Vermont communities and ripped through homes and washed away roads around the rural state. Some saw it as the state's worst natural disaster since a 1927 flood that killed dozens of people and caused widespread destruction. It took months for businesses — from restaurants to shops — to rebuild, losing out on their summer and even fall seasons. Several have just recently reopened while scores of homeowners were left with flood-ravaged homes heading into the cold season.

Under the legislation, the Vermont state treasurer, in consultation with the Agency of Natural Resources, would provide a report by Jan. 15, 2026, on the total cost to Vermonters and the state from the emission of greenhouse gases from Jan. 1, 1995, to Dec. 31, 2024. The assessment would look at the effects on public health, natural resources, agriculture, economic development, housing and other areas. The state would use federal data to determine the amount of covered greenhouse gas emissions attributed to a fossil fuel company.

It's a polluter-pays model affecting companies engaged in the trade or business of extracting fossil fuel or refining crude oil attributable to more than 1 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions during the time period. The funds could be used by the state for such things as upgrading stormwater drainage systems; upgrading roads, bridges and railroads; relocating, elevating or retrofitting sewage treatment plants; and making energy efficient weatherization upgrades to public and private buildings. It's modeled after the federal Superfund pollution cleanup program.

"For too long, giant fossil fuel companies have knowingly lit the match of climate disruption without being required to do a thing to put out the fire," Paul Burns, executive director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, said in a statement. "Finally, maybe for the first time anywhere, Vermont is going to hold the companies most responsible for climate-driven floods, fires and heat waves financially accountable for a fair share of the damages they've caused."

Maryland, Massachusetts and New York are considering similar measures.

The American Petroleum Institute, the top lobbying group for the oil and gas industry, has said it's extremely concerned the legislation "retroactively imposes costs and liability on prior activities that were legal, violates equal protection and due process rights by holding companies responsible for the actions of society at large; and is preempted by federal law."

"This punitive new fee represents yet another step in a coordinated campaign to undermine America's energy advantage and the economic and national security benefits it provides," spokesman Scott Lauer-mann said in a statement Friday.



Vermont lawmakers know the state will face legal challenges, but the governor worries about the costs and what it means for other states if Vermont fails.

State Rep. Martin LaLonde, a Democrat and an attorney, believes Vermont has a solid legal case. Legislators worked closely with many legal scholars in crafting the bill, he said in statement.

"Most importantly, the stakes are too high – and the costs too steep for Vermonters – to release corporations that caused the mess from their obligation to help clean it up," he said.

## **1 Malaysian climber dead, 1 rescued near the top of Denali, North America's tallest mountain**

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A climber from Malaysia who was stranded for three days near the top of North America's tallest mountain following a summit push was rescued Friday, but his partner was dead, officials said. A third member of their team had been rescued this week after descending lower on Denali in Alaska.

After days of cloudy, windy conditions, personnel from Denali National Park and Preserve on Friday morning were able to rescue the surviving climber at 19,600 feet (5,974 meters), where he and his partner had been holed up in a snow cave since late Tuesday, according to the park.

Late Thursday, the park's high-altitude helicopter pilot was able to drop a bag with survival gear near the snow cave and saw a climber waving at him, but strong winds prevented a rescue at that time, the park said.

It was not clear to rescuers whether one or both of the climbers was alive until Friday morning's rescue, park spokesperson Paul Ollig said by email. He noted in part limited communications with the climbers after rangers first received an SOS from the three-member team at 1 a.m. Tuesday indicating they were hypothermic and unable to descend after reaching Denali's 20,310-foot (6,190-meter) summit.

Officials are still gathering information about what happened, and the language barrier has been challenging, Ollig said. The climbers are from Malaysia.

"All we know right now is that the deceased climber died approximately two days ago," Ollig said by email.

The climber rescued Friday was medevaced to an Anchorage hospital for additional care and "was in surprisingly strong condition, walking on his own even, considering what he endured," Ollig said, adding that additional information about him and the other survivor would not be released by the park.

Rangers planned to recover the body of the climber who died later.

The climbers were part of a three-person team of men who all listed in their climbing histories experience on "multiple high elevation international peaks," Ollig has said. Two had previous experience on Denali, he said.

The third climber, previously identified as a 48-year-old, was rescued Tuesday night after descending to a 17,200-foot (5,243-meter) camp. He was described by the park as having severe frostbite and hypothermia.

## **Israel confirms its forces are in central Rafah in expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city**

JULIA FRANKEL undefined

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military confirmed Friday that its forces are operating in central parts of Rafah in its expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city.

Israel launched its ground assault into the city on May 6, triggering an exodus of around 1 million Palestinians out of the city and throwing U.N. humanitarian operations based in the area into turmoil. Still, it has yet to amount to a "major operation" in the eyes of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, according to the State Department.

Biden said Friday that Hamas is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel and urged the Israelis and Hamas to come to a deal to release remaining hostages for an extended cease-fire. He said Israeli officials have offered a three-phase deal to Hamas, adding, "Israel has made

their proposal. Hamas says it wants a cease-fire. This deal is an opportunity to prove whether they really mean it.”

Cease-fire talks ground to a halt at the beginning of the month after a major push by the U.S. and other mediators to secure a deal, in hopes of averting a full Israeli invasion of Rafah.

Friday’s statement by the Israeli military suggested its forces have been operating in most parts of the city. For its first weeks, the Israeli assault focused on Rafah’s eastern districts and in areas close to the border with Egypt. Israeli troops seized the Rafah crossing into Egypt on the first day of the offensive and have since claimed control over the Philadelphi Corridor, a road running the length of the Gaza-Egypt border on the Gazan side.

Earlier this week, Israeli troops also moved into Rafah’s western district of Tel al-Sultan, where heavy clashes with Hamas fighters have been reported by witnesses.

In its statement Friday, the military said its troops in central Rafah had uncovered Hamas rocket launchers and tunnels and dismantled a weapons storage facility of the group. It did not specify where in central Rafah the operations were taking place, but previous statements and witness reports have pointed to raids in the Shaboura refugee camp and other sites near the city center.

The White House declined to comment Friday on the Israeli operations in central Rafah.

Israel has said an offensive in Rafah is vital to uprooting Hamas fighters in its military’s campaign to destroy the group after its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. The military has said it found dozens of tunnels in eastern Rafah, including at least 20 along the Philadelphi Corridor.

Up to around 300,000 people are believed to remain in the Rafah area, with an unknown number still in the city itself. Most have flocked to rural areas on the Mediterranean coastline west of the city, said Shaina Low, a spokesperson for the Norwegian Refugee Council, a humanitarian group that operates in the area. That area has seen deadly Israeli strikes the past week.

Palestinians who fled the city have scattered around southern and central Gaza, most of them living in squalid tent camps.

More than 36,170 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza by Israel’s campaign of bombardment and offensives over the past eight months, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. Its count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. Israel has vowed to eliminate Hamas to ensure it cannot repeat its Oct. 7 attack, in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people and abducting around 250 others. Around 100 hostages are believed to remain in captivity in Gaza along with the bodies of some 30 others.

## The Latest | Biden speaks after Donald Trump’s conviction in hush money case

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 held a press conference Friday where he spoke publicly about the conviction and his White House bid.

Following his conviction on Thursday, Trump had 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 67 of 80

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:

## TRUMP SUPPORTERS INVOKE ANCIENT HISTORY

Donald Trump's guilty verdict is prompting some of his supporters and pundits to compare the country's current state to the fall of the Roman Empire.

Elon Musk, the owner of the social media platform X, referenced the civil war that preceded the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, who has since expressed his support for Trump, chipped in with a similar comparison Friday while traveling in Italy.

"This is the kind of thing you would see in the fall of the ancient Roman Empire," Ramaswamy said in a video on X. "Sometimes you just go abroad and you see the way that you're viewed, it reminds you of how much our own nation has rotted at its core."

## BIDEN CRITICIZES TRUMP'S RESPONSE TO GUILTY VERDICT

President Joe Biden said that Donald Trump's response to the jury's guilty verdict is "irresponsible."

Trump has claimed falsely the trial against him was rigged and connected to the Biden administration.

Biden said from the White House on Friday that the jury was chosen like any other in the U.S., and they heard five weeks of testimony and Trump had "every opportunity" to defend himself. He said no one is above the law.

"It's reckless, it's dangerous, it's irresponsible for anyone to say this is rigged just because they don't like the verdict," Biden said.

## TRUMP'S FALSE AND MISLEADING CLAIMS ABOUT BORDER CROSSINGS

Donald Trump claimed on Friday that "record levels of terrorists have come into our country."

While the number of foreigners on the terrorist watch list has increased, federal immigration authorities say they "are very uncommon" and a small fraction of the total number of migrants who cross the border.

From October 2022 to September 2023, the U.S. Border Patrol reported seeing 169, compared to 98 the previous year. Since October 2023, the Border Patrol has reported 80 encounters.

The former president also claimed, like he has done in recent speeches, that Chinese migrants are arriving in the U.S. to build an army, saying 29,000 have arrived in the past few months.

The U.S. has seen a larger than tenfold rise in the number of Chinese migrants with 37,000 of them being arrested in 2023, but there has been no evidence that they have tried to mount a military force or training network.

Interviews with some of these migrants reveal they were coming to escape the country or looking for a better life.

## PROTESTORS AND SUPPORTERS CROWD THE EXTERIOR OF TRUMP TOWER

Hundreds of people remained gathered outside Trump Tower in Manhattan after Donald Trump's press conference on Friday.

Supporters and detractors of the former president waved flags, shouting and chanting against a backdrop of Fifth Avenue luxury stores including Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Armani and Prada.

## RUNNING FOR U.S. PRESIDENT FROM PRISON? EUGENE V. DEBS DID IT, A CENTURY AGO

Even if Donald Trump's sentence, scheduled to be delivered July 11, includes time behind bars, he wouldn't even be the first candidate to run for U.S. president while imprisoned.

That piece of history belongs to Eugene V. Debs, who ran on the Socialist Party ticket in 1920 — and garnered almost a million votes, or about 3 percent.

The circumstances are obviously different. Debs, despite his influence and fame, was effectively a fringe candidate that year; Trump has already held the office and is running as the near-certain nominee of one

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 68 of 80

of the country's two major political parties.

But there are similarities, too. Read more about Debs here.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS DEMAND THAT MANHATTAN DA, INVESTIGATOR APPEAR BEFORE SELECT COMMITTEE

House Republicans announced Friday that they will demand that Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg and Matthew Colangelo, the lead investigator of the Donald Trump hush money case, appear before lawmakers next month.

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, said that the House Select Committee on weaponization will host a hearing with the two witnesses on June 13.

Jordan, one of Trump's closest allies in Congress, had previously opened an investigation into Bragg and his case against the former president. He and other lawmakers also traveled to New York City in April 2023 for a hearing on the prosecution's case.

TRUMP: 'WE'RE LIVING IN A FASCIST STATE'

Donald Trump circled back on Friday to a lot of the same authoritarian themes he has repeatedly focused on in speeches and rallies, painting the U.S. under President Joe Biden as a "corrupt" and "fascist" nation.

He called the committee that investigated the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol "thugs" and also called Biden a "Manchurian candidate," a phrase implying the president is corrupt and being used as a puppet by a political enemy.

"They're destroying our country," Trump said. "We're living in a fascist state."

TRUMP SPOKE FOR 33 MINUTES

He's largely been off the campaign trail, but Donald Trump's posttrial remarks served as a condensed version of many of the themes he traditionally hits during his rally speeches.

Deviating from his vow to appeal the hush money verdict and characterization of the trial as a "scam," Trump also repeatedly went after President Joe Biden for failures on border security and "record levels of terrorists who come into our country."

He also falsely claimed that tens of thousands of military-age Chinese men have recently come into the U.S., looking "like perfect soldiers."

Since late 2022 — when China's three-year COVID-19 lockdown began to lift — the U.S. has seen a sharp rise in the number of Chinese migrants. But there has been no evidence that they have tried to mount a military force or training network.

As is standard at his rallies, Trump also appealed to supporters to contribute financially to his campaign.

TRUMP WRAPS PRESS CONFERENCE

Donald Trump has wrapped his Friday press conference where he delivered a rambling response to the guilty verdict in his hush money trial a day before.

TRUMP CRITICIZES COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATION JAN. 6 CAPITOL RIOT

As he characterized what he sees as a failing country, Donald Trump on Friday also briefly hearkened back to Jan. 6, 2021, and what he said are false accusations that are at the center of another case against him.

He leveled specific critiques toward members of Congress who held committee meetings probing the Capitol assault. Trump also denied that he had tried to physically direct a Secret Service agent to drive him to the Capitol, which was part of testimony before the Select Committee.

He further called former GOP Rep. Adam Kinzinger, among his critics, "the most emotional human being I think I've ever seen."

TRUMP LIGHTS INTO BIDEN

Donald Trump called President Joe Biden "the worst president in the history of our country" during a press conference late Thursday morning.

He further labeled him as the "most incompetent" and "most dishonest."

"You take a look at the way he treats China, Russia, so many others," Trump said. "He's a very big danger to our country."

TRUMP CITES HIGH NEW YORK CRIME RATE, BUT DATA SAYS OTHERWISE

At a press conference on Friday, former President Donald Trump said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 69 of 80

Bragg should be looking at crime, saying it is "rampant" in New York City, "at levels no one has ever seen before."

He cited a man being stabbed by a machete in Times Square on Thursday.

However, crime in New York City is nowhere near the levels seen in the 1990s. The latest crime data from the NYPD shows major crime reports are down this year compared to the same period last year. Through the first week in May, the number of murders was down more than 15% from the same period last year, and down 26% from 2021.

Shootings have dropped 41% since 2021.

TRUMP TOUTS FUNDRAISING NUMBERS

Donald Trump said Friday that he thinks he broke a record in the history of politics by raising \$39 million dollars since the guilty verdict in his criminal hush money trial was announced.

He said it happened over 10 hours with small money donors.

Earlier Friday morning, his campaign noted a different figure: \$34.8 million.

TRUMP REPEATS FALSE CLAIM ABOUT CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Donald Trump incorrectly stated during a press conference that the New York prosecutors who charged him in his criminal trial were not allowed to look into alleged federal campaign finance violations.

Manhattan prosecutors didn't charge Trump with federal violations — that's not allowed — but they listed the allegations as one of three "unlawful acts" that jurors were asked to consider as they weighed the charges. To convict Trump, jurors had to find that not only did he falsify business records, but also that he did so to commit or conceal another crime.

Prosecutors said the other crime was a violation of a state election law barring conspiracies to promote or prevent an election by unlawful means. Jurors then had three alleged "unlawful means" to choose from.

One of them involved federal campaign finance violations.

TRUMP TESTS THE LI

MITS OF HIS GAG ORDER

During a press conference Friday morning, Donald Trump tested the limits of the order that prohibits him from publicly critiquing witnesses in his hush money case — including Michael Cohen.

Trump called his former fixer "a sleazebag," adding, "everybody knows that."

Cohen testified against Trump during the trial, saying his former boss directed him to handle the hush money payments and was aware of all that he was doing.

Trump didn't use Cohen's name, saying, "I'm not allowed to use his name because of the gag order."

Calling Cohen "effective" as a lawyer, he said the former lawyer "got into trouble because of outside deals" involving taxi cabs.

THE PROSECUTION'S 'SALACIOUS' WITNESS

Donald Trump on Friday called the witnesses who testified against him "salacious" and said their words against him demonstrated that the entire case was politically motivated.

"It had nothing to do with a case, but it had to do with politics," Trump said.

Stormy Daniels, the porn actor at the center of the hush money case against Trump, gave several days worth of testimony that included intimate details of their alleged 2006 encounter.

TRUMP WANTED TO TESTIFY — AND COULD HAVE IF HE HAD CHOSEN TO

Donald Trump insisted Friday that he wanted to testify in his criminal trial — and he could have, had he chosen to do so. All criminal defendants have a constitutional right to testify on their own behalf. By opting not to testify, Trump waived that right.

Trump said he wanted to testify but claimed the judge wanted to go into every detail of the case and that he feared being prosecuted for perjury if he made a verbal misstep.

"I would have liked to have testified," he said. "But you would have said something out of whack like, 'It was a beautiful sunny day, and it was actually raining out.'"

TRUMP REPEATS UNFOUNDED CLAIM CONNECTING BIDEN AND HUSH MONEY PROSECUTION

Donald Trump repeated unfounded claims Friday morning that President Joe Biden and the Justice Department influenced his New York hush money prosecution.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 70 of 80

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is a state-level prosecutor. His office, which prosecuted the hush money case, operates independently and is not under the direction of Biden or the federal government.

## TRUMP RIPS INTO BIDEN, MERCHAN

Donald Trump began his day-after-verdict press conference by launching into a critique of his general election opponent, as well as the "highly conflicted" judge who presided over his historic case.

From his namesake building in Manhattan, Trump argued that President Joe Biden and the "bunch of fascists" who back him are failing to secure the U.S.-Mexico border.

But he also marked the moment by, as he has done repeatedly, blaming Judge Juan M. Merchan for "a nasty gag order" that prevented Trump from levying public criticism against witnesses and many others affiliated with his case.

## TRUMP'S PRESS CONFERENCE BEGINS

At the outset of a press conference held at Trump Tower on Friday morning, Donald Trump complained about his criminal trial and subsequent conviction.

"If they can do this to me they can do this to anyone," he as he took to the podium.

He had notes with him, two pages written in black Sharpie.

## TRUMP MEDIA SHARES SWING WILDLY AND THEN TUMBLE

Shares of Trump Media & Technology Group swung wildly at the opening bell Friday, falling rapidly after it appeared that the owner of social networking site Truth Social would bounce back despite Donald Trump's hush money conviction a day before.

After rising more than 2% at the opening of trade, shares slid 7% — about the levels they were trading at immediately after the conviction was announced during off-hours trading Thursday evening.

## TRUMP STILL FACES 3 MORE FELONY INDICTMENTS

Donald Trump's hush money case, though criticized by some legal experts who called it the weakest of the four prosecutions against him, takes 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 that accuse him of conspiring to undo 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.

## UPSIDE-DOWN FLAGS

Donald Trump supporters and right-wing pundits have flown and shared images of upside-down flags in protest of the former president's conviction. At least one was spotted outside Trump Tower in Manhattan Friday morning and elected officials including Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene shared the image online Thursday.

The symbol, once a signal of distress for sailors, has come to represent the "Stop the Steal" movement, which falsely claimed the 2020 presidential election was stolen. The symbol was also spotted outside Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito's home in Virginia, though Alito said it pertained to a dispute between his wife and his neighbors.

Other incendiary rhetoric on social media referred to the verdict as a declaration of "war" or a sign of the coming of a "civil war." The words "RIP America" trended on X, formerly known as Twitter, immediately after the verdict.

## TRUMP RAISES \$34.8 MILLION FOLLOWING CONVICTION

Donald Trump's campaign said it has raised a record \$34.8 million in small-dollar online contributions off his hush money conviction — nearly double its previous largest haul.

"From just minutes after the sham trial verdict was announced, our digital fundraising system was overwhelmed with support, and despite temporary delays online because of the amount of traffic, President Trump raised \$34.8 million dollars from small dollar donors," said Trump campaign senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles in a statement.

Fundraising emails have employed stark language, including "I am a Political Prisoner" and "JUSTICE IS DEAD IN AMERICA!"

The campaign advisors said nearly 30% of Thursday's donors were new to the fundraising platform.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 71 of 80

## THE SCENE FROM TRUMP TOWER

Dozens of reporters and TV news crews are huddled in the lobby of Trump Tower in Manhattan ahead of the former president's planned postconviction remarks at 11 a.m.

It's the same very 1980s brass-and-rose marble lobby where Donald Trump descended his golden escalator to announce his 2016 campaign nine years ago next month.

Five American flags have been set behind a small lectern where he'll speak.

## TRUMP'S CONVICTION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE 2024 ELECTION

Donald Trump's conviction in his New York hush money trial is a stunning development in an already unorthodox presidential election with profound implications for the justice system and perhaps U.S. democracy itself.

But in a deeply divided America, it's unclear whether Trump's status as someone with a felony conviction will have any impact at all on the 2024 election.

Trump remains in a competitive position against President Joe Biden this fall, even as the Republican former president now faces the prospect of a prison sentence in the run-up to the November election.

In the short term at least, there were immediate signs that the unanimous guilty verdict was helping to unify the Republican Party's disparate factions as GOP officials in Congress and state capitals across the country rallied behind their presumptive presidential nominee, while his campaign expected to benefit from a flood of new fundraising dollars.

## 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.

## Researchers find a single, surprising gene behind a disorder that causes intellectual disability

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Scientists have found the genetic root of a disorder that causes intellectual disability, which they estimate affects as many as one in 20,000 young people. And they hope their discovery leads to a new diagnosis that can provide answers to families.

Those with the condition have a constellation of issues, which also include short stature, small heads, seizures and low muscle mass, said the researchers, who published their findings in the journal *Nature Medicine* on Friday.

"We were struck by how common this disorder is" when compared with other rare diseases linked to a single gene, said Ernest Turro of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, senior author of the study.

Syndromes like these can go unnoticed because the traits are sometimes so subtle doctors can't recognize them by just looking at patients, said Dr. Charles Billington, a pediatric geneticist at the University of Minnesota who was not involved in the study.

"So certainly this wasn't something that we necessarily had a name for," he said. "We're learning more about these syndromes that we recognize only once we are seeing the cause."

Researchers said the mutations occurred in a small "non-coding" gene, meaning it doesn't provide instructions for making proteins. Until now, all but nine of the nearly 1,500 genes known to be linked to intellectual disability in general are protein-coding genes. Most large genetic studies so far have used a sequencing technology that typically leaves out genes that don't code for proteins.

This study used more comprehensive "whole-genome" sequencing data from 77,539 people enrolled in the British 100,000 Genomes Project, including 5,529 with an intellectual disability. The rare mutations researchers found in the gene, called RNU4-2, were strongly associated with the potential to develop intellectual disability.

The finding "opens the door to diagnoses" for thousands of families, said study author Andrew Mumford, research director of the South West England NHS Genomic Medicine Service.

More research is needed, Mumford said. How the mutation causes the disorder remains unclear and there is no treatment. But Billington said labs should be able to offer testing for this condition relatively quickly. And researchers said families should be able to find and support each other – and know they're not alone.

"That can be incredibly comforting," Mumford said.

## AP analysis finds 2023 set record for US heat deaths, killing in areas that used to handle the heat

By SETH BORENSTEIN, MARY KATHERINE WILDEMAN and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

David Hom suffered from diabetes and felt nauseated before he went out to hang his laundry in 108-degree weather, another day in Arizona's record-smashing, unrelenting July heat wave.

His family found the 73-year-old lying on the ground, his lower body burned. Hom died at the hospital, his core body temperature at 107 degrees.

The death certificates of more than 2,300 people who died in the United States last summer mention the effects of excessive heat, the highest number in 45 years of records, according to an Associated Press analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. With May already breaking heat records, 2024 could be even deadlier.

And more than two dozen doctors, public health experts, and meteorologists told the AP that last year's figure was only a fraction of the real death toll. Coroner, hospital, ambulance and weather records show America's heat and health problem at an entirely new level.

"We can be confident saying that 2023 was the worst year we've had from since ... we've started having reliable reporting on that," said Dr. John Balbus, director of the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity at the Department of Health and Human Services.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 73 of 80

Last year, ambulances were dispatched tens of thousands of times after people dropped from the heat. It was relentless and didn't give people a break, especially at night. The heat of 2023 kept coming, and people kept dying.

"It's people that live the hot life. These are the ones who are dying. People who work outside, people that can't air-condition their house," said Texas A&M climate scientist Andrew Dessler, who was in hard-hit southern Texas. "It's really quite, quite grim."

Dallas postal worker Eugene Gates Jr., loved working outdoors and at 7:30 a.m. June 20, the 66-year-old texted his wife that it was close to 90 degrees. He kept working in the heat that felt like 119 degrees with the humidity factored in and finally passed out in somebody's yard. He ran a fever of 104.6 degrees and died, with the medical examiner saying heat contributed to his death.

"The way that my husband died, it could have been prevented," said Carla Gates.

"There's just very low awareness that heat kills. It's the silent killer," said University of Washington public health scientist Kristie Ebi, who helped write a United Nations special report on extreme weather. That 2012 report warned of future dangerous heat waves.

Ebi said in the last few years, the heat "seems like it's coming faster. It seems like it's more severe than we expected."

## DEATHS DOWN SOUTH

Last summer's heat wave killed differently than past ones that triggered mass deaths in northern cities where people weren't used to the high temperatures and air conditioning wasn't common. Several hundreds died in the Pacific Northwest in 2021, in Philadelphia in 1998 and in Chicago in 1995.

Nearly three-quarters of the heat deaths last summer were in five southern states that were supposed to be used to the heat and planned for it. Except this time they couldn't handle it, and it killed 874 people in Arizona, 450 in Texas, 226 in Nevada, 84 in Florida and 83 in Louisiana.

Those five states accounted for 61% of the nation's heat deaths in the last five years, skyrocketing past their 18% share of U.S. deaths from 1979 to 1999.

At least 645 people were killed by the heat in Maricopa County, Arizona, alone, according to the medical examiner's office. People were dying in their cars and especially on the streets, where homelessness, drug abuse and mental illness made matters worse.

Three months after being evicted from her home, 64-year-old Diana Smith was found dead in the back of her car. Her cause of death was methamphetamine and fentanyl, worsened by heat exposure, Phoenix's medical examiner ruled.

"In the last five years, we are seeing this consistent and record kind of unprecedented upward trend. And I think it's because the levels of heat that we have seen in the last several years have exceeded what we had seen in the last 20 or 30," said Balbus, of the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity at the Department of Health and Human Services.

## UNRELENTING HEAT

Phoenix saw 20 consecutive days of extreme heat stress in July, the longest run of such dangerously hot days in the city since at least 1940, according to the data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Phoenix wasn't alone.

Last year the U.S. had the most heat waves since 1936. In the South and Southwest, Last year was the worst on record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"It was crazy," said University of Miami tropical meteorology researcher Brian McNoldy, who spent the summer documenting how Miami broke its daily heat index record 40% of the days between mid-June and mid-October.

Houston's Hobby airport broke daily high temperature marks 43 times, meteorologists said. Nighttime lows set records for heat 57 times, they said. That didn't give people's bodies chances to recover.

Across five southern states, the average rate of emergency department visits for heat illness in the summer of 2023 was over double that of the previous five summers, according to an analysis of data from the CDC.

## THE DEATHS

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 74 of 80

Experts warned that counting heat mortality based on death certificates leads to underestimates. Heat illness can be missed, or might not be mentioned.

They pointed to "excess death" studies for a more realistic count. These are the type of long-accepted epidemiological studies that look at grand totals of deaths during unusual conditions — such as hot days, high air pollution or a spreading COVID-19 pandemic — and compare them to normal times, creating an expected trend line.

Texas A&M's Dessler and his colleague Jangho Lee published one such study early last year. According to their methods, Lee said, about 11,000 heat deaths likely occurred in 2023 in the U.S. — a figure that would represent a record since at least 1987 and is about five times the number reported on death certificates.

Deaths are also up because of better reporting, and because Americans are getting older and more vulnerable to heat, Lee said. The population is also slowly shifting to cities, which are more exposed to heat.

## THE FUTURE

In some places, last year's heat already rivals the worst on record. As of late May, Miami was on track to be 1.5 degrees warmer than the hottest May on record, according to McNoldy. Dallas' Murphy pointed to maps saying conditions with a broiling Mexico are "eerily similar to what we saw last June" so he is worried about "a very brutal summer."

Texas A&M's Dessler said last year's heat was "a taste of the future."

"I just think in 20 years, you know, 2040 rolls around ... we're going to look back at 2023 and say, man, that was cool," Dessler said. "The problem with climate change is if it hasn't pushed you over the edge yet, just wait."

## An inflation gauge closely tracked by Federal Reserve rises at slowest pace this year

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A price gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve cooled slightly last month, a sign that inflation may be easing after running high in the first three months of this year.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that an index that excludes volatile food and energy costs rose 0.2% from March to April, down from 0.3% in the previous month. It was the mildest such increase so far this year.

Measured from 12 months earlier, such so-called "core" prices climbed 2.8% in April, the same as in March. Overall inflation increased 0.3% from March to April, the same as in the previous month, and 2.7% from a year earlier, also unchanged from March's figure.

The latest figures could provide some tentative reassurance for Fed officials, who aggressively raised interest rates to fight inflation, that price pressures are easing. Chair Jerome Powell has said he expects inflation, after picking up in the first three months of 2024, to resume cooling in the coming months. Powell has cautioned, though, that the central bank needs "greater confidence" that inflation is sustainably slowing before it would consider cutting rates.

"April is a first step in the right direction, but much work remains," said Stephen Stanley, chief U.S. economist at Santander, an investment bank.

The Fed tends to favor the inflation gauge that the government issued Friday — the personal consumption expenditures price index — over the better-known consumer price index. The PCE index tries to account for changes in how people shop when inflation jumps. It can capture, for example, when consumers switch from pricier national brands to cheaper store brands.

Inflation fell sharply in the second half of last year before sticking well above the Fed's 2% target in the first few months of 2024. With polls showing that costlier rents, groceries and gasoline are angering voters as the presidential campaign intensifies, Donald Trump and his Republican allies have sought to heap the blame on President Joe Biden.

Friday's report also showed that income growth slowed and spending cooled sharply in April, a trend that

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 75 of 80

could help moderate economic growth and inflation in the coming months and potentially please the Fed.

Adjusted for inflation, after-tax incomes fell 0.1% in April, the second such drop this year. Consumer spending also declined 0.1% when adjusted for inflation, a sign that economic growth may remain modest in the current April-June quarter. The Fed will likely see such data as evidence that the economy is cooling in a way that could restrain inflation later this year.

Many Americans, particularly lower-income workers, have been pulling back on spending as they struggle to keep up with rising expenses, leading some businesses to rein in prices. In recent weeks, chains including McDonald's, Target and Walmart have announced price reductions or temporary discount deals.

Grocery prices eased last month, according to Friday's report, though they're still up significantly from before the pandemic. The prices of long-lasting goods also dropped, led by less expensive new and used cars, furniture and appliances. The cost of used cars has declined nearly 5% over the past year.

Gas prices, though, jumped 2.7%, just from March to April. Likewise, the costs of many services rose faster than the Fed would like. Restaurant meals, for example, increased 0.3% from March to April and are up 4% from a year earlier. Entertainment prices, including for movies and concerts, jumped 7.4% from 12 months earlier.

In the past couple of weeks, a stream of remarks by Fed officials have underscored their intention to keep borrowing costs high as long as needed to fully defeat inflation. As recently as March, the Fed's policymakers had collectively forecast three rate cuts this year, starting as early as June. Yet Wall Street traders now expect just one rate cut this year, in November.

One influential Fed official, John Williams, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, said Thursday that he expects inflation to start cooling again in the second half of the year. Until it does, though, Powell has made clear that the central bank is prepared to keep its key rate pegged at 5.3%, its highest level in 23 years.

But Williams expects inflation, according to the Fed's measure, to cool only slightly by year's end, to a 2.5% annual pace. He doesn't foresee it dropping to the Fed's 2% target until next year.

The central bank raised its benchmark rate from near zero to its current peak in 15 months, the fastest such increase in four decades, to try to conquer inflation. The result has been significantly higher rates for mortgages, auto loans and other forms of consumer and business borrowing.

In Europe, inflation rose unexpectedly in May to a yearly rate of 2.6% from 2.4%, according to official figures released Friday, in a sign that rising prices haven't yet been fully tamed in the 20 countries that use the euro. Still, the European Central Bank is likely to proceed with an interest rate cut at its meeting next week.

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

By ILLIA NOVIKOV, MATTHEW LEE and KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Germany joined the United States on Friday in authorizing Ukraine to hit some targets on Russian soil with the long-range weapons they are supplying — a significant policy change that comes as depleted Ukrainian troops are losing ground in the war.

Ukrainian officials have expressed frustration over restrictions on the use of Western weapons — especially as the border region of Kharkiv has endured a Russian onslaught this month that has stretched Kyiv's outgunned and outmanned forces.

Both Germany and the U.S. specifically authorized the use of weapons to defend Kharkiv, whose capital city of the same name lies only 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Russia. Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment building in the city overnight, Ukrainian officials said, killing at least six people.

Beyond offering Ukraine a chance of better protecting Kharkiv by targeting Russian capabilities in the region, it's not clear what effect the easing of restrictions might have on the direction of the conflict in what is proving to be a critical period. But it drew a furious response from Moscow and warnings it could

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 76 of 80

draw Russia into war with NATO.

The German government said Ukraine can use weapons it supplies against positions just over the border, from where Russia launches its attacks on Kharkiv. A day earlier, U.S. President Joe Biden gave Kyiv a green light to strike back with American weapons at Russian military assets targeting the region, according to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Blinken said Kyiv had asked Washington for permission to use U.S.-supplied weapons against the Kremlin's troops amassing on the Russian side of the border for attacks inside Ukraine. Biden's approval was for that purpose, Blinken said at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Prague.

U.S. 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.

In response, Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said Friday that "Ukraine and its NATO allies will receive such a devastating response that the alliance won't be able to avoid entering the conflict" — an eventuality that Western governments have ruled out.

Western leaders have hesitated to ease the restrictions on their weapons because of the risk it would provoke Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has repeatedly warned that the West's direct involvement could put the world on a path to nuclear conflict. Last week, Russia said military drills involving tactical nuclear weapons had begun.

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

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 to Ukraine.

The German government statement noted that, in recent weeks, Russia has prepared, coordinated and carried out attacks on the 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.

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.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Friday he supported lifting the limits on Ukraine's use of Western weaponry, saying it's "a matter of upholding international law — Ukraine's right to self-defense."

"Putin wanted to deter the NATO allies from supporting Ukraine. But we are not and we will not be deterred," Stoltenberg said.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström noted that his country had not restricted Ukraine's use of its weapons at all, while Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Rome won't let Kyiv use Italian weapons outside its territory.

In Moscow, Medvedev repeated Russian warnings that the steps being taken could set NATO and Russia on the path to a nuclear conflict. "It's not an attempt to scare or any sort of a nuclear bluff," he said.

Russia's newly appointed defense minister, Andrei Belousov, claimed Friday that Russian troops are "advancing in all tactical directions," including in the Kharkiv region where he said they have pushed Ukrainian forces back by as much as 9 kilometers (5 miles). Russian forces captured 28 towns and villages over the past month, he said.

Overall since the start of the year, Russian forces have taken control of 880 square kilometers (340 square miles) of territory, he added.

It was not possible to verify his battlefield claims.

Overnight into Friday, Russia launched five ballistic missiles at Kharkiv, 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.

Six people were killed, according to Syniehubov, and at least 25 were wounded.

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. Russia used the 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.

## Tests find AI tools readily create election lies from the voices of well-known political leaders

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As high-stakes elections approach in the U.S. and European Union, publicly available artificial intelligence tools can be easily weaponized to churn out convincing election lies in the voices of leading political figures, a digital civil rights group said Friday.

Researchers at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Countering Digital Hate tested six of the most popular AI voice-cloning tools to see if they would generate audio clips of five false statements about elections in the voices of eight prominent American and European politicians.

In a total of 240 tests, the tools generated convincing voice clones in 193 cases, or 80% of the time, the group found. In one clip, a fake U.S. President Joe Biden says election officials count each of his votes twice. In another, a fake French President Emmanuel Macron warns citizens not to vote because of bomb threats at the polls.

The findings reveal a remarkable gap in safeguards against the use of AI-generated audio to mislead voters, a threat that increasingly worries experts as the technology has become both advanced and accessible. While some of the tools have rules or tech barriers in place to stop election disinformation from being generated, the researchers found many of those obstacles were easy to circumvent with quick workarounds.

Only one of the companies whose tools were used by the researchers responded after multiple requests for comment. ElevenLabs said it was constantly looking for ways to boost its safeguards.

With few laws in place to prevent abuse of these tools, the companies' lack of self-regulation leaves voters vulnerable to AI-generated deception in a year of significant democratic elections around the world. E.U. voters head to the polls in parliamentary elections in less than a week, and U.S. primary elections are ongoing ahead of the presidential election this fall.

"It's so easy to use these platforms to create lies and to force politicians onto the back foot denying lies again and again and again," said the center's CEO, Imran Ahmed. "Unfortunately, our democracies are being sold out for naked greed by AI companies who are desperate to be first to market ... despite the fact that they know their platforms simply aren't safe."

The center — a nonprofit with offices in the U.S., the U.K. and Belgium — conducted the research in May. Researchers used the online analytics tool Semrush to identify the six publicly available AI voice-cloning tools with the most monthly organic web traffic: ElevenLabs, Speechify, PlayHT, Descript, Invideo AI and Veed.

Next, they submitted real audio clips of the politicians speaking. They prompted the tools to impersonate the politicians' voices making five baseless statements.

One statement warned voters to stay home amid bomb threats at the polls. The other four were various confessions — of election manipulation, lying, using campaign funds for personal expenses and taking strong pills that cause memory loss.

In addition to Biden and Macron, the tools made lifelike copies of the voices of U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, former U.S. President Donald Trump, United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, U.K. Labour Leader Keir Starmer, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and E.U. Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 78 of 80

"None of the AI voice cloning tools had sufficient safety measures to prevent the cloning of politicians' voices or the production of election disinformation," the report said.

Some of the tools — Descript, Invideo AI and Veed — require users to upload a unique audio sample before cloning a voice, a safeguard to prevent people from cloning a voice that isn't their own. Yet the researchers found that barrier could be easily circumvented by generating a unique sample using a different AI voice cloning tool.

One tool, Invideo AI, not only created the fake statements the center requested but extrapolated them to create further disinformation.

When producing the audio clip instructing Biden's voice clone to warn people of a bomb threat at the polls, it added several of its own sentences.

"This is not a call to abandon democracy but a plea to ensure safety first," the fake audio clip said in Biden's voice. "The election, the celebration of our democratic rights, is only delayed, not denied."

Overall, in terms of safety, Speechify and PlayHT performed the worst of the tools, generating believable fake audio in all 40 of their test runs, the researchers found.

ElevenLabs performed the best and was the only tool that blocked the cloning of U.K. and U.S. politicians' voices. However, the tool still allowed for the creation of fake audio in the voices of prominent E.U. politicians, the report said.

Aleksandra Pedraszewska, Head of AI Safety at ElevenLabs, said in an emailed statement that the company welcomes the report and the awareness it raises about generative AI manipulation.

She said ElevenLabs recognizes there is more work to be done and is "constantly improving the capabilities of our safeguards," including the company's blocking feature.

"We hope other audio AI platforms follow this lead and roll out similar measures without delay," she said.

The other companies cited in the report didn't respond to emailed requests for comment.

The findings come after AI-generated audio clips already have been used in attempts to sway voters in elections across the globe.

In fall 2023, just days before Slovakia's parliamentary elections, audio clips resembling the voice of the liberal party chief were shared widely on social media. The deepfakes purportedly captured him talking about hiking beer prices and rigging the vote.

Earlier this year, AI-generated robocalls mimicked Biden's voice and told New Hampshire primary voters to stay home and "save" their votes for November. A New Orleans magician who created the audio for a Democratic political consultant demonstrated to the AP how he made it, using ElevenLabs software.

Experts say AI-generated audio has been an early preference for bad actors, in part because the technology has improved so quickly. Only a few seconds of real audio are needed to create a lifelike fake.

Yet other forms of AI-generated media also are concerning experts, lawmakers and tech industry leaders. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT and other popular generative AI tools, revealed on Thursday that it had spotted and interrupted five online campaigns that used its technology to sway public opinion on political issues.

Ahmed, the CEO of the Center for Countering Digital Hate, said he hopes AI voice-cloning platforms will tighten security measures and be more proactive about transparency, including publishing a library of audio clips they have created so they can be checked when suspicious audio is spreading online.

He also said lawmakers need to act. The U.S. Congress has not yet passed legislation regulating AI in elections. While the E.U. has passed a wide-ranging artificial intelligence law set to go into effect over the next two years, it does not address voice-cloning tools specifically.

"Lawmakers need to work to ensure there are minimum standards," Ahmed said. "The threat that disinformation poses to our elections is not just the potential of causing a minor political incident, but making people distrust what they see and hear, full stop."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 79 of 80

## Russian court extends the detention of a Russian-US journalist

MOSCOW (AP) — A court in Russia on Friday ordered a detained Russian American journalist to be held until at least Aug. 5, pending investigation and trial, a further step in the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent and free speech.

Alsu Kurmasheva, an editor for the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tatar-Bashkir service, was taken into custody on Oct. 18 and charged with failing to register as a foreign agent while collecting information about the Russian military. Later, she was also charged with spreading "false information" about the military.

A court in Tatarstan on Friday ordered her to remain behind bars at least until Aug. 5, according to OVD-Info, a Russian rights group that tracks political arrests.

Kurmasheva, a dual U.S.-Russian citizen who lives in Prague with her husband and two daughters, could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted, according to RFE/RL.

Russian authorities have intensified a crackdown on Kremlin critics and independent journalists after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine in February 2022, using legislation that effectively criminalized any public expression about the conflict that deviates from the Kremlin line.

Kurmasheva was the second U.S. journalist detained in Russia last year, after Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was arrested on espionage charges in March. Gershkovich and his employer have rejected the charges, and U.S. authorities designated him wrongfully detained. He has spent a year in custody.

Kurmasheva was initially stopped on June 2 on the way out of Kazan International Airport after traveling to Russia the previous month to visit her ailing mother. Officials confiscated Kurmasheva's U.S. and Russian passports and fined her for failing to register her U.S. passport. She was waiting for her documents to be returned when she was arrested on other charges in October. RFE/RL has called for her release.

RFE/RL was told by Russian authorities in 2017 to register as a foreign agent, but it has challenged Moscow's use of foreign agent laws in the European Court of Human Rights. The organization has been fined millions of dollars by Russia.

## Today in History: June 1

### The Beatles release 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 1, the 153rd day of 2024. There are 213 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 1, 1967, the Beatles released "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," for years considered by many to be the greatest rock 'n' roll album of all time.

On this date:

In 1533, Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII, was crowned as Queen Consort of England.

In 1792, Kentucky became the 15th state.

In 1796, Tennessee became the 16th state.

In 1812, President James Madison, in a message to Congress, recounted what he called Britain's "series of acts hostile to the United States as an independent and neutral nation"; Congress ended up declaring war.

In 1813, the mortally wounded commander of the USS Chesapeake, Capt. James Lawrence, gave the order, "Don't give up the ship" during a losing battle with the British frigate HMS Shannon in the War of 1812.

In 1916, Louis Brandeis took his seat as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, the first Jewish American to serve on the nation's highest bench.

In 1943, a civilian flight from Portugal to England was shot down by Germany during World War II, killing all 17 people aboard, including actor Leslie Howard.

In 1957, Don Bowden, a student at the University of California at Berkeley, became the first American to

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, June 1, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 341 ~ 80 of 80**

break the four-minute mile during a meet in Stockton, California, in a time of 3:58.7.

In 1958, Charles de Gaulle became premier of France, marking the beginning of the end of the Fourth Republic.

In 1980, Cable News Network made its debut.

In 2009, General Motors filed for Chapter 11, becoming the largest U.S. industrial company to enter bankruptcy protection.

In 2017, President Donald Trump declared he was pulling the U.S. from the landmark Paris climate agreement. (President Joe Biden signed an order returning the U.S. to that accord on his first day in office.)

In 2020, police violently broke up a peaceful and legal protest by thousands of people in Lafayette Park across from the White House, using chemical agents, clubs and punches to send protesters fleeing; the protesters had gathered following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis a week earlier. President Donald Trump, after declaring himself "the president of law and order" and threatening to deploy the U.S. military in a Rose Garden speech, then walked across the empty park to be photographed holding a Bible in front of St. John's Church, which had been damaged a night earlier.

In 2021, the Biden administration suspended oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, reversing a drilling program approved by the Trump administration.

In 2022, a Virginia jury ruled in favor of Johnny Depp in his libel lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard, vindicating his stance that Heard fabricated claims that she was abused by Heard and awarding him \$15 million. But jurors also found in favor of Heard, who said she was defamed by Depp's lawyer when he called her abuse allegations a hoax, giving her \$2 million.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Pat Boone is 90. Actor Morgan Freeman is 87. Opera singer Frederica von Stade is 79. Actor Brian Cox is 78. Rock musician Ronnie Wood is 77. Actor Jonathan Pryce is 77. Actor Gemma Craven is 74. Actor John M. Jackson (TV: "JAG," "NCIS: Los Angeles") is 74. Blues-rock musician Tom Principato is 72. Country singer Ronnie Dunn is 71. Actor Lisa Hartman Black is 68. Actor Tom Irwin is 68. Singer-musician Alan Wilder is 65. Rock musician Simon Gallup (The Cure) is 64. Actor-comedian Mark Curry is 63. Actor-singer Jason Donovan is 56. Actor Teri Polo is 55. Basketball player-turned-coach Tony Bennett is 55. Actor Rick Gomez is 52. Model-actor Heidi Klum is 51. Singer Alanis Morissette is 50. Actor Sarah Wayne Callies is 47. Comedian Link Neal (Rhett & Link) is 46. TV personality Damien Fahey is 44. Americana singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile is 43. Actor Johnny Pemberton is 43. Actor-writer Amy Schumer is 43. Former tennis player Justine Henin is 42. Actor Taylor Handley is 40. Actor Zazie Beetz is 33. Actor Willow Shields is 24.