

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, June 4

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

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



May God fill your day with Blessings, Happy moments, and Good friends.

- Legion hosts Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (1)
- Junior Legion hosts Redfield, 7:30 p.m. (1)
- U12 R/W hosts Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- SB U14 hosts Miller, 6:30 p.m.
- T-Ball G/B practice, 6 p.m.
- State Golf Meet at Bakker Crossing Golf Course, Sioux Falls
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- The Pantry at Community Center, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
- United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
- Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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1440

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Western Heat Wave

More than 25 million people across the western US are under heat alerts, as a heat wave is expected to bring dangerously high temperatures from Arizona to the Pacific Northwest this week. Temperatures are expected to reach triple digits in several areas as the intense heat moves northward from drought-stricken Mexico.

The extreme heat is being driven by a heat dome—a high-pressure system trapping hot air in place while preventing precipitation. Temperatures in California could reach up to 20 degrees above normal in many areas, with Death Valley predicting temperatures near 120 degrees. Elsewhere, Phoenix and Las Vegas could both hit 110 degrees for the first time this year by Thursday. See a heat risk map here.

Temperatures will cool only slightly at night, elevating the risk for heat-related illness. Excessive heat causes hundreds of deaths annually in the US, with over 2,300 deaths last summer, the highest number in 45 years of records.

Fauci Testifies on COVID-19

Dr. Anthony Fauci—the US' former top infectious disease official—testified yesterday before a House subcommittee investigating the origins of COVID-19 and the US government's response. The appearance was Fauci's first public testimony since leaving government in 2022 and comes after two days of closed-door testimony in January.

A US intelligence report previously found insufficient evidence to conclude whether the virus behind COVID-19 emerged naturally or from a lab. Fauci yesterday rejected allegations he had tried to downplay the lab theory, insisting he has maintained an open mind about COVID-19's origins. Fauci also denied allegations his agency funded research that could have been used to evolve a virus into COVID-19.

Much of the testimony focused on EcoHealth Alliance, a nonprofit that received US government funding and worked with a virology lab in Wuhan, China, where COVID-19 was first detected. The Biden administration suspended grants to the nonprofit last month over compliance and reporting failures.

Mbappé Joins Real Madrid

French soccer star and World Cup winner Kylian Mbappé is set to join Real Madrid for the next five seasons once his contract with Paris Saint-Germain expires this month. The announcement of the deal—reportedly worth roughly \$16M per year after taxes—comes after years of speculation over the move.

The 25-year-old is considered one of the world's best soccer players, having broken records, including the most goals scored (256) of any PSG player. Mbappé won the World Cup with France in 2018 and scored three goals (see video), known as a "hat trick," during the 2022 World Cup final before France fell to Argentina.

Mbappé started his career with Monaco at 16, becoming the youngest ever to play for Monaco's first team in the 2016-17 season. He joined PSG in 2017 for a reported transfer fee of \$214M, making him the second-most expensive soccer transfer in history. Real Madrid, which won a record 15th European Cup Saturday, began courting Mbappé as far back as 2012.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Minnesota Vikings sign wide receiver Justin Jefferson to four-year, \$140M extension, the most lucrative non-quarterback deal in NFL history. Larry Allen, Pro Football Hall of Fame offensive lineman, dies at 52 while vacationing in Mexico.

American YouTuber MrBeast passes Indian music label T-Series to become the platform's most-subscribed channel with 269 million subscribers.

Pop music legend Cyndi Lauper, 70, announces her "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" farewell tour with 23 stops across North America.

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

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Science & Technology

Engineers develop generative AI model to help multipurpose robots learn new movements and tasks in unfamiliar environments; applications include basic motions like flipping a spatula or turning a wrench.

Physicists create a Bose-Einstein condensate out of molecules instead of single atoms for the first time; the phenomenon occurs when more than 1,000 ultracold molecules act as one giant quantum mechanical object.

Researchers discover fungus capable of breaking down plastic polyethylene, the most common type of plastic pollutant in the world's oceans.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +0.6%); Dow falls on weaker-than-expected US manufacturing data. New York Stock Exchange resolves temporary technical glitch that caused volatility in at least 40 stocks, including Berkshire Hathaway.

GameStop shares close up 21% after trader Keith Gill, known as "Roaring Kitty" on social media, posts screen shot showing possible \$116M stake in company. Stericycle shares close up 15% on news of Waste Management acquiring the medical waste disposal company for \$7.2B, including debt.

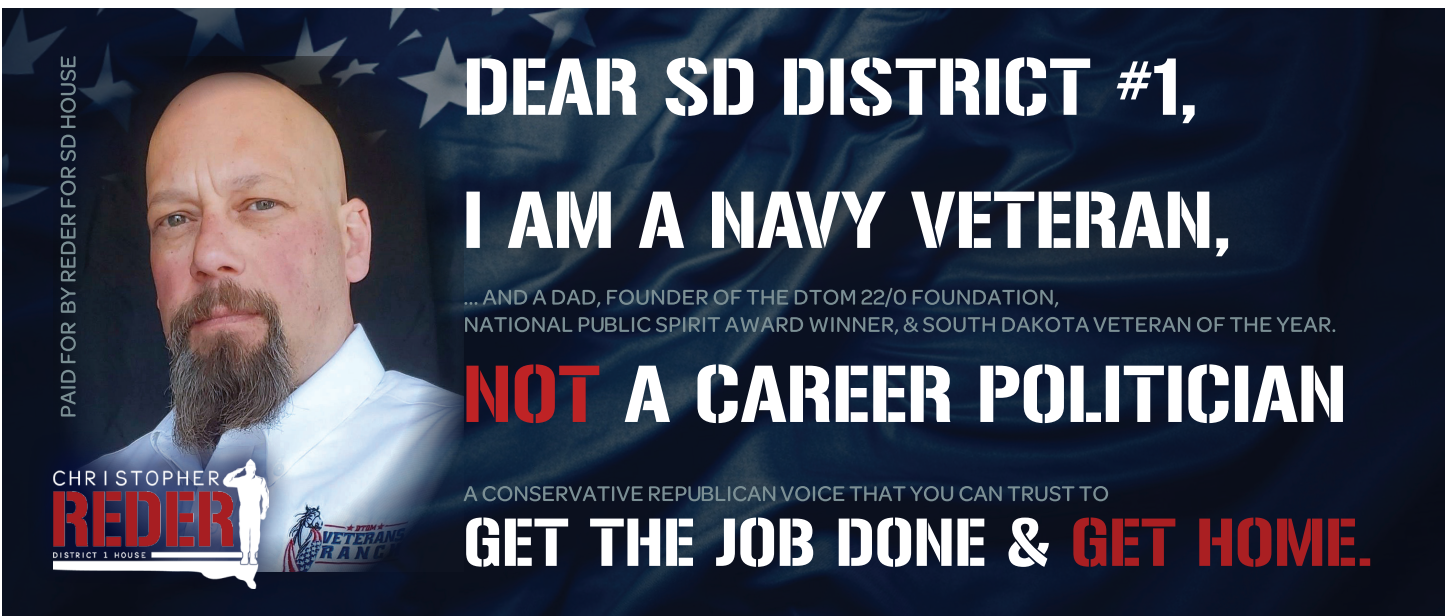
Skydance Media, Paramount Global reportedly agree to terms of a merger deal valued at \$8B, with official announcement expected in coming days; Paramount's annual shareholders meeting takes place today.

Politics & World Affairs

President Joe Biden to issue executive order today reportedly granting border agents authority to turn away migrants with asylum requests after reaching daily average of 2,500 migrant encounters. South Korea plans to suspend 2018 military pact with North Korea due to trash balloon dispute.

Mexico elects Claudia Sheinbaum, 61, as country's first female president; the former Mexico City mayor secured more than 58% of the vote in the presidential election. India begins counting votes in its general elections.

Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) files for reelection as an independent; Menendez is currently on trial for federal bribery charges. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D, TX-18) announces pancreatic cancer diagnosis.



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GET THE JOB DONE & GET HOME.

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REDER
DISTRICT 1 HOUSE

VETERANS
FRANCHISE

Death Notice: Rory McKittrick

Rory McKittrick, 61, of Sartell, MN passed away June 1, 2024 at his home. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.



Voters Encouraged to Check Their Polling Location and Not Publicize Their Ballot

(Pierre, S.D.) – Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson encourages voters to check their polling location before they head out to vote during the Tuesday, June 4th Primary Election. The Secretary of State's website provides guidance on finding your polling location, tracking your absentee ballot application, and viewing your sample ballot at <https://vip.sdsos.gov/VIPLogin.aspx>.

Secretary Johnson reminds voters that they must provide a photo identification (ID) card when voting, which may be any of the following:

- A South Dakota driver's license or nondriver ID card;
- A U.S. government photo ID (e.g., passport);
- A U.S. Armed Forces ID;
- A current student photo ID from a South Dakota high school or college; or
- A Tribal ID.

If a voter does not have a photo ID, they may be given the option to sign a personal identification affidavit under the penalty of perjury and vote a regular ballot.

Secretary Johnson would also like to remind voters to not publicize an official, marked ballot. "While voters are encouraged to participate in the democratic process and invite others to do the same, posting a photo to social media of an official, marked ballot is not the proper way to do so," stated Secretary Johnson.

According to SDCL § 12-18-27, no person may publicize an official ballot after it is marked in such a way that would reveal the contents of the ballot or the name of any candidate for which the person has cast a vote. In addition, no person may solicit a voter to show their official ballot. If you feel that this law is being broken, please contact law enforcement.

Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. local time. More information on voting in South Dakota can be found on the Secretary of State's website: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/voting/default.aspx>.

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

June 4, 2024 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Barn Cleanup – 5 E Railroad Avenue – Kadoun
4. City Hall Sidewalk/Curb Drainage
5. Department Reports
6. Second Reading of Ordinance No. 776 – Sewer Rates
7. Minutes
8. Bills
9. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
10. Adjournment

Name Released in 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: Nicholas James Doney, 43 year old male from Platte, SD, 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.

Preliminary crash information indicates Nicholas J. Doney, the driver of a 2005 Chrysler PT Cruiser was westbound on SD Highway 50. Doney failed to negotiate a curve in the roadway and entered the ditch where the vehicle vaulted over a driveway and rolled. Doney 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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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY
JUNE 4, 2024 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Proclamation for Men's Health Week
5. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign YMCA Drawdown #7 for CDBG Grant
6. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of May 28, 2024
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Transfer 2007 Ford Explorer from DOE to IT
 - e. Travel Request
 - f. Lease Agreement
 - g. Lottery Permit for Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation
 - h. Claim Assignments
7. Other Business
8. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
9. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
ELECTION CANVASS
JUNE 7, 2024, 10:00 A.M.

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

CANVASS THE PRIMARY ELECTION HELD JUNE 4, 2024

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That's Life by Tony Bender: No one is above the law

Let's start with a basic fact. Democracy cannot exist without the rule of law. The concept that no one is above the law. And America cannot exist without democracy.

Our founders bristled at the arbitrary dictates of a king an ocean away. Americans fought and died in WWII to ensure democracy and its hallmark, free elections, the peaceful transfer of power.

The construct of America balances the power between three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial. The judicial branch demands objectivity and depends upon common citizens to indict wrongdoers as members of grand juries and to render verdicts in trials.

Last week, 12 jurors, agreed upon by the prosecution and defense, convicted former president Donald J. Trump on 34 counts of falsifying business records to hide hush money payments made to women during the 2016 election to prevent negative publicity that could have altered the election outcome. Shell companies were used to disguise transactions. It's considered election interference by deceiving voters.

Can we agree that those are the facts?

Among the MAGA base, there was outrage and a vow to support a convicted felon with even more fervor. Some of that was driven by falsehoods perpetuated by right wing media and Trump supporters. Trump claimed his lawyers were not allowed to call the witnesses they wanted to. No, they chose not to, and Trump chose not to testify. They complained that the jury selection process was unfair, that they didn't get as many peremptory strikes as did the prosecution. Again, false; it doesn't work that way. Selected jurors included those who, based on their favorite news sources, including Trump's Truth Social, leaned right. Critics said Trump couldn't receive a fair trial in his hometown where the crimes were committed. His hometown. Read into that what you will.

Pundits said it was political, an invented crime. As a matter of perspective, over a 14-month period in 2022-2023 the Manhattan District Attorney's office charged 29 individuals and companies with the same thing. Trump's lawyer, Michael Cohen, was convicted of charges related to the case in 2018. Trump was immune as a sitting president and could not be charged while in office. A grand jury charged him in March 2023. If Trump or anyone broke the law 34 times, should he not be charged?

GROTON

SUBWAY

**Opening
June 12th
Hours Daily
10 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

**Under new ownership,
Beau and Chelsea Larson**



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Some claimed the prosecution of a former president has turned America into a banana republic. But, in a democracy, no man is above law. It's the difference between authoritarianism and democracy. Trump, meanwhile, advocates full presidential immunity. No accountability for criminal behavior.

Criminal prosecution of politicians in democracies is not uncommon around the globe—France, Italy, Israel, South Korea, Brazil, and Argentina have all successfully navigated these waters. One could argue that it shows the strength of democracy, not a weakness.

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum is hoping to land a position in a second Trump administration. For the second time during the seven-week trial, Burgum was there, wearing the required red tie regalia, to defend Trump, in part by discrediting the jury, amplifying emotions, thereby putting their lives and those of their families in danger. A message of intimidation for future juries.

Burgum said before he joined the Trump Team, "You're judged by the company you keep." Well, let's look at the felons with whom Trump keeps company: campaign chairman Paul Manafort; campaign vice chairman, Rick Gates; personal lawyer Michael Cohen; adviser Roger Stone; White House aide Peter Navarro; campaign adviser George Papadopoulos; Trump Organization CFO Allen Weisselberg; White House national security advisor Michael Flynn; chief strategist Steve Bannon; Elliot Broidy vice chair of Trump's inaugural committee; and lawyers Kenneth Chesebro and Sidney Powell.

Now, Trump himself is a felon. Previously, he was found culpable in a rape case, a defamation case, and his business was found guilty of massive tax fraud. He illegally directed charitable dollars designated for veterans and sick children to his campaign. He had to reimburse victims of his Trump University scam.

Again, can we agree that these are facts?

Still, Trump is being represented as a Christ-like martyr by some supporters. That he's an innocent man who's being persecuted by the system. Or perhaps he could simply be a criminal. Occam's Razor suggests that the simplest explanation is almost always reality.

The Manhattan conviction was the most benign of the cases against Trump. Voters won't know the outcome of the other cases before November. He's accused of trying to manufacture enough votes to win Georgia. There's the case of refusing to return classified documents, and finally, the insurrection. Did he try to overturn the 2020 election and the votes of 81 million people, end democracy, and establish a banana republic? I direct you to Occam's Razor.

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Guthmiller tied at 18 in first round of State A

Carly Guthmiller is tied at 18 in the first round of the State A Golf Meet being held in Sioux Falls on Monday. She shot an 84 on the day. Carlee Johnson is tied for 38th with an 93, Claire Schuelke was tied at 72 with a 112, Mia Crank was tied at 78 with a 116 and Carly Gilbert was tied at 88 with a score of 128.

The tournament continues today.

Groton Post 39 Go Down On Final Play Against Lake Norden

By GameChanger Media

A walk-off left Groton Post 39 on the wrong end of an 8-7 defeat to Lake Norden on Monday. The game was tied at seven in the bottom of the tenth when Turner Stevenson singled, scoring one run.

Both teams exchanged the lead back-and-forth in the game, but Lake Norden eventually took the lead for good thanks to a single in the tenth inning.

Groton Post 39 got on the board in the first inning after Brevin Flihs scored after tagging up.

A single by Kamden Keszter gave Lake Norden the lead, 2-1, in the bottom of the second.

A ground out by George Jenson extended the Lake Norden lead to 3-1 in the bottom of the third inning.

Groton Post 39 captured the lead, 5-4, in the top of the eighth when Dillon Abeln drew a walk, scoring one run, Jarret Erdmann drew a walk, scoring one run, and Colby Dunker singled, scoring two runs.

Lake Norden took the lead in the bottom of the eighth. Stevenson singled, scoring two runs, to give Lake Norden the advantage, 6-5.

Groton Post 39 took the lead in the top of the ninth. Bradin Althoff doubled, scoring two runs, to give Groton Post 39 the upper hand, 7-6.

Keszter grounded out, which helped Lake Norden tie the game at seven in the bottom of the ninth.

Christian Rodrigues earned the win for Lake Norden. The reliever gave up one hit and zero runs over one and two-thirds innings, striking out four and walking none. Erdmann took the loss for Groton Post 39. They went three and two-thirds innings, surrendering four runs (three earned) on four hits, striking out six and walking four. Gavin Englund opened the game for Groton Post 39. The starting pitcher gave up five hits and four runs (three earned) over five and one-third innings, striking out six and walking three. Dawson Noem began the game for Lake Norden. They allowed five hits and five runs over seven innings, striking out 12 and walking four.

Dunker drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Post 39 with three runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-4 on the day. Braxton Imrie and Flihs each collected two hits for Groton Post 39.

Lake Norden piled up 10 hits in the game. Keszter, the number seven hitter for Lake Norden, led the way with three runs batted in. They went 1-for-5 on the day. Tyson Stevenson and Stevenson each collected three hits for Lake Norden. Jenson collected two hits for Lake Norden in four at bats. Noem led Lake Norden with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game. Jenson and Rylan Thue each stole multiple bases for Lake Norden. Lake Norden turned one double play in the game. Lake Norden didn't commit a single error in the field. Rodrigues had the most chances in the field with 15.

Next up for Groton Post 39 is a game against Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser on Tuesday.

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Groton Post 39 7 - 8 Lake Norden

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 03, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	R	H	E
GRTN	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	7	8	2
LKNR	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	8	10	0

BATTING

Groton Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (SS)	4	3	2	0	1	0
D Abeln (2B)	4	1	1	1	1	2
B Althoff (1B)	5	0	1	2	0	2
C Dunker (LF)	4	0	1	3	0	1
J Erdmann (LF, P)	3	0	0	1	1	3
N Morris (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
G Englund (P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
C Simon (3B)	4	0	0	0	0	4
R Groeblichhoff...	1	0	0	0	0	0
K Flihs (C)	4	0	0	0	1	4
B Imrie (RF)	3	1	2	0	1	0
T Diegel (CF)	3	2	1	0	0	2
Totals	37	7	8	7	5	19

2B: B Althoff, **TB:** C Dunker, D Abeln, B Imrie 2, B Flihs 2, B Althoff 2, T Diegel, **HBP:** T Diegel, **SB:** B Flihs, T Diegel, **LOB:** 6

Lake Norden	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Stevenson (SS,...	5	2	3	1	1	0
D Noem (P, SS, C)	2	1	0	0	3	1
T Stevenson (CF,...	6	1	3	2	0	1
C Rodrigues (C, P)	5	0	1	0	0	2
G Jenson (1B)	4	2	2	1	0	0
R Thue (LF, CF)	2	1	0	0	2	1
K Keszter (3B)	5	1	1	3	0	1
J Mata (RF)	4	0	0	0	1	3
B Stevenson (2B,...	5	0	0	0	0	3
Totals	38	8	10	7	7	12

2B: T Stevenson, C Rodrigues, T Stevenson, **TB:** T Stevenson 4, C Rodrigues 2, G Jenson 2, K Keszter, T Stevenson 4, **SAC:** R Thue, **CS:** J Mata, **HBP:** G Jenson, D Noem, **SB:** G Jenson 2, R Thue 2, **LOB:** 11

PITCHING

Groton Post 39	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	5.1	5	4	3	3	6	0
J Erdmann	3.2	4	4	3	4	6	0
N Morris	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	9.0	10	8	6	7	12	0

L: J Erdmann, **P-S:** N Morris 3-2, J Erdmann 76-39, G Englund 101-65, **WP:** J Erdmann 2, G Englund 2, **HBP:** J Erdmann, G Englund, **BF:** N Morris, J Erdmann 19, G Englund 28

Lake Norden	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
D Noem	7.0	5	5	5	4	12	0
T Stevenson	1.1	2	2	2	1	3	0
C Rodrigues	1.2	1	0	0	0	4	0
Totals	10.0	8	7	7	5	19	0

W: C Rodrigues, **P-S:** T Stevenson 25-16, C Rodrigues 26-17, D Noem 102-64, **WP:** T Stevenson, **HBP:** T Stevenson, **BF:** T Stevenson 8, C Rodrigues 6, D Noem 29

Strong Hitting Not Enough As Groton Jr Teeners 14U Falls To W.I.N. Teeners

By GameChanger Media

Even though Groton Jr Teeners 14U collected four hits to W.I.N. Teeners's three, they still fell 5-0 on Monday. Ryder Schelle, Alex Abeln, Lincoln Shilhanek, and Kolton Antonsen each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U.

W.I.N. Teeners got on the board in the top of the first inning after Hayden Liebl walked, and Ethan Kroll balked, each scoring one run.

An error, and a walk by Drew Sparling helped W.I.N. Teeners extend their early lead in the third.

Colton Smith earned the win for W.I.N. Teeners. The starting pitcher gave up four hits and zero runs over five innings, striking out five and walking three. Kroll took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The righty went two and one-third innings, surrendering five runs (four earned) on one hit, striking out two and walking eight.

Liebl drove the middle of the lineup, leading W.I.N. Teeners with three runs batted in. Becket Halvorson, Raden Ratigan, and Blake Bjorgaard each collected one hit for W.I.N. Teeners. Kyle Olson paced W.I.N. Teeners with four walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up 12 walks for the game. Olson stole two bases. W.I.N. Teeners didn't commit a single error in the field. Halvorson had the most chances in the field with six.

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- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles

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Ultima™ ZTS1 46
ZERO-TURN

- 22 HP¹ Kohler® 7000 Series V-Twin OHV engine
- 46" AeroForce™ fabricated twin-blade deck
- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles

\$4,499*



Ultima™ ZT1 50
ZERO-TURN

- 23 HP¹ Kawasaki® FR691V V-twin OHV engine
- 50" AeroForce™ fabricated triple-blade deck
- Dual Hydro-Gear® EZT-2200™ transmission

\$3,299*

*Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and delivery charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect actual appearance. Always read operator's manual. As rated by Kohler, all power levels are based on gross horsepower in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International. †Actual operating information for weight, details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Kohler® is a registered trademark of Kohler Co. Kawasaki® is a registered trademark of KAWASAKI JUKOKYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA.

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Groton Jr Teeners 14U Breeze Past W.I.N. Teeners

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr Teeners 14U won big over W.I.N. Teeners 13-7 on Monday.

A wild pitch put W.I.N. Teeners on the board in the top of the first.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U jumped back into the lead in the bottom of the first inning after TC Schuster walked, Kason Oswald walked, and John Bisbee walked, each scoring one run.

W.I.N. Teeners captured the lead, 4-3, in the top of the second after Dalton Lee walked, and Blake Bjorgaard walked, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the second, scoring five runs on one hit to take a 8-4 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a double by Layne Johnson that drove in two.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U added two runs in the third. Johnson doubled on an 0-2 count, making the score 10-7.

Three more Groton Jr Teeners 14U runs crossed the plate in the fourth inning to extend the lead to 13-7. Shaydon Wood drew a walk, scoring one run, and Ryder Schelle hit an inside the park home run, scoring two runs.

Lincoln Shilhanek earned the win for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The reliever gave up two hits and zero runs over one and two-thirds innings, striking out one and walking one. Raden Ratigan took the loss for W.I.N. Teeners. They went three and two-thirds innings, surrendering 10 runs (nine earned) on four hits, striking out two and walking seven. Jordan Schwan stepped on the mound first for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The starting pitcher allowed zero hits and seven runs over two and one-third innings, striking out six and walking nine. Bjorgaard stepped on the bump first for W.I.N. Teeners. The starting pitcher allowed two hits and three runs over one-third of an inning, striking out one and walking four. Kolton Antonsen tossed one inning of no-run ball for Groton Jr Teeners 14U in relief. They gave up two hits, striking out none and walking none.

Johnson drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Jr Teeners 14U with three runs batted in. The 3-hole hitter went 3-for-3 on the day. Alex Abeln collected two hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U in three at bats. Groton Jr Teeners 14U had a strong eye at the plate, collecting 11 walks for the game. Schuster, Schelle, and Zach Fliehs led the team with two walks each. Schuster, Johnson, Schelle, Abeln, Xavier Ellenbecker, and Oswald each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U stole 18 bases in the game.

Drew Sparling, Ratigan, Bjorgaard, and Steger each collected one hit for W.I.N. Teeners. Sparling, Bjorgaard, and Steger each drove in one run for W.I.N. Teeners. W.I.N. Teeners had a strong eye at the plate, amassing 10 walks for the game. Hayden Liebl and Bjorgaard led the team with two walks each. Sparling, Becket Halvorson, Kyle Olson, Liebl, and Steger each stole multiple bases for W.I.N. Teeners. W.I.N. Teeners ran wild on the base paths, amassing 12 stolen bases for the game.

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

11 tribal recruits attending new law enforcement course in Pierre

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 3, 2024 5:33 PM

The state's first law enforcement certification course focusing on tribal policing began Monday in Pierre with 11 tribal trainees.

The recruits from the Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate are joined by 12 trainees from non-tribal agencies in South Dakota for the 13-week course.

The course came about through a collaboration between Gov. Kristi Noem and Attorney General Marty Jackley. It's meant to offer training closer to home for tribal police, who typically get 13 weeks of basic training in New Mexico through the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Providing consistent training for tribal, state, sheriffs and city police better ensures public safety across South Dakota," Jackley said in a press release. "The relationships and trust formed during the training is extremely valuable."

The 11 tribal recruits are two less than Jackley's office previously announced. In response to South Dakota Searchlight questions, Jackley's spokesman said two applications were "denied due to eligibility issues."

Officers for tribal police departments already had the option to attend a regular basic training course in the state, but still had to complete another two weeks of training afterward with the BIA in New Mexico. The BIA has agreed to send trainers for the new course in South Dakota.

Other agencies helping with the training include the state Division of Criminal Investigation, Highway Patrol and Department of Game, Fish and Parks, along with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Dakota.

The course emerged amid long-running discussions of tribal law enforcement needs that grew more heated this winter when Noem began repeatedly alleging that tribal areas are especially vulnerable to Mexican cartel drugs and violence.

Some of Noem's comments since her Jan. 31 speech on an "invasion" at the U.S.-Mexico border have drawn the ire of tribal leaders. The governor has asserted that some tribal leaders are personally benefiting from cartels.

Elected leaders in all nine South Dakota tribes have voted to ban Noem from their lands. The tribes have pointed to her comments about cartels, as well as allegations she made about Native American children lacking hope and having negligent parents.

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.

Marijuana legalization measure validated for Nov. 5 election

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JUNE 3, 2024 4:33 PM

A petition that would legalize adult recreational marijuana use in South Dakota has enough signatures from registered voters to be placed on the Nov. 5 ballot, according to the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office.

The office made the announcement Monday, triggering a 30-day window for challenges to the petition's validity.

It's the sixth statewide ballot measure to qualify for the general election, pending potential challenges.

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Four of the measures are citizen-initiated and two were placed on the ballot by the Legislature.

The marijuana ballot measure would allow people 21 and older to possess, grow, ingest and distribute marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia, with some restrictions. Among those are a possession limit of 2 ounces and a maximum number of six plants per person or 12 per household.

Twenty-four states have legalized recreational marijuana. South Dakota voters approved it in 2020, along with the legalization of medical marijuana. But the recreational portion of that ballot measure was challenged in court and invalidated, while medical marijuana legalization proceeded.

The new measure needed 17,508 signatures from South Dakota registered voters to qualify for the ballot. Based on a random sample, the Secretary of State's Office estimated that petitioners collected 22,558 valid signatures.

Ballot question status update

Measures placed on the Nov. 5 ballot by the Legislature:

An amendment to the state constitution updating references to certain officeholders and people (replacing male-specific pronouns with neutral language).

An amendment to the state constitution authorizing the state to impose work requirements on certain people who are eligible for expanded Medicaid.

Citizen-proposed measures validated for the ballot, pending potential challenges:

An initiated measure prohibiting state sales taxes on items sold for human consumption, specifically targeting state sales taxes on groceries.

An initiated amendment to the state constitution re-establishing abortion rights.

An initiated amendment to the state constitution establishing open primary elections.

An initiated measure legalizing adult recreational use, possession and distribution of marijuana.

Petition still in circulation:

A proposed referendum of a new law regulating carbon dioxide pipelines (the deadline to submit referendum petitions is June 25).

COMMENTARY

This year's closed Republican primary could be the last of its kind in South Dakota

Some members of GOP oppose change that could help them

DANA HESS

Tuesday's primary election could be the last of its kind in South Dakota. In November, voters will consider Constitutional Amendment H which, if approved, would drastically change the way primaries are conducted in this state.

Amendment H would open the primaries to all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation or the lack of party affiliation. All candidates would be on the ballot during the primary, with the top winners advancing to the November election. The advancing candidates could be from different parties or from the same party.

The open primaries change would apply to races for governor, the Legislature, U.S. Senate and House and elected county offices. As an example, in the case of the race for governor, the top two candidates would advance to the fall election. In the case of the South Dakota State House, where two candidates are elected in most districts, four candidates would advance.

The best part of Amendment H is that it opens the primary system to all registered voters, not just those affiliated with a political party. This is particularly important in the case of the Republican Party, which is dominant in South Dakota. Often positions are filled in Pierre and at the county level during the Republican Party primary if there are no independent or Democratic Party challengers.

It just doesn't seem right that taxpayers should get the privilege of paying for a primary and then be

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shut out of it if they don't belong to that party. The Democratic Party opens its primary to independents, but voters are locked out of the Republican Party primary unless they belong to the GOP.

As Amendment H heads for the fall election, the state's Democratic Party has decided to remain neutral on the issue. Some Republicans are dead set against it.

"We are 110% opposed to the idea," South Dakota Republican Party Chair John Wiik told South Dakota Searchlight. "It's our job in the Republican Party to put out the best candidates and decide who's going to represent us on the general election ballot."

Wiik's big talk would be easier to take seriously if he could back it up with some money to pay for his party's share of the primary. Or, if the primary isn't to his liking anymore, the Republicans could caucus or make their candidate selections at a convention. Primaries aren't the only way to choose candidates.

It's odd that Wiik is 110% opposed to Amendment H because, based on the current primary, it looks like Republicans would benefit the most from the change. Republicans have the most to gain from the proposed system because they are fielding far more candidates than Democrats.

Legislative primary challenges are a growth industry in the Republican Party with 44 taking place across the state this June. Democrats have one Senate primary. With the Democrats' dearth of candidates, they may have been better off talking one of those candidates into changing districts.

According to the Secretary of State's website, Republicans are fielding more than 150 legislative candidates in the primary and the general election. Democrats have just over 50. If voters approve of Amendment H and that 3 to 1 candidate advantage holds true in the next election, there will be far more Republican choices for voters than Democratic choices.

This year, Democrats made their best effort in recent history to attract candidates. They still fell far short of filling the ballot with 19 candidates for the 35-member Senate and 33 candidates for the 70-member House. It's hard to believe this new system would hurt the Republican Party given that they're fielding so many more candidates than Democrats.

Some citizens may be happy with keeping most of the old system and just constitutionally mandating that the primaries be open to all registered voters. It only seems fair that people who pay for an election get to take part in it.

This fall, South Dakota voters will have to decide if they like the other big change in Amendment H, advancing the top primary candidates with the most votes to the fall election regardless of party affiliation.

2024 South Dakota voter guide

Primary election

Date: June 4.

Voter registration: Closed (deadline was May 20).

Early/absentee voting: Underway.

General election

Date: Nov. 5.

Voter registration deadline: Oct. 21.

Early/absentee voting: Begins Sept. 20.

Voter information

Register: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/voting/register-to-vote/default.aspx>.

Vote early: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/voting/absentee-voting.aspx>.

Find your polling place and sample ballot: <https://vip.sdsos.gov/VIPLgin.aspx>.

Candidate list: <https://vip.sdsos.gov/candidatelist.aspx?eid=651>.

Ballot questions: <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/upcoming-elections/general-information/2024/2024-ballot-questions.aspx>.

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

USDA aims to aid small farmers by barring pay deductions from poultry companies

BY: LIA CHIEN - JUNE 3, 2024 5:42 PM

WASHINGTON — A rule proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture would eliminate pay deductions for chicken producers, Secretary Tom Vilsack said Monday.

Under the current poultry payment system, an incentive-based arrangement known within the industry as a tournament system, farmers who raise poultry earn a base payment from the companies that buy the product and bring it to a retail market.

Companies contract with producers to supply broiler chicks, feed, and veterinary care and then it's up to the farmers to raise healthy, substantial chickens at a mutually agreed price.

Farmers have opportunities for bonuses based on the quality of their flock.

But companies can also deduct pay from producers' base pay based on that year's market. If demand is down or if one producer successfully raises more chickens than another producer, the chicken company can deduct pay from the lesser farmer's contracted compensation.

The proposed rule would prohibit companies from deducting that pay.

"If you're going to establish a base pay, then it can't go below that," Vilsack said at a Monday press conference.

Industry groups say the tournament system makes sense economically and promotes competition in the chicken industry.

But critics, including groups that advocate for farmers, say it often harms smaller farmers, leading to a more consolidated industry and a tougher market for producers.

Vilsack said Monday that the USDA's proposed rule would not compromise the quality of meat sold to grocery shoppers around the country, but rather balance the relationship between producers and companies.

This rule is one of several new rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act enacted by President Joe Biden's administration seeking to combat monopolization in the agricultural industry. Congress passed the Packers and Stockyards Act in 1921 to regulate competition in livestock markets.

In 2021, under Biden's Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy, the administration aimed to ensure fair industry competition and equitable practices.

USDA finalized the Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity rule in March as part of this executive order. The rule addresses mistreatment and discrimination of livestock and poultry producers based on identity factors such as race, religion, national origin or sex.

The Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems rule now enters a public comment period where industry members, consumers and others can offer feedback. It may then be revised and if allowed, published as a final ruling in the Federal Register.

Lia is a Capitol Reporting Fellow based in the States Newsroom Washington, D.C Bureau. She is passionate about covering agriculture, climate, and education policy areas.

Fauci defends his work on COVID-19, says he has an 'open mind' on its origins

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 3, 2024 3:45 PM

WASHINGTON — Dr. Anthony Fauci defended his decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic on Monday, testifying before Congress about his work on the virus as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases during two presidencies.

House Republicans who called the hearing grilled Fauci during the contentious three-hour session about the origins of COVID-19, which killed more than 1 million Americans, as well as Fauci's role in the response. It was the first time Fauci, 83, who also served as chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, had ap-

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peared before Congress since leaving government employment in 2022.

Fauci repeatedly said he didn't conduct official business using personal email in response to allegations he did so to avoid oversight. He also said he has kept an open mind about the origins of the virus, and explained to members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic why guidance shifted so much during the first several months of the pandemic.

"When you're dealing with a new outbreak, things change," Fauci said. "The scientific process collects the information that will allow you, at that time, to make a determination or recommendation or a guideline."

"As things evolve and change and you get more information, it is important that you use the scientific process to gain that information and perhaps change the way you think of things, change your guidelines and change your recommendation," Fauci added.

Republicans on the panel repeatedly asked Fauci about how the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China received grant funding from the U.S. government, as well as whether it, or another lab, could have created COVID-19. That theory is counter to another that the virus emerged from a "spillover event" at an outdoor food market.

Fauci testified that it was impossible the viruses being studied at the Wuhan Institute under an NIH subgrant could have led to COVID-19, but didn't rule out it coming from elsewhere.

"I cannot account, nor can anyone account, for other things that might be going on in China, which is the reason why I have always said and will say now, I keep an open mind as to what the origin is," Fauci said. "But the one thing I know for sure, is that the viruses that were funded by the NIH, phylogenetically could not be the precursor of SARS-CoV-2."

Fauci added that the \$120,000 grant that was sent to another organization before being sent to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, was a small piece of the budget.

"If they were going to do something on the side, they have plenty of other money to do it. They wouldn't necessarily have to use a \$120,000 NIH grant to do it," Fauci said.

The NIH subaward to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, he testified, "funded research on the surveillance of and the possibility of emerging infections."

"I would not characterize it as dangerous gain-of-function research," Fauci said. "I've already testified to that effect, a couple of times."

Politicians have used multiple, often shifting, definitions for gain-of-function research during the last few years. The American Society for Microbiology writes in a two-page explainer that it is "used in research to alter the function of an organism in such a way that it is able to do more than it used to do."

Saving lives

Actions taken during the first several months of the pandemic were essential to saving lives, Fauci testified. Those steps included encouraging people to socially distance, to wear masks and to obtain the vaccine once it was approved.

Fauci said that had public health officials just let the virus work its way through the country without any precautions or safety measures, "there very likely would have been another million people (who) would have died."

Information about the COVID-19 vaccine, he said, was communicated as it came in, including particulars about whether it would stop the spread of the virus entirely or whether it predominantly worked by limiting severe illness and hospitalizations.

The issue is particularly "complicated," Fauci said, because at the very beginning of the vaccine rollout, data showed the shot did "prevent infection and subsequently, obviously, transmission."

"However, it's important to point out, something that we did not know early on that became evident as the months went by, is that the durability of protection against infection, and hence transmission was relatively limited — whereas the duration of protection against severe disease, hospitalization and deaths was more prolonged," Fauci testified.

"We did not know that in the beginning," he added. "In the beginning it was felt that, in fact, it did pre-

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vent infection and thus transmission. But that was proven, as time went by, to not be a durable effect.” Republican members on the subcommittee, as well as those sitting in from other committees, repeatedly asked Fauci about allegations that he avoided using his government email address to circumvent requests for those communications under the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA.

Fauci vehemently denied the accusations, saying he “never conducted official business using” his personal email.

Death threats

Michigan Democratic Rep. Debbie Dingell asked Fauci during the hearing about threats he and his family have faced during the last few years, especially as misinformation and disinformation about COVID-19 have spread.

“There have been credible death threats, leading to the arrests of two individuals. And credible death threats means someone who clearly was on their way to kill me,” Fauci testified.

Fauci and his wife and three daughters have received harassing emails, text messages and letters. Fauci said people targeting his family for his public health work makes him feel “terrible.”

“It’s required my having protective services, essentially all the time,” Fauci testified. “It is very troublesome to me.”

One of the most critical Republicans on the panel, Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, caused the hearing to grind to a halt during her questioning, refusing to address Fauci as a medical doctor and instead calling him “Mr. Fauci.”

Greene also alleged that Fauci should be in jail, though she didn’t present any evidence of actual crimes, nor has any police department or law enforcement agency charged him with a crime.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin, ranking member on the Committee on Oversight and Accountability, of which the subcommittee is a part, said repeated GOP-led investigations into Fauci’s conduct show “he is an honorable public servant, who has devoted his entire career to the public health in the public interest. And he is not a comic book super villain.”

Raskin later apologized to Fauci for several GOP lawmakers treating him like a “convicted felon,” before seemingly referencing that former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, is a convicted felon.

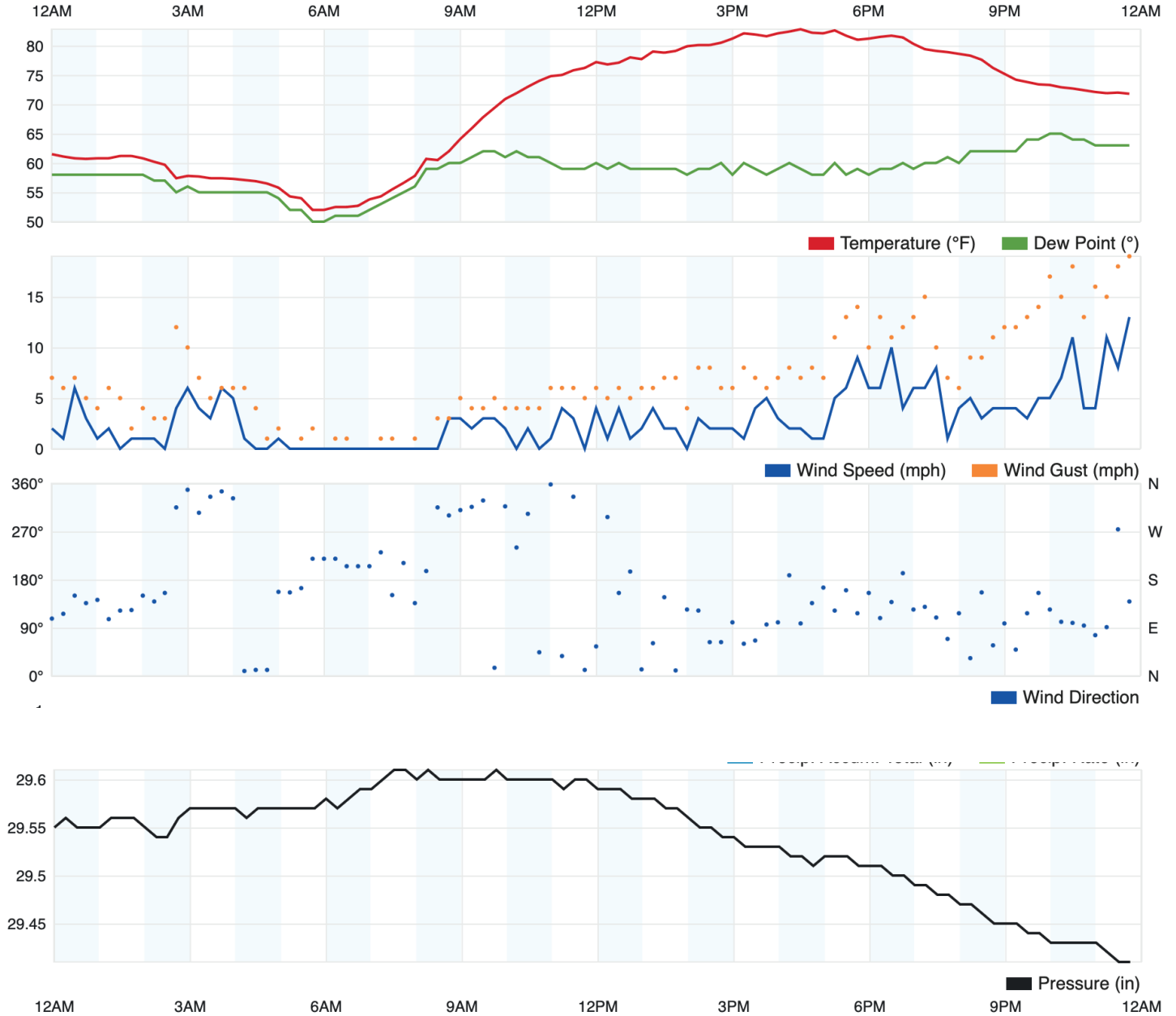
“Actually, you probably wish they were treating you like a convicted felon. They treat convicted felons with love and admiration,” Raskin said. “Some of them blindly worship convicted felons.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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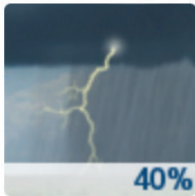
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Tuesday



High: 74 °F

Chance
T-storms

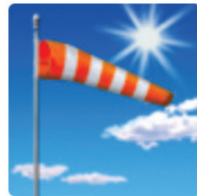
Tuesday Night



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 76 °F

Sunny and
Breezy

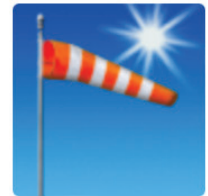
Wednesday
Night



Low: 53 °F

Mostly Clear
and Breezy
then Mostly
Clear

Thursday



High: 76 °F

Sunny and
Breezy

Today



Highs: 70s

Showers & a few weak thunderstorms ending over central South Dakota this morning, and over eastern South Dakota & west central Minnesota this afternoon

Forecast for the rest of the week...

Highs in the 70s to near 80°

Mainly dry after today!

Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/aberdeen



Dry weather will return to central South Dakota by late morning, and across eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota by this evening. The dry weather will continue through much of the remainder of the work week, with highs in the 70s to near 80 degrees.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 4:33 PM

Low Temp: 52 °F at 5:47 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 11:19 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 34 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1954

Average High: 77

Average Low: 52

Average Precip in June.: .44

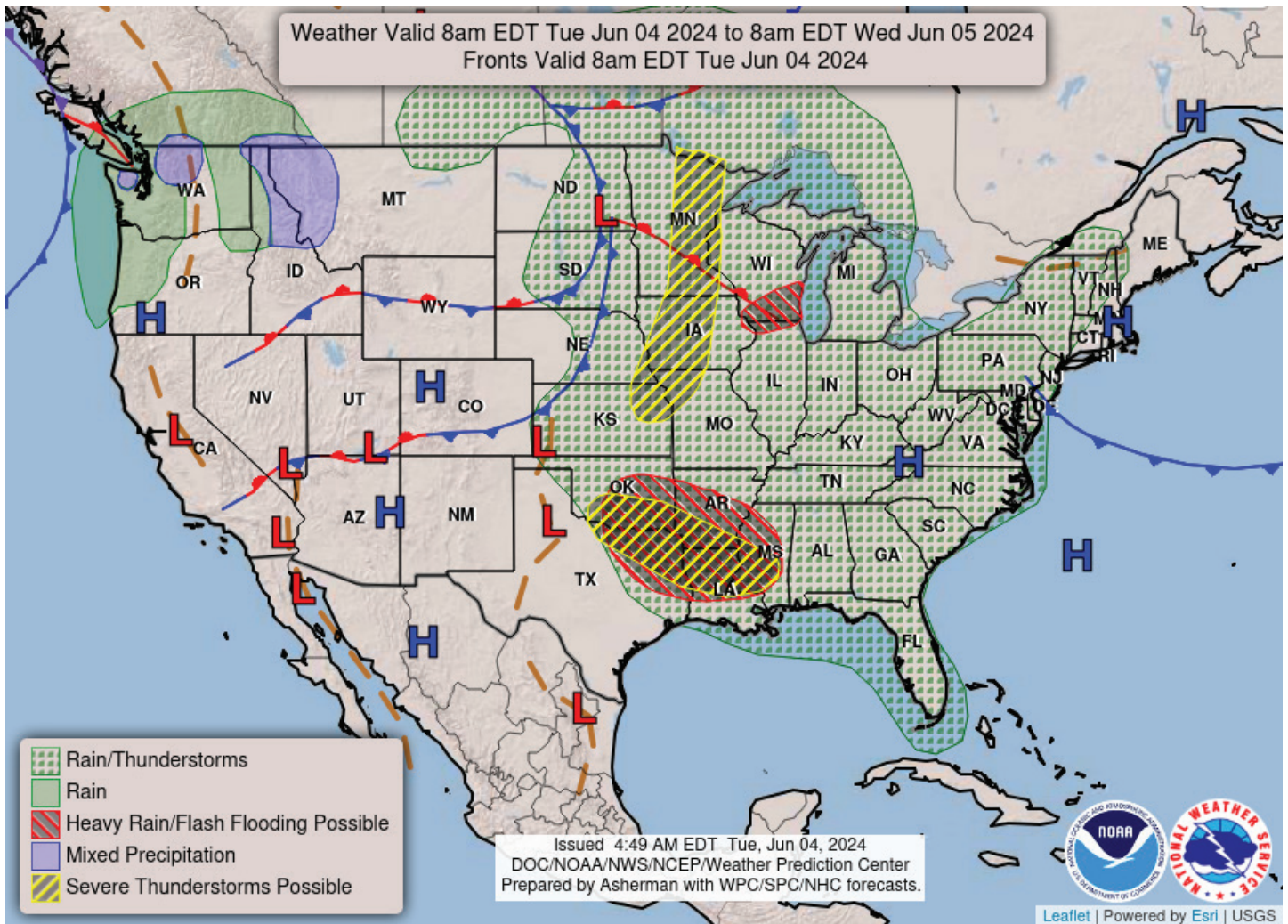
Precip to date in June: 0.03

Average Precip to date: 7.69

Precip Year to Date: 7.10

Sunset Tonight: 9:18:11 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43:10 am



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Today in Weather History

June 4, 1984: Heavy rains of up to seven inches caused the Bad River to rise over 23 feet in six hours at Fort Pierre. Flash flooding resulted as a dam, 17 miles west of Fort Pierre gave way, and an irrigation dam near town was damaged. Water covered some roads and bridges. Many homes had water damage. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting up to 60 mph downed numerous branches and several signs in Faulk, Edmunds, McPherson, and Brown Counties.

June 4, 1991: Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches caused street flooding in Harrold. Several county roads in Stanley, Sully, Hughes, and Lyman Counties were closed due to flooding. Some rainfall amounts include 1.83 inches at Oahe Dam; 1.96 inches, 12 miles SSW of Harrold; and 3.20 inches, two miles North of Onaka.

June 4, 1993: An earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale shook a portion of northeast South Dakota but caused no real damage or injuries. The epicenter of the quake was 22 miles northwest of Morris, Minnesota or 38 miles east of Sisseton and was felt in most of Roberts, Grant, and Deuel Counties. The quake was the first in the area since 1975.

1825: A severe storm of tropical origin swept up the Atlantic Coast during the first week of June 1825 with reports of significant damage from Florida to New York City. Shipping logs told of a disturbance at Santo Domingo on May 28th and Cuba on June 1st. Gales were reported at St. Augustine, Florida on the 2nd. The Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald reported "undiminished violence" from the gale force winds for 27 hours, ending on June 4th. The effect of the storm reached well inland. Washington had cold, heavy rain all day on the 4th with high winds laying the crops in the vicinity. The wind also tore up trees by the roots in front of the State House in Philadelphia. This storm impacted the New Jersey Coast and the Long Island area as well with high winds and a two-foot storm surge. A Columbian frigate was driven ashore as were many smaller boats. The largest loss of life occurred along the Long Island shore when a schooner capsized. The entire crew of seven was lost.

1860 - Iowa's Commanche Tornado, with wind speeds estimated in excess of 300 mph, was unquestionably one of the worst experienced by early settlers, with nearly a million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1877: A tornado of estimated F4 intensity touched down just west of Mt. Carmel, Illinois and moved east-northeast, devastating the town. 20 businesses and 100 homes were damaged or destroyed. At least 16 people and as many as 30 were killed, with 100 others injured.

1982 - A four day storm began over New England which produced up to 14 inches of rain in southern Connecticut breaching twenty-three dams and breaking two others. Damage was estimated at more than 276 million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Early morning thunderstorms in south Texas produced 6.5 inches of rain at Hockheim, and five inches at Hallettsville, in just a few hours. Afternoon thunderstorms in Virginia deluged northern Halifax County with 5.5 inches of rain in two hours. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 76 mph at Dusty WA, and wind gusts to 88 mph at Swanquarter NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A dozen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Atlantic City NJ with a reading of 40 degrees. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Glasgow MT and Havre MT with readings of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern Plains Region and the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Atlantic Coast Region during the day and into the night. Just four tornadoes were reported, but there were 87 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ADVANCE!

When Caesar crossed the English Channel from Gaul and landed on the shore, he knew that the odds were against his winning the battle. After thinking of the seriousness of the situation, he did a strange thing.

When he landed on the shore, he had all of his men get off of the ships and gather around him. He then ordered all but a few to move forward and not look back. Then, he ordered the remaining few to stay with him. At his command they were to set fire to all of the ships.

After the first party made their way forward, he issued the order to set the ships ablaze. When the ships were blazing, he then gave another command for the men to turn around and see the burning ships.

The men were stunned as they looked at the burning vessels. They realized that they were now stranded in enemy territory and could not retreat to safety. There was nothing that they could do but advance and fight. And they did. With every ounce of strength they possessed, they fought their way forward and won!

When we are faced with overwhelming challenges and difficult decisions, we must look to God and ask Him what is the best way to advance and win the battle. He knows what we should do. However, we must trust in Him, His advice and His strength to be victorious.

Prayer: Each day, Lord, we face tasks that are trying and problems that are perplexing. May we look to You for Your insight and wisdom as we advance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6



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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.31.24

4 11 23 33 49 23

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$560,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.03.24

5 6 22 33 38 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,850,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 44 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.03.24

8 21 23 39 40 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.01.24

1 4 17 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$132,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.03.24

25 39 46 47 51 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 28 Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.03.24

19 29 35 36 45 16

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$185,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 28 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

3rd try at approving recreational marijuana in South Dakota makes the ballot

By JACK DURA and SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

South Dakota voters will decide again whether to legalize recreational marijuana, an issue with a frustrating history for backers of the ballot initiative in the conservative state.

On Monday, Secretary of State Monae Johnson's office validated a measure for the November general election ballot. It will be the third time South Dakota voters have weighed in on the question.

In 2020, voters passed a measure which was ultimately struck down in court. In 2022, voters defeated another attempt.

Twenty-four states have legalized recreational marijuana. Ohio voters did so most recently, in November 2023. Florida voters will also vote on the issue this fall. And other efforts are ongoing in other states, including North Dakota.

The South Dakota measure would legalize recreational marijuana for people 21 and older. The proposal has possession limits of 2 ounces of marijuana in a form other than concentrated cannabis or cannabis products. The measure also allows cultivation of plants, with restrictions. Measure backers plan to work with the Legislature to implement business licensing, tax and other regulations, if successful.

"We firmly believe that South Dakotans deserve to make their own choices on how they live their lives, including the freedom to responsibly use cannabis," said Zebadiah Johnson, political director for the campaign to legalize recreational marijuana, in a statement.

Opponent Jim Kinyon, chairperson of Protecting South Dakota Kids, said the state's voters already had a say on the issue and rejected recreational marijuana back in 2022. He criticized supporters' repeated efforts to put the issue to a vote.

"How many times does the state of South Dakota need to reject recreational marijuana before the industry will accept the decision of the state's citizens?" Kinyon said.

"I expect that the industry will triple down on their money to try and sway and dissuade voters," Protecting South Dakota Kids chairperson Jim Kinyon said.

Other initiated measures on South Dakota's ballot this fall are ones to protect abortion rights, to repeal the state food tax and to implement a "top two" primary election system.

Silence and heavy security in China and Hong Kong on 35th anniversary of Tiananmen crackdown

By KEN MORITSUGU and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Checkpoints and rows of police vehicles lined a major road leading to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Tuesday as China heightened security on the 35th anniversary of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests.

China has long quashed any memory of the killings, when the Chinese government ordered in the army to end the months-long protests and uphold Communist rule. An estimated 180,000 troops and armed police rolled in with tanks and armored vehicles, and fired into crowds as they pushed toward Tiananmen Square.

The death toll remains unknown to this day. Hundreds, if not thousands are believed to have been killed in an operation that started the night before and ended on the morning of June 4, 1989.

The crackdown became a turning point in modern Chinese history, ending a crisis in favor of Communist Party hardliners who advocated for control instead of political reforms.

The economy boomed in the ensuing decades, turning a once impoverished country into the world's second largest economy, but societal controls have been tightened since party leader Xi Jinping came to

power in 2012.

Across China, the event remains a sensitive and taboo subject that is heavily censored, and any mention or reference on social media is erased.

It was just another day in the Chinese capital, with hundreds of tourists lining the streets leading to gates to enter Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the former imperial palace that sits across from the north side of the square. Those who lost family members in the crackdown are generally prevented from gathering or grieving in public.

Asked by a foreign journalist for comment on the 35th anniversary during a daily foreign ministry briefing on Monday, spokesperson Mao Ning shrugged off the event.

"The Chinese government has long since come to a clear conclusion on the political disturbance that took place in the late 1980s," she said, without elaborating.

Tiananmen Mothers, a group formed by families of the victims, made an online appeal to the Chinese government to publish the names and numbers of those who died, grant compensation to the victims and their relatives and pursue the legal responsibility of those responsible.

"The June 4 tragedy is a historical tragedy that the Chinese government must face and explain to its people, and some people in the Government at that time should be held legally responsible for the indiscriminate killing of innocents," the group said in a letter signed by 114 family members and published on its website, which is blocked in China.

Tiananmen memorials have also been scrubbed out in Hong Kong — for years the only place in China where they could take place. On Tuesday, a carnival organized by pro-Beijing groups was held in a park that for decades was the site of a huge candlelight vigil marking the anniversary.

Police used a new national security law to arrest eight people over the past week for social media posts commemorating the crackdown, including Chow Hang-tung, a former organizer of the vigil. Several pro-democracy activists told The Associated Press that police had inquired about their plans for Tuesday.

Officers were out in force in Causeway Bay, a bustling shopping district close to the park where the vigil was held. Police briefly detained a performance artist the previous evening in the same neighborhood.

Some Hong Kong residents remembered the event privately, running 6.4 kilometers (4 miles) on Monday — a reference to the June 4 date — and sharing Tiananmen-related content on social media. The British consulate posted a photo on the social media platform X showing a smartphone's flashlight turned on with "VIIV," the Roman numerals for 6/4, printed on it.

An independent bookstore, which displayed "35/5" on its window — a roundabout reference to the date of the crackdown as May 35th — wrote on Instagram that police officers were stationed outside the shop for an hour on Sunday, during which they recorded the identity details of customers.

Hong Kong's leader John Lee did not answer directly when asked Tuesday whether residents could still publicly mourn the crackdown. He urged residents not to let down their guard against any attempts to cause trouble.

"The threat to national security is real," Lee said at a weekly briefing. "Such activities can happen all of a sudden and different people may use different excuses to hide their intention."

Commemorative events have grown overseas in response to the silencing of voices in Hong Kong. Vigils were planned in Washington, D.C., London, Brisbane and Taipei among other cities this year, as well as a growing number of talks, rallies, exhibitions and plays.

Tractors rumble in streets again ahead of EU polls. Farming is a big issue and the far right pounces

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BEERSEL, Belgium (AP) — The far-right Flemish Interest party had set up the demonstration in the picture-pretty rolling fields south of Brussels, ahead of the four-day European Union election starting Thursday. The goal was clear: Decrying how farmers would lose fertile land to what they see as overbearing environmentalists trying to turn it into a chain of woods, killing off a traditional way of life.

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It was also another show how agriculture has been instrumentalized by the populist and hard right groups throughout the 27-nation bloc.

In a final push on Tuesday, militant agricultural groups from more than a half dozen nations were converging on Brussels in a show of force that they hoped would sweep the progressive Green Deal climate pact off the table and give farmers the leeway they had for so long in deciding how to till the land. There too, the impact of the far right was clear, with representatives from several EU nations attending the protest that drew hundreds of tractors.

At last week's small protest south of the capital, farmer Eduard Van Overstraeten was growling. "As a farmer, you have just been turned into a number," he said. Of the 60 hectares (148 acres) he used to farm for wheat, corn and potatoes, he said he was forced to sell a quarter of it — including his farmhouse — to help make a string of distinct woods around Brussels to become one continuous nature zone to improve biodiversity and fight pollution.

Similar stories of discontent, centering on limiting use of manure and pesticides to forcing parts of farmland to be kept pristine nature zones for the benefit of birds and bees — and eventually the population at large — have driven this influential electoral base of conservative Christian Democrats further to the fringes of the right.

"Nobody defends us, so others have to come to power," said Van Overstraeten.

And just as a wealthy think tank funded by the self-proclaimed illiberal Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has helped Tuesday's and previous demonstrations in Brussels, it is the surging Flemish Interest party that does so at a local level.

"They are looking for another party that brings a credible story. And that is us," said Klaas Sloopmans, a parliamentarian for the Flemish Interest. "It is common sense that you need to protect farmers and food supplies."

It is the crux of the political issue that pits farmers against environmentalists, the greens and much of the left against the populist and far-right forces: do you protect farmers and food supplies by giving farmers free rein to work as they see best? Or by hemming them in and imposing strict regulations to cut pollution and promote a life closer to nature that would contain the excesses of climate change?

Over the past year though, scientific arguments have taken a second seat to the rumble of the street.

Crucially, the center parties, especially the Christian Democrats, have started to dither and waver toward the right following months of unrelenting demonstrations across the bloc, with hundreds of tractors often blocking essential economic lifelines or many of the Europe's great cities like Paris and Madrid.

As climate change, with droughts, heat waves, floods and fires, started to increasingly wreak havoc, the EU sought to bring tough laws as part of its Green Deal to make the bloc climate-neutral by 2050. Agriculture accounts for more than 10% of EU greenhouse gas emissions, from sources such as the nitrous oxide in fertilizers, carbon dioxide from vehicles and methane from cattle.

For years the EU became the globe's trendsetter which earned plenty of plaudits on the international stage, but lost its farming base, which was increasingly lost in myriad rules that sometimes pinpointed when could be sowed and reaped, and even had satellite surveillance to check on it. It was fodder for the extreme right, which railed in the European Parliament and in countless demonstrations about bureaucratic interference.

And at EU and national level, ambitious plans have already been curtailed. In the Netherlands, the new coalition plans are rife with measures that largely meet the demands of farmers and counter those of environmentalists. The coalition is dominated by the extreme right party of Geert Wilders.

The groundswell of defiance has driven many to a level of farming militancy not seen in decades. The Dutch Farmers Defense Force, which was behind Tuesday's march, often calls its members "fighters," and some of the demonstrations have resulted in violence.

Tuesday's march was supposed to be the culminating point of the months of protests, with rumors of up to 100,000 protesters coming. It was a fraction of that.

Jos Ubels, the No. 2 of the FDF, blamed nature's intervention. Much of Western Europe is going through its wettest spring in living memory and even in early June, land is unsown and blights are ravaging it, he said. "The weather has made it impossible."

The Latest | 2 Palestinians are killed in the West Bank and 11 are killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said Tuesday it killed two Palestinians, who it claimed were attempting to launch a shooting attack toward Israeli communities from the occupied West Bank. A surge of violence has gripped the West Bank since the October start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, where Palestinian health officials said Israeli strikes killed at least 11 people overnight into Tuesday.

A cease-fire proposal announced by United States President Joe Biden has placed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a crossroads. The proposal offers the possibility of ending Israel's war against Hamas, returning scores of hostages held by the militant group, quieting the northern border with Lebanon and potentially advancing a historic agreement to normalize ties with Saudi Arabia.

Israeli bombardments and ground operations in Gaza have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. Israel's expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians facing widespread hunger.

Israel launched the 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's military confirmed the deaths Monday of four more hostages held by Hamas. Around 80 hostages captured on Oct. 7 are believed to still be alive in Gaza, alongside the remains of 43 others.

Currently:

- The U.S. urges U.N. Security Council to support a cease-fire plan in Gaza announced by President Biden.
- Proposed Gaza cease-fire puts Netanyahu at a crossroads that could shape his legacy.
- Iran's acting top diplomat dismisses U.S.-proposed Gaza cease-fire deal in visit to Lebanon.
- Palestinian officials apply to join South Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide at the top U.N. court.
- Israeli airstrikes near Syria's Aleppo kill several, including an Iranian adviser, reports say.
- Israel declares four more hostages are dead in Gaza.

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

Here's the latest:

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL 11 PALESTINIANS OVERNIGHT IN THE GAZA STRIP

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Palestinian health officials in the Gaza Strip said Israeli strikes killed at least 11 people overnight into Tuesday, including a family of three and eight police officers.

A strike on a home in the built-up Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza late Monday killed two parents and their young daughter, while a second strike early Tuesday hit a police vehicle in the central town of Deir al-Balah, killing eight officers with the Hamas-run Interior Ministry.

An Associated Press journalist counted the bodies as they arrived Tuesday at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah and confirmed the details with hospital records.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames Hamas for their deaths because the militant group places fighters, underground tunnels and rocket launchers in dense, residential areas. The military rarely comments on individual strikes.

President Joe Biden detailed an Israeli cease-fire plan that the sides were considering.

The war, sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and noncombatants in its tally. Many of the dead have been women and children, the ministry says.

BRUSH FIRES SPARKED BY FIGHTING WITH HEZBOLLAH INJURES 6 SOLDIERS, ISRAELI MILITARY SAYS

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Tuesday that six soldiers were lightly injured in a brush fire in the country's north that was sparked by fighting with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

The blaze, which has been raging since Sunday, was mostly under control Tuesday, according to Israeli Army Radio. The Israeli military said it had sent reserve soldiers and equipment to assist Israel's Fire and Rescue services to stamp out the blaze.

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Fires sparked by fighting have ignited sporadically in recent weeks, but this week's blaze was more widespread and appeared to cause more damage. Israel's Nature and Parks Authority said around 10,000 dunams (2,500 acres) burned across northern Israel this week as a result of the brush fires.

Significant damage was caused to several nature reserves and parks that will take years to rehabilitate, the Nature and Parks Authority said. A total of nearly 40,000 dunams (9,900 acres) have burned since the end of May in multiple brush fires, many of which were started by rocket and other projectile fire launched by Hezbollah, the authority said.

Sharon Levy, the director of the Golan Region at the Nature and Parks Authority, said the dry summer season was exacerbating the fires.

Hezbollah began launching rockets at Israel a day after the war in Gaza broke out with Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. Since then, Israel and Hezbollah have been trading fire daily in violence that has pushed the region to the brink of wider war.

2 PALESTINIANS ARE KILLED IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Tuesday it killed two Palestinians who it claimed were attempting to launch a shooting attack toward Israeli communities from the occupied West Bank.

The military said the two approached the West Bank separation barrier and were killed by Israeli forces. The military provided a photo of a rifle it said the men were set to use to carry out the alleged attack.

The Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed the deaths, saying they took place near the city of Tulkarem. Residents of Israeli communities just outside the West Bank have reported an uptick in shootings emanating from the occupied Palestinian territory in recent days.

A surge of violence has gripped the West Bank since the October start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Israel has been cracking down on militancy in the West Bank, killing more than 500 people there since the start of the war, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Many of them were killed in fighting with the military or for throwing stones at troops. Others not involved in the confrontations have also been killed.

The Latest | India counts votes from a mega-election seen as a referendum on Modi

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW DELHI (AP) — India started counting votes Tuesday from its staggered, six-week election that was seen as a referendum on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decade in power and was expected to give him a third term in office.

Early leads showed fewer seats for Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party than expected. BJP is part of the National Democratic Alliance, whose parties were leading in 283 constituencies according to an early count. The Congress party is part of the INDIA alliance, which was leading in 232 constituencies.

A total of 272 seats are needed for a majority in parliament.

Nearly 970 million people — more than 10% of the world's population — were eligible to vote and turnout averaged 66%, according to official data. The tallying at counting centers in 543 constituencies could stretch well into the evening before final results are announced, though substantial leads are likely to emerge earlier.

India's vote is the latest in an unusually busy stretch of elections around the world that are challenging the status quo.

Currently:

- What to know as votes are being counted.
- The world's largest election, in photos.
- Voting ended Saturday in the election that's a referendum on Modi's decade in power.
- A scorching heat wave killed 14 in India before the final phase of voting.
- Modi touts India's roaring economy, but many feel left behind.

Here's the latest:

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MODI'S BJP IS AHEAD IN EARLY TALLIES, BUT WITH A STRONGER OPPOSITION SHOWING THAN EXPECTED

India's Election Commission says early counting of votes shows incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party comfortably ahead, but with a stronger than expected showing by the main opposition.

Some six hours into counting, Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP was ahead in 236 constituencies and had won two — including one uncontested — of 543 parliamentary seats.

The main opposition Congress party was leading in 99 constituencies.

The Election Commission does not release data on the percentage of votes tallied, but counting is expected to go on through the day. A total of some 642 million votes are being counted in the world's largest democratic exercise.

Modi's party is part of the National Democratic Alliance, whose parties were leading in 283 constituencies according to the early count, including the two won by BJP. The Congress party is part of the INDIA alliance, which was leading in 232 constituencies.

A total of 272 seats are needed for a majority in parliament.

INDIAN MARKETS ARE DOWN SHARPLY AS EARLY TALLIES SHOW A STRONGER CHALLENGE FROM THE OPPOSITION THAN EXPECTED

Indian markets, which closed at an all-time high Monday, were down sharply in midday trading Tuesday, after early leads showed fewer seats for Modi's governing BJP than had been expected.

Modi's party still showed a comfortable lead, according to early figures reported by India's election commission. but was facing a stronger challenge from the opposition than exit polls had projected.

India's benchmark stock indices, the NIFTY 50 and the BSE Sensex, were both down by more than 8% before recovering slightly. This followed a dip of more than 3% when markets opened.

The country's stock markets have boomed under Modi, whose pro-market policies have made him popular among India's corporations and businesspeople.

WORKERS TAKE HEAT PRECAUTIONS AS VOTES ARE COUNTED IN TEMPERATURES EXPECTED TOO REACH 106F

Temperatures in the Indian capital were down Tuesday from highs in the past week of 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit), but election officials and political parties were nonetheless taking precautions as votes were being counted.

Workers carried cases of water into one air-conditioned counting station in New Delhi early in the morning in preparation, while tents outside for security personnel and others were outfitted with industrial evaporative coolers.

Temperatures in the morning hovered around 37 C (99 F) in New Delhi and were expected to rise to 41 C (106 F) by the end of the day.

At the headquarters of the opposition Congress party, a tent was set up outside, equipped with evaporative coolers, for waiting media.

WOMEN ARE A KEY VOTING BLOC IN INDIA'S 2024 ELECTION

Indian women are a key voting bloc with more of them voting in recent elections than ever before. Most poll experts expect women voters to play a decisive role in determining the 2024 election results.

Political parties have been wooing them with monthly cash handouts, subsidized cooking gas cylinders and low-interest loans. Many such programs have particularly helped Modi's Bharatiya Janata party widen its support among them, especially in rural areas. The opposition alliance also tried to gain women's votes by unveiling programs that promised financial aid of \$1,200 per year to poor women, and promised to reserve 50% of government jobs for women if voted into power.

Women make up nearly 49% of India's total electorate. Turnout has grown in each recent major election — of women who were eligible to vote, 53% voted in 2004; 56% in 2009; 65.5% in 2014; and 67% in 2019. Data for 2024 was not yet available but was estimated to resemble 2019's female voter turnout.

COUNTING STARTS WITH POSTAL BALLOTS THEN MOVES TO ELECTRONIC ONES

The counting of some 642 million votes cast in India's election is being done at various locations around

the country by government employees. Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar said they were starting with postal ballots and then move on to combining the votes from India's electronic voting machines.

The process is expected to be completed by the end of the day Tuesday.

India has close to 970 million eligible voters, and votes were cast at more than a million polling stations staggered over the last six weeks.

That brought the final phase into India's hottest season, with temperatures higher than 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in some parts of the country, and Kumar said the election officials learned a valuable lesson.

"We should have completed the election at least one month before," he said ahead of the start of the counting. "We shouldn't have let it continue into so much heat."

Modi's party well ahead in Indian elections in early vote count but opposition stiffer than expected

By KRUTIKA PATHI and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party showed a comfortable lead Tuesday, according to early figures reported by India's Election Commission, but was facing a stronger challenge from the opposition than had been expected.

The counting of more than 640 million votes cast over the past six weeks in the world's largest democratic exercise was expected to take all day, with Modi widely expected to be elected to a third five-year term when the final result is declared.

If the 73-year-old Modi wins, it would only be the second time an Indian leader has retained power for a third term after Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister.

Some four hours into the counting, early leads reported by the Election Commission showed Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party comfortably ahead of the main opposition Congress party.

The preliminary figures showed the BJP ahead in 240 constituencies out of 542 and winning one uncontested race. Congress was leading in 94 constituencies.

Modi's National Democratic Alliance group was leading in 287 constituencies, while the opposition INDIA alliance, led by the Congress party and its main campaign leader, Rahul Gandhi was leading in 225.

The Election Commission does not release data on the percentage of votes tallied, but counting was to go on throughout the day and early figures were expected to change.

Exit polling from the weekend had projected the NDA to win more than 350 seats. Indian markets, which had hit an all-time high on Monday, were down sharply in midday trading Tuesday, with benchmark stock indices — the NIFTY 50 and the BSE Sensex — both down by more than 7%.

Some 642 million people voted in the election, with an average 66% turnout across the seven phases, according to official data.

Extreme heat struck India as voters went to the polls, with temperatures higher than 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in some parts of the country. The chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar said officials had learned a valuable lesson. "We should have completed the election at least one month before," he said. "We shouldn't have let it continue into so much heat."

Temperatures were somewhat lower on Tuesday for the counting, but election officials and political parties still took precautions, hauling in large quantities of water and installing evaporative coolers for people outside the buildings where votes were being tallied and party headquarters.

On Tuesday, BJP workers outside the party's office in New Delhi performed a Hindu ritual shortly after the counting began. Meanwhile, supporters at the Congress party headquarters appeared upbeat and chanted slogans praising Gandhi, the party's campaign face.

In his 10 years in power, Modi has transformed India's political landscape. His popularity has outstripped that of his party's, and has turned a parliamentary election into one that increasingly resembles a presidential-style campaign. The result is that the BJP relies more and more on Modi's enduring brand to stay in power, with local politicians receding into the background even in state elections.

"Modi was not just the prime campaigner, but the sole campaigner of this election," said Yamini Aiyar, a public policy scholar.

His supporters see him as a self-made, strong leader who has improved India's standing in the world, and credit his pro-business policies with making the economy the world's fifth-largest.

But a decade of his leadership has also left the country deeply divided. Modi's critics and opponents say his Hindu-first politics have bred intolerance, hate speech and brazen attacks against the country's minorities, especially Muslims, who comprise 14% of the population.

India's economy, one of the fastest-growing, has become more unequal under Modi. While stock markets reach record-highs and millionaires multiply, youth unemployment has soared, with only a small portion of Indians benefitting from the economic boom.

The country's democracy, Modi's critics say, is faltering under his government, which has increasingly wielded strong-arm tactics to subdue political opponents, squeeze independent media and quash dissent. The government has rejected such accusations and say democracy is flourishing.

As polls opened in mid-April, a confident BJP initially focused its campaign on "Modi's guarantees," highlighting the economic and welfare achievements that his party says have reduced poverty. With him at the helm, "India will become a developed nation by 2047," Modi repeated in rally after rally.

But the campaign turned increasingly shrill, as Modi ramped up polarizing rhetoric that targeted the Muslim minority, a tactic seen to energize his core Hindu majority voters.

His opposition, the INDIA alliance led by the Congress party, has attacked Modi over his Hindu nationalist politics. It hopes to benefit from the simmering economic discontent, and its campaign has rallied around issues of joblessness, inflation and inequality.

But the broad alliance of over a dozen political parties has been beset by ideological differences and defections, raising questions over their effectiveness. Meanwhile, the alliance has also claimed they've been unfairly targeted, pointing to a spree of raids, arrests and corruption investigations against their leaders by federal agencies they say are politically motivated. The government has denied this.

Another victory would cement Modi as one of the country's most popular and important leaders. It would follow a thumping win in 2019, when the BJP won 303 out of 543 parliamentary seats.

With time short, veterans seize the chance to keep their D-Day memories alive for others

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ken Hay's part in the invasion of Normandy lasted just a few weeks, but he wants to make sure the experiences of those who fought and died to end the Nazi grip on Europe live forever.

The British Army veteran was captured a few weeks after the D-Day landings in northern France when his patrol was surrounded by German troops during the two-month battle for strategic high ground outside the city of Caen known simply as Hill 112. Nine members of his platoon were killed that night. Hay spent the next 10 months as a prisoner of war.

Now 98, Hay visits schools whenever he can to tell his story, so the battle to liberate France and defeat Nazi Germany doesn't become a dusty relic of history like the Greek and Roman wars he read about as a child.

"While we are around, we vets — and we're a diminishing crew, of course — we are a tangible interpretation of what they read in the books, what they've heard from their parents, what their parents remember their grandparents saying," Hay said recently.

He said his outreach isn't to glorify war but to leave the message that "there must be a way, other than war, to resolve difficulties."

One hears that over and over from the veterans who are gathering in Normandy this week to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day. With even the youngest of those men and women nearing their 100th birthdays and their ranks dwindling rapidly, they feel a special imperative to tell their stories.

They know this is likely to be the last major event to commemorate the sacrifices of those who fought

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and died to liberate France.

World leaders have recognized the significance of the event. U.S. President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose countries supplied most of the D-Day forces, will travel to Normandy for the ceremonies, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron. King Charles III, whose mother and father served during World War II, will attend an event at the British Normandy Memorial.

D-Day began in the early hours of June 6, 1944, when almost 160,000 Allied troops landed on the Normandy beaches or parachuted behind enemy lines to open the long-awaited second front in the war against Nazi Germany. At least 4,414 troops were killed and another 5,900 were listed as missing or wounded as Allied forces broke through the Nazis' heavily fortified "Atlantic Wall" to secure a foothold in Northern Europe.

By the end of August, more than 2 million forces from 12 Allied nations had crossed the English Channel, starting the march to Berlin that ended with Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945.

No one knows exactly how many of the men and women who saw those events firsthand are still living. Less than 1% of the 16.4 million Americans who served in the armed forces during World War II were still alive at the end of last year, and 131 are dying every day, according to estimates from the U.S. Veterans Administration.

"The actuarial tables tell us that pretty soon there won't be a generation," said Rob Citino, a senior historian at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans. "And I think this 80th is the last round year in which we will actually be able to celebrate in the presence, and with the wisdom of, the veteran generation that actually fought the war."

What's being lost are the men and women who witnessed Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the fall of France and the persecution of Jews now known as the Holocaust, then fought their way across Europe to defeat the Nazis.

In the U.K., the passing of the World War II generation was highlighted by the death in 2022 of Queen Elizabeth II, who trained as a military mechanic and truck driver during the final months of the war.

D-Day was the biggest operation of the war and a moment of high drama because everyone knew the Allies would invade Europe, they just didn't know when or where, said Ian Johnson, a professor of war, diplomacy and technology at the University of Notre Dame.

But 80 years later, many people's vision of D-Day is being shaped by Hollywood productions such as "Saving Private Ryan," not the experiences of the veterans who were there.

"You know, most of my students were not alive when that movie was made," Johnson said. "They've almost all seen it. This is something that, when they think of the Second World War, this is what they picture, I think."

The success of D-Day wasn't guaranteed.

Allied commanders employed trickery, including a dummy army, to fool the Germans about where the invasion would take place and struggled to find a day with the right combination of weather, moon and tides to increase the chances of success.

They knew that failure would prolong the war, meaning more death and misery across Europe.

"It's hundreds of thousands of military casualties, and we can only guess how many more civilian casualties of Hitler's racial policies, his murderous racial policy," Citino said. "So you want to end this war and you want to end it quickly, and the path to do that is a successful landing in Western Europe."

Even with the success of D-Day, Jews continued to die in Nazi concentration camps.

Anne Frank, who spent more than two years hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam, listened to BBC reports of the D-Day landings and wrote in her famous diary that the news filled her with "fresh courage." Her family was arrested in August 1944 and she died of typhus at Bergen-Belsen in February 1945.

Last month at a school in east London, Hay recounted his firsthand account of Nazi cruelty.

After he and four other members of his platoon were captured, they were shipped to Poland by train and put to work in a coal mine. As Russian forces closed in from the east in January 1945, the prisoners

were marched back across the continent with little food or protection from the weather until they were freed by U.S. tank troops on April 22.

The two American soldiers who liberated him are the most important people in his life, Hay said, except of course for his late wife, Doris. They were married for 62 years.

The man the kids named "Grandad Ken" talked about hunger and cold and pain. He held back on some details, though, afraid to tell the "kiddies" all the horrors he had seen.

But he was ready when Joey Howlett, 11, asked how to end war.

"Love," Hay said.

"If you love yourself, if you love your family, if you love your friends, if you love the people you met yesterday, and the people you meet today and the people you're going to meet tomorrow. If we could all do that, there would be no wars."

Craft unfurls China's flag on the far side of the moon and lifts off with lunar rocks to bring home

By EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China said its lunar spacecraft unfurled the country's red and gold flag for the first time on the far side of the moon before part of the vehicle blasted off early Tuesday with rock and soil samples to bring back to Earth.

The mission was hailed as a success in China, which has made significant advances in a space program that aims to put a person on the moon before the end of this decade.

The Chang'e-6 probe was launched last month and its lander touched down on the far side of the moon Sunday. Its ascender lifted off Tuesday morning at 7:38 a.m. Beijing time, with its engine burning for about six minutes as it entered a preset orbit around the moon, the China National Space Administration said.

The agency said the spacecraft withstood a high temperature test on the lunar surface, and acquired the samples using both drilling and surface collection before stowing them in a container inside the ascender of the probe as planned.

The container will be transferred to a reentry capsule that is due to return to Earth in the deserts of China's Inner Mongolia region about June 25.

The small flag, which the agency said was made of special composite materials, emerged on a retractable arm deployed from the side of the lunar lander and was not placed onto the lunar soil, according to an animation of the mission released by the agency.

"Mission accomplished!" Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying wrote on X. "An unprecedented feat in human lunar exploration history!"

Missions to the moon's far side are more difficult because it doesn't face the Earth, requiring a relay satellite to maintain communications. The terrain is also more rugged, with fewer flat areas to land.

Xinhua said the probe's landing site was the South Pole-Aitken Basin, an impact crater created more than 4 billion years ago that is 13 kilometers (8 miles) deep and has a diameter of 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles).

It is the oldest and largest of such craters on the moon, so may provide the earliest information about it, Xinhua said, adding that the huge impact may have ejected materials from deep below the surface.

The mission is the sixth in the Chang'e moon exploration program, which is named after a Chinese moon goddess. It is the second designed to bring back samples, following the Chang'e 5, which did so from the near side in 2020.

The moon program is part of a growing rivalry with the U.S. — still the leader in space exploration — and others, including Japan and India. China has put its own space station in orbit and regularly sends crews there.

China aims to put a person on the moon before 2030, which would make it the second nation after the United States to do so. America is planning to land astronauts on the moon again — for the first time in more than 50 years — though NASA pushed the target date back to 2026 earlier this year.

Mexico's next president faces 3 pressing challenges: money, dialogue and the US election

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's newly elected president, the first woman to win the job, faces a long list of challenges, including persistent cartel violence, a deeply divided country, cash-straitened social programs and the long shadow of her mentor, outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

But for some analysts it mostly comes down to three things: money, dialogue and the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.

Claudia Sheinbaum, who begins her six-year presidential term Oct. 1, has four months ahead of her to define her administration's agenda. During this time, López Obrador is expected to continue delivering his daily morning press briefings as he tries to solidify his legacy.

The coexistence might be far from easy: He has divided society; she says she wants to unite it. He is a leader of the masses; she is an academic and a scientist.

López Obrador has said he will not interfere with his protege's administration. "I do not aspire to be a 'moral leader,' a 'maximum boss,' a 'caudillo,'" he said Monday.

He has insisted that once his presidency is over, he is going to "talk with the trees, live with the birds." Yet, it was he who announced Monday that current Treasury Secretary Rogelio Ramírez de la O would remain in his post through the next administration in a bid to avoid a market meltdown.

The balance between continuity and change will not be simple.

A top economic challenge will be whether Sheinbaum will have the money to continue her predecessor's popular social programs, considering the government has a big deficit of almost 6% that the Treasury has vowed to reduce.

"There needs to be fiscal reform," said Isidro Morales, an economics and international relations expert. Otherwise, he warns, citing Mexico's decreasing oil income as one problem, "Claudia is going to have her hands tied."

Mexico's state-owned oil company Pemex is López Obrador's most fervent symbol of nationalism, but it continues to lose money and oil is far from the primary revenue stream it once was. Yet, it is a red line for Sheinbaum who, despite being a climate scientist who wants to move into clean energy, closed her campaign last week before gigantic banners of support from oil industry workers.

Mexico's presidential transition also happens to fall right into the heart of the U.S. presidential campaign. "Mexico's most important election is taking place on Nov. 5," said Carlos A. Pérez Ricart, a professor at Mexican public research center CIDE, referring to the U.S. presidential election.

President Joe Biden's reelection or the return to power of former President Donald Trump will be "the real variable that will change scenarios," Pérez Ricard said. The outcome could not only influence security, trade and immigration policies, but also many internal decisions about the role of Mexico's army, he said.

Sheinbaum studied in the U.S., speaks English and understands that country's politics, which would lead one to think there would be more understanding with Washington, but no one can control the Trump factor.

And when it comes to immigration and security, Mexico's new president is left only with the existing policies, which have only intermittently slowed migration to the U.S. border and failed to significantly lower Mexico's persistent violence.

To confront Mexico's increasing violence, analysts have said the country needs to strengthen civilian police and prosecutor's offices. Instead, López Obrador opted for militarizing the country, giving the armed forces unprecedented power in a bevy of civilian areas — from domestic security to construction — with the risks to human rights and accountability that implies.

It remains unclear what Sheinbaum will want from the military, what she could change or what kind of pressure the military could bring to bear on her.

Politically, her Morena party's congressional majority could be a double-edged sword.

For the approximately 40% of voters who did not support her, it will be seen as dangerous because if

preliminary results hold up, she could have enough lawmakers to amend the constitution. López Obrador has floated a host of controversial constitutional proposals, including eliminating institutions that provide checks on executive power and on subjecting judges to public elections.

It will be key that Mexico has a strong government that unquestionably defends the separation of powers, Pérez Ricart said.

Political scientist Luis Miguel Pérez Juárez, however, argues that Sunday's strong victory gives Sheinbaum "enormous power" for independent action, including from the party López Obrador created.

"She will not have to go to anyone," he said.

US urges UN Security Council to support cease-fire plan in Gaza announced by President Biden

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States urged the U.N. Security Council on Monday to support the three-phase plan announced by President Joe Biden aimed at ending the nearly eight-month war in Gaza, freeing all hostages and sending massive aid into the devastated territory.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United States circulated a draft resolution to the 14 other council members to back the proposal for ending the conflict that began with Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7 that killed some 1,200 people, mostly Israeli civilians.

"Numerous leaders and governments, including in the region, have endorsed this plan and we call on the Security Council to join them in calling for implementation of this deal without delay and without further conditions," she said in a statement.

The brief draft resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, would welcome the May 31 deal announced by Biden and call on Hamas "to accept it fully and implement its terms without delay and without condition." Hamas has said it views the proposal "positively."

It makes no mention of Israeli acceptance of the deal.

When Biden made the announcement he called it an Israeli offer that includes an "enduring cease-fire" and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza if Hamas releases all hostages it is holding.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his hardline governing partners Monday the proposal announced by Biden would meet Israel's goal of destroying Hamas, according to local media. The ultra-nationalists have threatened to bring down his government if Netanyahu agrees to a deal that doesn't eliminate Hamas.

Netanyahu told parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that Biden gave an outline of the deal but not all the details, and he said there are "gaps."

Biden said the first phase of the proposed deal would last for six weeks and include a "full and complete cease-fire," a withdrawal of Israeli forces from all populated areas of Gaza and the release of some 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. There would be a surge in humanitarian assistance, with 600 trucks a day entering Gaza.

In the second phase, all the rest of the living hostages would be released, including soldiers, and Israeli forces would withdraw from Gaza. Biden said if Hamas lives up to its commitments, the temporary cease-fire would become a "cessation of hostilities permanently."

About 250 people, mainly Israeli civilians, were abducted on Oct. 7, then more than 100 were freed in a short truce in late November and early December. Israel says about 80 hostages are believed to still be captive, alongside the remains of about 43 others.

Israeli bombardments and ground offensives in Gaza, which Hamas has ruled, have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

The third phase of the plan announced by Biden calls for the start of a major reconstruction of Gaza, which faces decades of rebuilding from devastation caused by the war.

The draft resolution stresses the importance of Israel and Hamas adhering to the deal once it is agreed to, "with the aim of bringing about a permanent cessation of hostilities, and calls upon all member states and the United Nations to support its implementation."

The draft would also reiterate the council's "unwavering commitment" to a two-state solution, and stress the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador, said Security Council members "have consistently called for the steps outlined in this deal: bringing the hostages home, ensuring a complete ceasefire, enabling a surge of humanitarian assistance into Gaza and in the refurbishment of essential services, and setting the stage for a long-term reconstruction plan for Gaza."

"Council members should not let this opportunity pass by," she said. "We must speak with one voice in support of this deal."

On Monday, the foreign ministers of five key Arab nations — Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt — urged Israel and Hamas to consider Biden's proposal "seriously and positively."

The group of seven major industrialized nations — the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Italy — also backed the cease-fire plan.

Mourners can now speak to an AI version of the dead. But will that help with grief?

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER and HALELUYA HADERO Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — When Michael Bommer found out that he was terminally ill with colon cancer, he spent a lot of time with his wife, Anett, talking about what would happen after his death.

She told him one of the things she'd miss most is being able to ask him questions whenever she wants because he is so well read and always shares his wisdom, Bommer recalled during a recent interview with The Associated Press at his home in a leafy Berlin suburb.

That conversation sparked an idea for Bommer: Recreate his voice using artificial intelligence to survive him after he passed away.

The 61-year-old startup entrepreneur teamed up with his friend in the U.S., Robert LoCascio, CEO of the AI-powered legacy platform Eternos. Within two months, they built "a comprehensive, interactive AI version" of Bommer — the company's first client.

Eternos, which got its name from the Italian and Latin word for "eternal," says its technology will allow Bommer's family "to engage with his life experiences and insights." It is among several companies that have emerged in the last few years in what's become a growing space for grief-related AI technology.

One of the most well-known start-ups in this area, California-based StoryFile, allows people to interact with pre-recorded videos and uses its algorithms to detect the most relevant answers to questions posed by users. Another company, called HereAfter AI, offers similar interactions through a "Life Story Avatar" that users can create by answering prompts or sharing their own personal stories.

There's also "Project December," a chatbot that directs users to fill out a questionnaire answering key facts about a person and their traits — and then pay \$10 to simulate a text-based conversation with the character. Yet another company, Seance AI, offers fictionalized seances for free. Extra features, such as AI-generated voice recreations of their loved ones, are available for a \$10 fee.

While some have embraced this technology as a way to cope with grief, others feel uneasy about companies using artificial intelligence to try to maintain interactions with those who have passed away. Still others worry it could make the mourning process more difficult because there isn't any closure.

Katarzyna Nowaczyk-Basinska, a research fellow at the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Future of Intelligence who co-authored a study on the topic, said there is very little known about the potential short-term and long-term consequences of using digital simulations for the dead on a large scale. So for

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now, it remains “a vast techno-cultural experiment.”

“What truly sets this era apart — and is even unprecedented in the long history of humanity’s quest for immortality — is that, for the first time, the processes of caring for the dead and immortalization practices are fully integrated into the capitalist market,” Nowaczyk-Basinska said.

Bommer, who only has a few more weeks to live, rejects the notion that creating his chatbot was driven by an urge to become immortal. He notes that if he had written a memoir that everyone could read, it would have made him much more immortal than the AI version of himself.

“In a few weeks, I’ll be gone, on the other side — nobody knows what to expect there,” he said with a calm voice.

PRESERVING A CONNECTION

Robert Scott, who lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, uses AI companion apps Paradot and Chai AI to simulate conversations with characters he created to imitate three of his daughters. He declined to speak about what led to the death of his oldest daughter in detail, but he lost another daughter through a miscarriage and a third who died shortly after her birth.

Scott, 48, knows the characters he’s interacting with are not his daughters, but he says it helps with the grief to some degree. He logs into the apps three or four times a week, sometimes asking the AI character questions like “how was school?” or inquiring if it wants to “go get ice cream.”

Some events, like prom night, can be particularly heart-wrenching, bringing with it memories of what his eldest daughter never experienced. So, he creates a scenario in the Paradot app where the AI character goes to prom and talks to him about the fictional event. Then there are even more difficult days, like his daughter’s recent birthday, when he opened the app and poured out his grief about how much he misses her. He felt like the AI understood.

“It definitely helps with the what ifs,” Scott said. “Very rarely has it made the ‘what if’s’ worse.”

Matthias Meitzler, a sociologist from Tuebingen University, said that while some may be taken aback or even scared by the technology — “as if the voice from the afterlife is sounding again” — others will perceive it as an addition to traditional ways of remembering dead loved ones, such as visiting the grave, holding inner monologues with the deceased, or looking at pictures and old letters.

But Tomasz Hollanek, who worked alongside Nowaczyk-Basinska at Cambridge on their study of “dead-bots” and “griefbots,” says the technology raises important questions about the rights, dignities and consenting power of people who are no longer alive. It also poses ethical concerns about whether a program that caters to the bereaved should be advertising other products on its platform, for example.

“These are very complicated questions,” Hollanek said. “And we don’t have good answers yet.”

Another question is whether companies should offer meaningful goodbyes for someone who wants to cease using a chatbot of a dead loved one. Or what happens when the companies themselves cease to exist? StoryFile, for example, recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, saying it owes roughly \$4.5 million to creditors. Currently, the company is reorganizing and setting up a “fail-safe” system that allows families to have access to all the materials in case it folds, said StoryFile CEO James Fong, who also expressed optimism about its future.

PREPARING FOR DEATH

The AI version of Bommer that was created by Eternos uses an in-house model as well as external large language models developed by major tech companies like Meta, OpenAI and the French firm Mistral AI, said the company’s CEO LoCascio, who previously worked with Bommer at a software company called LivePerson.

Eternos records users speaking 300 phrases — such as “I love you” or “the door is open” — and then compresses that information through a two-day computing process that captures a person’s voice. Users can further train the AI system by answering questions about their lives, political views or various aspects of their personalities.

The AI voice, which costs \$15,000 to set up, can answer questions and tell stories about a person’s life without regurgitating pre-recorded answers. The legal rights for the AI belongs to the person on whom

it was trained and can be treated like an asset and passed down to other family members, LoCascio said. The tech companies “can’t get their hands on it.”

Because time has been running out for Bommer, he has been feeding the AI phrases and sentences — all in German — “to give the AI the opportunity not only to synthesize my voice in flat mode, but also to capture emotions and moods in the voice.” And indeed the AI voicebot has some resemblance with Bommer’s voice, although it leaves out the “hms” and “ehs” and mid-sentence pauses of his natural cadence.

Sitting on a sofa with a tablet and a microphone attached to a laptop on a little desk next to him and pain killer being fed into his body by an intravenous drip, Bommer opened the newly created software and pretended being his wife, to show how it works.

He asked his AI voicebot if he remembered their first date 12 years ago.

“Yes, I remember it very, very well,” the voice inside the computer answered. “We met online and I really wanted to get to know you. I had the feeling that you would suit me very well — in the end, that was 100% confirmed.”

Bommer is excited about his AI personality and says it will only be a matter of time until the AI voice will sound more human-like and even more like himself. Down the road, he imagines that there will also be an avatar of himself and that one day his family members can go meet him inside a virtual room.

In the case of his 61-year-old wife, he doesn’t think it would hamper her coping with loss.

“Think of it sitting somewhere in a drawer, if you need it, you can take it out, if you don’t need it, just keep it there,” he told her as she came to sit down next to him on the sofa.

But Anett Bommer herself is more hesitant about the new software and whether she’ll use it after her husband’s death.

Right now, she more likely imagines herself sitting on the couch sofa with a glass of wine, cuddling one of her husband’s old sweaters and remembering him instead of feeling the urge to talk to him via the AI voicebot — at least not during the first period of mourning.

“But then again, who knows what it will be like when he’s no longer around,” she said, taking her husband’s hand and giving him a glance.

Israel declares 4 more hostages are dead in Gaza, including 3 older men from Hamas video

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Four more hostages kidnapped on Oct. 7 were declared dead by the Israeli military — including three older men seen in a Hamas video begging to be released. Monday’s announcement heightens pressure on the Israeli government to agree to a U.S. cease-fire proposal that could secure the return of the hostages still held in Gaza and end the eight-month war.

About 80 hostages in Gaza are believed to be alive, alongside the remains of 43 others. In the days since President Joe Biden announced the cease-fire proposal Friday, Israel has seen some of its largest protests calling on the government to bring them home. Although Biden said the proposal was Israeli, the Israeli leadership has appeared to distance itself from the plan, vowing to keep conducting military operations against Hamas until the militant group is destroyed.

All four of the men declared dead Monday night — Nadav Popplewell, Amiram Cooper, Yoram Metzger and Haim Peri — were kidnapped and taken into Gaza still alive, according to the Hostages Forum, a grassroots group representing the families of the hostages.

“It is time to end this cycle of sacrifice and neglect,” the group said following the announcement. “Their murder in captivity is a mark of disgrace and a sad reflection on the significance of delaying previous deals.” The group called on the government to immediately approve the new cease-fire plan.

Hundreds of people, including relatives of the captives, gathered outside Israel’s Defense Ministry and military headquarters in central Tel Aviv late Monday, calling for a deal. Smaller protests took place across the country.

About 100 captives were released during a weeklong exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners in

November. Three of the men declared dead Monday had female relatives who were released during the exchange.

Israel's military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said the four hostages were killed while they were together, during the army's operation in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. He said the four were killed months ago, but that recent operations allowed the military to gather enough intelligence to confirm the deaths.

Their bodies are still being held by Hamas, and the cause of death was not immediately known. Hamas claimed in May that the other hostage pronounced deceased, Nadav Popplewell, died after being wounded in an Israeli airstrike, but provided no evidence. Popplewell was over 50.

"We are checking all of the options. There are a lot of questions," Hagari said.

Cooper, Metzger and Peri were all age 80 or older. They appeared in a video in December released by Hamas under the title, "Don't let us grow old here." In the video, the three men appear gaunt, wearing thin white T-shirts.

"We are the generation who built the foundation for the state of Israel," Peri said, noting that all the men had chronic illnesses. "We do not understand why we have been abandoned here."

Cooper was an economist and one of the founders of Kibbutz Nir Oz, according to the hostages forum. Metzger helped to found the kibbutz winery and Peri built the community's art gallery and sculpture garden.

Nir Oz was among the hardest-hit towns near the border with Gaza during the Hamas attack Oct. 7, when Palestinian militants stormed Israel, killing some 1,200 people and hauling around 250 hostages back to Gaza.

The news late Monday came after an announcement earlier in the day that the body of a presumed hostage, Dolev Yehud, 35, was found in a community near the Gaza border that Hamas militants had attacked on Oct. 7. Yehud was thought to be among scores of hostages held in Gaza until Monday, when the military announced the discovery of his body and said he had been killed in the initial attack.

Israeli bombardments and ground operations in Gaza have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Israel has been expanding its offensive in the southern city of Rafah, once the main hub of humanitarian aid operations. The Israeli invasion of Rafah has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians facing widespread hunger.

Justice Department's 'deepfake' concerns over Biden interview audio highlights AI misuse worries

By DAN MERICA and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Releasing an audio recording of a special counsel's interview with President Joe Biden could spur deepfakes and disinformation that trick Americans, the Justice Department said, conceding the U.S. government could not stop the misuse of artificial intelligence ahead of this year's election.

A senior Justice Department official raised the concerns in a court filing on Friday that sought to justify keeping the recording under wraps. The Biden administration is seeking to convince a judge to prevent the release of the recording of the president's interview, which focused on his handling of classified documents.

The admission highlights the impact the AI-manipulated disinformation could have on voting and the limits of the federal government's ability to combat it.

A conservative group that's suing to force the release of the recording called the argument a "red herring."

Mike Howell of the Heritage Foundation accused the Justice Department of trying to protect Biden from potential embarrassment. A transcript of the interview showed the president struggling to recall certain dates and confusing details but showing a deep recall of information at other times.

"They don't want to release this audio at all," said Howell, executive director of the group's oversight project. "They are doing the kitchen sink approach and they are absolutely freaked out they don't have any good legal argument to stand on."

The Justice Department declined to comment Monday beyond its filing.

Biden asserted executive privilege last month to prevent the release of the recording of his two-day

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interview in October with special counsel Robert Hur. The Justice Department has argued witnesses might be less likely to cooperate if they know their interviews might become public. It has also said that Republican efforts to force the audio's release could make it harder to protect sensitive law enforcement files.

Sen. Mark Warner, the Democratic chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told The Associated Press that he was concerned that the audio might be manipulated by bad actors using AI. Nevertheless, the senator said, it should be made public.

"You've got to release the audio," Warner said, though it would need some "watermarking components, so that if it was altered" journalists and others "could cry foul."

In a lengthy report, Hur concluded no criminal charges were warranted in his handling of classified documents. His report described the 81-year-old Democrat's memory as "hazy," "poor" and having "significant limitations." It noted that Biden could not recall such milestones as when his son Beau died or when he served as vice president.

Biden's aides have long been defensive about the president's age, a trait that has drawn relentless attacks from Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee, and other Republicans. Trump is 77.

The Justice Department's concerns about deepfakes came in a court papers filed in response to legal action brought under the Freedom of Information Act by a coalition of media outlets and other groups, including the Heritage Foundation and the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

An attorney for the media coalition, which includes The Associated Press, said Monday that the public has the right to hear the recording and weigh whether the special counsel "accurately described" Biden's interview.

"The government stands the Freedom of Information Act on its head by telling the Court that the public can't be trusted with that information," the attorney, Chuck Tobin, wrote in an email.

Bradley Weinsheimer, an associate deputy attorney general for the Justice Department, acknowledged "malicious actors" could easily utilize unrelated audio recordings of Hur and Biden to create a fake version of the interview.

However, he argued, releasing the actual audio would make it harder for the public to distinguish deepfakes from the real one.

"If the audio recording is released, the public would know the audio recording is available and malicious actors could create an audio deepfake in which a fake voice of President Biden can be programmed to say anything that the creator of the deepfake wishes," Weinsheimer wrote.

Experts in identifying AI-manipulated content said the Justice Department had legitimate concerns in seeking to limit AI's dangers, but its arguments could have far-reaching consequences.

"If we were to go with this strategy, then it is going to be hard to release any type of content out there, even if it is original," said Alon Yamin, co-founder of Copyleaks, an AI-content detection service that primarily focuses on text and code.

Nikhel Sus, deputy chief counsel at Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said he has never seen the government raise concerns about AI in litigation over access to government records. He said he suspected such arguments could become more common.

"Knowing how the Department of Justice works, this brief has to get reviewed by several levels of attorneys," Sus said. "The fact that they put this in a brief signifies that the Department stands behind it as a legal argument, so we can anticipate that we will see the same argument in future cases."

Hunter Biden's federal firearms case is opening after the jury is chosen

By CLAUDIA LAUER, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, COLLEEN LONG and RANDALL CHASE Associated Press WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Lawyers will make their opening statements Tuesday in the federal gun case against President Joe Biden's son Hunter after a jury was seated for the trial while the first lady watched from the courtroom and the president sent a message of support.

Hunter Biden has been charged with three felonies stemming from a 2018 firearm purchase when he

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was, according to his memoir, in the throes of a crack addiction. He has been accused of lying to a federally licensed gun dealer, making a false claim on the application by saying he was not a drug user and illegally having the gun for 11 days.

The proceedings come after the collapse of a deal with prosecutors that would have avoided the spectacle of a trial so close to the 2024 election. Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty and has argued he's being unfairly targeted by the Justice Department after Republicans decried the now-defunct plea deal as special treatment for the Democratic president's son.

The trial is unfolding just days after Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was convicted of 34 felonies in New York City. The two criminal cases are unrelated, but their proximity underscores how the courts have taken center stage during the 2024 campaign.

Jury selection moved at a clip Monday in the president's home state, where Hunter Biden grew up and where, the elder Biden often says, the family is deeply established. Joe Biden spent 36 years as a senator there, commuting daily back and forth from Washington, D.C.

People just know the story of how Biden's two young sons, Hunter and Beau, were injured in the car accident that killed his wife and baby girl in the early 1970s. And Beau Biden was the former state attorney general before he died at 46 from cancer.

Some prospective jurors were dismissed because they knew the family personally; others because they held both positive and negative political views about the Bidens and couldn't be impartial. Still, it only took a day to find the jury of six men and six women plus four women serving as alternates, who will decide the case.

One potential juror who was sent home said she didn't know whether she could be impartial because of the opinion she had formed about Hunter Biden based on media reports.

"It's not a good one," she said.

Another was excused because he was aware of the case and said, "It seems like politics is playing a big role in who gets charged with what and when."

But much of the questioning focused on drug use, addiction and gun ownership, as attorneys sought to test prospective jurors' knowledge of the case, and dismiss those with strong thoughts on drug use, or who might want to regulate firearms — some of the very people Biden counts as constituents.

The panel of 12 was chosen out of roughly 65 people. Their names were not made public. They included a woman whose sister was convicted about 10 years ago of credit card fraud and drug charges in Delaware, a man whose father had been killed in a crime involving a gun, and a woman married to a former law enforcement officer who is also a licensed gun owner.

Hunter Biden also faces a separate trial in California in September on charges of failing to pay \$1.4 million in taxes. Both cases were to have been resolved through the deal with prosecutors last July, the culmination of a yearslong investigation into his business dealings.

But Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, questioned some unusual aspects of the deal, which included a proposed guilty plea to misdemeanor offenses to resolve the tax crimes and a diversion agreement on the gun charge, which meant as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years the case would be dismissed.

The lawyers could not come to a resolution on her questions, and the deal fell apart. Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed the top investigator, former U.S. attorney for Delaware, David Weiss, as a special counsel in August, and a month later Hunter Biden was indicted.

Opening statements come as Garland faces members of the Republican-led House judiciary committee in Washington, which has been investigating the president and his family and whose chairman has been at the forefront of a stalled impeachment inquiry stemming from Hunter Biden's business dealings.

The Delaware trial isn't about Hunter Biden's foreign business affairs, though the proceedings were likely to dredge up dark, embarrassing and painful memories.

The president's allies are worried about the toll the trial may take on the elder Biden, who's long been concerned about his only living son and his sobriety and who must now watch as his son's painful past mistakes are publicly scrutinized. And the president must do so while he's campaigning under anemic poll

numbers and preparing for an upcoming presidential debate with Trump.

In a statement Monday, the president said he has “boundless love” for his son, “confidence in him and respect for his strength.”

“I am the President, but I am also a Dad,” he said, adding that he would have no further comment on the case. “Jill and I love our son, and we are so proud of the man he is today.”

The first lady sat in court all day Monday, on her 73rd birthday, watching the proceedings quietly from the front row behind the defense table, as did Hunter Biden’s wife Melissa and sister Ashley. The president was nearby most of the day, camped at their Wilmington home. He departed after court adjourned for a campaign reception in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Aboard Air Force One Monday night, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was asked if the case might affect the president’s ability to do his job and replied, “Absolutely not.”

“He always puts the American people first, and is capable of doing his job,” said Jean-Pierre, who declined to say if Biden got updates on the trial throughout the day or spoke to his son after the proceedings’ conclusion.

Biden was traveling to France on Tuesday evening and will be gone the rest of the week. The first lady is scheduled to join him later this week.

The case against Hunter Biden stems from a period when, by his own public admission, he was addicted to crack. His descent followed the 2015 death of his brother from cancer. He bought and owned a gun for 11 days in October 2018 and indicated on the gun purchase form that he was not using drugs.

If convicted, Hunter Biden faces up to 25 years in prison, though first-time offenders do not get anywhere near the maximum, and it’s unclear whether the judge would give him time behind bars.

She’s the world’s most expensive cow, and part of Brazil’s plan to put beef on everyone’s plate

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

UBERABA, Brazil (AP) — Brazil has hundreds of millions of cows, but one in particular is extraordinary. Her massive, snow-white body is watched over by security cameras and an armed guard.

Worth \$4 million, Viatina-19 FIV Mara Movéis is the most expensive cow ever sold at auction, according to Guinness World Records. That’s three times more than the last recordholder’s price. And — at 1,100 kilograms (more than 2,400 pounds) — she’s twice as heavy as an average adult of her breed.

Along a highway through Brazil’s heartland, Viatina-19’s owners have put up two billboards praising her grandeur and beckoning people to make pilgrimages to see the supercow.

Climate scientists agree that people need to consume less beef, the largest agricultural source of greenhouse gasses and a driver of Amazon deforestation. But the cattle industry is a major source of Brazilian economic development and the government is striving to conquer new export markets. The world’s top beef exporter wants everyone, everywhere to eat its beef.

The embodiment of Brazil’s cattle ambitions is Viatina-19, the product of years of efforts to raise meatier cows. Prizewinners are sold at high-stakes auctions — so high that wealthy ranchers share ownership. They extract the eggs and semen from champion animals, create embryos and implant them in surrogate cows that they hope will produce the next magnificent specimens.

“We’re not slaughtering elite cattle. We’re breeding them. And at the end of the line, going to feed the whole world,” one of her owners, Ney Pereira, said after arriving by helicopter to his farm in Minas Gerais state. “I think Viatina will provide that.”

The cow’s eye-popping price stems from how quickly she put on vast amounts of muscle, from her fertility and — crucially — how often she has passed those characteristics to her offspring, said Lorrany Martins, a veterinarian who is Pereira’s daughter and right hand. Breeders also value posture, hoof solidity, docility, maternal ability and beauty. Those eager to level up their livestock’s genetics pay around \$250,000 for an opportunity to collect Viatina-19’s egg cells.

“She is the closest to perfection that has been attained so far,” Martins said. “She’s a complete cow, has

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all the characteristics that all the proprietors are looking for.”

INDIA TO BRAZIL

In Brazil, 80% of the cows are Zebu, a subspecies originating in India with a distinctive hump and dewlap, or folds of draping neck skin. Viatina-19 belongs to the Nelore breed, which is raised for meat, not milk, and makes up most of Brazil's stock.

The city of Uberaba, where Viatina-19 lives, holds an annual gathering called ExpoZebu that bills itself as the world's biggest Zebu fair. Held several weeks ago, it was a far cry from the Brazil that's imagined abroad. The dress code was boots, baseball caps and blue jeans. Evening concerts drew 10,000 spectators belting out their favorite country songs. But the main attraction was the daily cattle shows where cows compete for prizes that boost an animal's auction price.

The most prestigious auction is called Elo de Raça, held April 28. As the first cow entered the paddock, speakers blared Queen's "We Are the Champions." But that cow was a mere appetizer before this year's starlet, Donna, and three of her clones; the final sale price put her total value at 15.5 million reais (\$3 million.)

A commodities boom in the 2000s turbocharged Brazilian agriculture, especially with a rising China buying soy and beef. Today, agriculture's influence extends to Brazil's Congress and the national consciousness. And Brazil, along with the U.S., is at the forefront of cattle genetics.

Showstoppers like Donna and Viatina-19 are rarities in Brazil, which has more than 230 million cows, according to the USDA. It's the world's largest beef cattle population, and that's problematic; huge swaths of Amazon rainforest have been slashed to create pasture, releasing carbon stored in trees. And cows belch methane that's far worse for the climate.

Genetic improvements that reduce cows' slaughtering age are helpful but limited ways to reduce warming. Simpler, more effective measures include planting better grass for grazing and regularly moving cattle from pasture to pasture, said Beto Veríssimo, an agronomist and the co-founder of an environmental nonprofit called Imazon.

Meanwhile, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been working to open new markets. Last month, he met Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan, home to the premium, marbled Wagyu beef; he urged his counterpart to taste Brazilian meat and become a believer.

"Please," he said, addressing his vice president at the event, "take Prime Minister Fumio to eat steak at the best restaurant in Sao Paulo so that, the following week, he starts importing our beef."

SEND IN THE CLONES

Down the highway from the Elo de Raça auction is the laboratory of the company Geneal Animal Genetics and Biotechnology. In a small pen behind it, a cloned calf recently lay in the sunshine, still too unsure of its newborn legs to stand. Another born by cesarean section 20 minutes earlier pressed backwards against a stall's rear wall, unsettled by this strange new world. Clones of Viatina-19 are due in a few months, said Geneal's commercial director, Paulo Cerantola.

Some ranchers wouldn't want a big herd of her clones. High-maintenance cows like Viatina-19 aren't profitable on a large, commercial scale because they couldn't meet their energy needs from grass alone, said P.J. Budler, international business manager for Trans Ova Genetics, an Iowa-based company focused on improving the bovine gene pool.

"For the environment and the resources that it would take to run a cow like (Viatina-19), she fits the mold ideally, but she's not the answer for all cattle everywhere," Budler said.

Viatina-19's owner, Pereira, said she gets special treatment to boost egg cell production, but would thrive were she put to pasture — where almost all his elite cattle feed.

Meanwhile, Viatina-19 is pregnant for the first time, and Pereira's eyeing expansion; her egg cells have sold to Bolivian buyers and he wants to export to the United Arab Emirates, India and the US.

His veterinarian daughter, Martins, is looking even farther ahead.

"I hope she is the basis for an even better animal in the future, decades from now," she said.

Many Americans still shying away from EVs despite Biden push, AP-NORC/EPIC poll finds

By MATTHEW DALY and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Americans still aren't sold on going electric for their next car purchase. High prices and a lack of easy-to-find charging stations are major sticking points, a new poll shows.

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults say they would be at least somewhat likely to buy an EV the next time they buy a car, according to the poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago, while 46% say they are not too likely or not at all likely to purchase one.

The poll results, which echo an AP-NORC poll from last year, show that President Joe Biden's election-year plan to dramatically raise EV sales is running into resistance from American drivers. Only 13% of U.S. adults say they or someone in their household owns or leases a gas-hybrid car, and just 9% own or lease an electric vehicle.

Caleb Jud of Cincinnati said he's considering an EV, but may end up with a plug-in hybrid — if he goes electric. While Cincinnati winters aren't extremely cold, "the thought of getting stuck in the driveway with an EV that won't run is worrisome, and I know it wouldn't be an issue with a plug-in hybrid," he said. Freezing temperatures can slow chemical reactions in EV batteries, depleting power and reducing driving range.

A new rule from the Environmental Protection Agency requires that about 56% of all new vehicle sales be electric by 2032, along with at least 13% plug-in hybrids or other partially electric cars. Auto companies are investing billions in factories and battery technology in an effort to speed up the switch to EVs to cut pollution, fight climate change — and meet the deadline.

EVs are a key part of Biden's climate agenda. Republicans led by presumptive nominee Donald Trump are turning it into a campaign issue.

Younger people are more open to eventually purchasing an EV than older adults. More than half of those under 45 say they are at least "somewhat" likely to consider an EV purchase. About 32% of those over 45 are somewhat likely to buy an EV, the poll shows.

But only 21% of U.S. adults say they are "very" or "extremely" likely to buy an EV for their next car, according to the poll, and 21% call it somewhat likely. Worries about cost are widespread, as are other practical concerns.

Range anxiety — the idea that EVs cannot go far enough on a single charge and may leave a driver stranded — continues to be a major reason why many Americans do not purchase electric vehicles.

About half of U.S. adults cite worries about range as a major reason not to buy an EV. About 4 in 10 say a major strike against EVs is that they take too long to charge or they don't know of any public charging stations nearby.

Concern about range is leading some to consider gas-engine hybrids, which allow driving even when the battery runs out. Jud, a 33-year-old operations specialist and political independent, said a hybrid "is more than enough for my about-town shopping, dropping my son off at school" and other uses.

With EV prices declining, cost would not be a factor, Jud said — a minority view among those polled. Nearly 6 in 10 adults cite cost as a major reason why they would not purchase an EV.

Price is a bigger concern among older adults.

The average price for a new EV was \$52,314 in February, according to Kelley Blue Book. That's down by 12.8% from a year earlier, but still higher than the average price for all new vehicles of \$47,244, the report said.

Jose Valdez of San Antonio owns three EVs, including a new Mustang Mach-E. With a tax credit and other incentives, the sleek new car cost about \$49,000, Valdez said. He thinks it's well worth the money.

"People think they cost an arm and a leg, but once they experience (driving) an EV, they'll have a different mindset," said Valdez, a retired state maintenance worker.

The 45-year-old Republican said he does not believe in climate change. "I care more about saving green" dollars, he said, adding that he loves the EV's quiet ride and the fact he doesn't have to pay for gas or

maintenance. EVs have fewer parts than gas-powered cars and generally cost less to maintain. Valdez installed his home charger himself for less than \$700 and uses it for all three family cars, the Mustang and two older Ford hybrids.

With a recently purchased converter, he can also charge at a nearby Tesla supercharger station, Valdez said.

About half of those who say they live in rural areas cite lack of charging infrastructure as a major factor in not buying an EV, compared with 4 in 10 of those living in urban communities.

Daphne Boyd, of Ocala, Florida, has no interest in owning an EV. There are few public chargers near her rural home "and EVs don't make any environmental sense," she said, citing precious metals that must be mined to make batteries, including in some countries that rely on child labor or other unsafe conditions. She also worries that heavy EV batteries increase wear-and-tear on tires and make the cars less efficient. Experts say extra battery weight can wear on tires but say proper maintenance and careful driving can extend tire life.

Boyd, a 54-year-old Republican and self-described farm wife, said EVs may eventually make economic and environmental sense, but "they're not where they need to be" to convince her to buy one now or in the immediate future.

Ruth Mitchell, a novelist from Eureka Springs, Arkansas, loves her EV. "It's wonderful — quiet, great pickup, cheap to drive. I rave about it on Facebook," she said.

Mitchell, a 70-year-old Democrat, charges her Chevy Volt hybrid at home but says there are several public chargers near her house. She's not looking for a new car, Mitchell said, but when she does it will be electric: "I won't drive anything else."

The AP-NORC poll of 6,265 adults was conducted March 26 to April 10, 2024 using a combined sample of interviews from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population, and interviews from opt-in online panels. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points. The AmeriSpeak panel is recruited randomly using address-based sampling methods, and respondents later were interviewed online or by phone.

She's the world's most expensive cow, and part of Brazil's plan to put beef on everyone's plate

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

UBERABA, Brazil (AP) — Brazil has hundreds of millions of cows, but one in particular is extraordinary. Her massive, snow-white body is watched over by security cameras, a veterinarian and an armed guard.

Worth \$4 million, Viatina-19 FIV Mara Movéis is the most expensive cow ever sold at auction, according to Guinness World Records. That's three times more than the last recordholder's price. And — at 1,100 kilograms (more than 2,400 pounds) — she's twice as heavy as an average adult of her breed.

Along a highway through Brazil's heartland, Viatina-19's owners have put up two billboards praising her grandeur and beckoning ranchers, curious locals and busloads of veterinary students to make pilgrimages to see the supercow.

Climate scientists agree that people need to consume less beef, the largest agricultural source of greenhouse gasses and a driver of Amazon deforestation. But the cattle industry is a major source of Brazilian economic development and the government is striving to conquer new export markets. The world's top beef exporter wants everyone, everywhere to eat its beef.

The embodiment of Brazil's cattle ambitions is Viatina-19, the product of years of efforts to raise meatier cows. The country's prizewinners are sold at high-stakes auctions — so high that wealthy ranchers share ownership. They extract the eggs and semen from champion animals, create embryos and implant them in surrogate cows that they hope will produce the next magnificent specimens.

"We're not slaughtering elite cattle. We're breeding them. And at the end of the line, going to feed the whole world," one of her owners, Ney Pereira, said after arriving by helicopter at his farm in Minas Gerais

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The cow's eye-popping price stems from how quickly she put on vast amounts of muscle, from her fertility and — crucially — how often she has passed those characteristics to her offspring, said Lorrany Martins, a veterinarian who is Pereira's daughter and right hand. Breeders also value posture, hoof solidity, docility, maternal ability and beauty. Those eager to level up their livestock's genetics pay around \$250,000 for an opportunity to collect Viatina-19's egg cells.

"She is the closest to perfection that has been attained so far," Martins said. "She's a complete cow, has all the characteristics that all the proprietors are looking for."

A GRAND MATRIARCH

A commodities boom in the 2000s turbocharged Brazilian agriculture, especially with a rising China buying soy and beef. Today, agriculture's influence extends to Brazil's Congress and the national consciousness. Country music is booming. TV viewers can watch the massive Globo network's seven-year campaign exalting the sector. The Cow Channel features live auctions. And Brazil, along with the U.S., is at the forefront of cattle genetics; it does more in-vitro fertilizations than any country in the world, said João Henrique Moreira Viana, genetic resources and biotechnology researcher at the government's agricultural research corporation.

Viatina-19 won award after award — including "Miss South America" at the Fort Worth, Texas-based "Champion of the World" competition, a bovine version of Miss Universe where cows and bulls from different countries square off. But at 3 years old she hadn't yet proven that her egg cells, when fertilized and implanted in a surrogate cow, would reliably produce offspring bearing her champion characteristics, said Pereira, an internet executive who moved into elite cow breeding. He needed "a grand matriarch."

Such cows cost so much that people buy and sell partial ownership, and Pereira's company Napemo Agriculture paid several million reais (almost \$800,000) in a 2022 auction for a 50% stake in Viatina-19. Another rancher kept the other half, so the two would jointly make important decisions and split revenues.

As the auctioneer banged his gavel, the speakers blasted Elvis Presley's "Suspicious Minds." For Pereira, a lifelong Elvis fanatic, it was a sign.

"It gave me butterflies in the stomach," he said. "We were new breeders. It was a bit of boldness, a bit of feeling and a bit of heart, too."

Last year, Pereira and the other owner put a 33% stake in the cow up at auction. One bidder paid 7 million reais (\$1.3 million), making Viatina-19's full value break the Guinness record.

INDIA TO BRAZIL

In Brazil, 80% of the cows are Zebus, a subspecies originating in India with a distinctive hump and dewlap, or folds of draping neck skin. Viatina-19 belongs to the Nelore breed, which is raised for meat, not milk, and makes up most of Brazil's stock.

The first Zebus arrived in Brazil in the latter half of the 19th century and they proved far hardier than European stock. They coped well with the sweltering tropical heat, proved resistant to parasites and gained weight faster. A prizewinning Nelore bull named Karvardi arrived from India in 1963, and some breeders still preserve cryogenically frozen doses of his semen, according to Brazil's Zebu association. Draped in traditional Indian vestments, Karvardi's preserved body stands in the Zebu Museum in Uberaba, the city in Brazil's agricultural heartland where Viatina-19 lives.

Uberaba holds an annual gathering called ExpoZebu that bills itself as the world's biggest Zebu fair. Held several weeks ago, it was a far cry from the Brazil imagined abroad. The dress code was boots, baseball caps and blue jeans. Evening concerts drew 10,000 spectators belting out their favorite country songs. But the main attraction was the daily cattle shows. Ranchers came from as far away as Zimbabwe and Indonesia. Stockmen shaved cows' ears and the bases of their horns — the equivalent of a fresh human haircut to charm show judges and win prizes that boost an animal's auction price.

The most prestigious auction is called Elo de Raça, and Viatina-19 has been sold at increasingly higher prices there. Searchlights shooting into the night sky on April 28 summoned the hundreds fortunate enough to receive invitations. Arthur Lira, the speaker of Congress' Lower House, drove in followed by a car with his security detail. He was set to offer his 3-month-old calf.

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"The auctions always present the best of what each person has and that spreads to other people, other breeders, and the genetics evolve," said Lira, who ranches in Brazil's northeast.

As the first cow entered the paddock, speakers blared Queen's "We Are the Champions." But that cow was a mere appetizer before the auction of this year's starlet, Donna, and three of her clones. The final sale price put her total value at 15.5 million reais (\$3 million). Presenting Donna, the announcer said that each of the four produces 80 egg cells a month – quadruple an average Nelore – and called them "a factory."

"Donna shows where we are with the Nelore breed and where we will go!" he shouted.

NEW MARKETS

Showstoppers like Donna and Viatina-19 are rarities in Brazil, where there are more than 230 million cows, according to the United States Department of Agriculture. It has the world's largest beef cattle population, and that's problematic; of the nation's total greenhouse emissions, 86% are linked to its food production, mainly for beef and soy, according to a World Bank report published last month. Huge swaths of Amazon rainforest have been slashed to create pasture, releasing carbon stored in trees, and cows belch methane that's far worse for the climate.

One of the best ways to cut livestock emissions is reducing cows' age of slaughter, said Rodrigo Gomes, a beef cattle researcher at the government's agricultural research corporation. Elite cows can gain weight fast enough to be slaughtered significantly younger.

Others say genetic improvements are helpful but limited ways to reduce warming. Simpler, more effective measures include planting better grass for grazing and regularly moving cattle from pasture to pasture, said Beto Veríssimo, an agronomist who co-founded an environmental nonprofit called Imazon. Productivity in Brazil could be at least three times higher, said Veríssimo, who sits on the consultation committee of meatpacking giant JBS' Amazon fund. He receives no compensation.

Ranching is here to stay; it's an economic engine in Brazil, which exported more than 2 million tons of beef in both 2022 and 2023, the most since records began in 1997. The overwhelming majority goes to developing nations, especially China, thanks to rising incomes that have put beef within reach. It's partly why agriculture and livestock activity grew 3.6% from 2015 to 2023, compared to 0.8% for services and a contraction in industry of 0.6%, according to calculations by LCA Consultores based on official data.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been working to open new markets. Last month, Lula met Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan, home to the premium, marbled Wagyu beef; he urged his counterpart to taste Brazilian meat and become a believer.

"Please," he said, addressing his vice president at the event, "take Prime Minister Fumio to eat steak at the best restaurant in Sao Paulo so that, the following week, he starts importing our beef."

And in April, Lula visited one of the 38 Brazilian meatpacking plants that China authorized to send beef there. He boasted about the billions in revenue they will provide. Lula's administration last month declared Brazil totally free of foot-and-mouth disease, saying it will request recognition from the World Organization for Animal Health in August. That would open the world's more restrictive — and lucrative — markets to Brazilian beef, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin said at the time.

SEND IN THE CLONES

Just down the highway from the Elo de Raça auction stands what appears an ordinary farmhouse. But inside, employees in white coats extract DNA from cows' tail hair and use it to create embryos. Behind that laboratory, sprawling hills of pasture are dotted with some 500 surrogates pregnant with clones.

"All those are rental bellies," said Geneal Animal Genetics and Biotechnology's commercial director, Paulo Cerantola, motioning to a hilltop herd as his truck rumbled along a dirt road.

It led to a stable beside a small pen where a cloned calf lay in the sunshine. Born the day before, it was still too unsure of its legs to stand, and a 2-day-old clone set an example by ambling about gamely. Another born 20 minutes earlier by cesarean section was huddled on hay in the rear of a stall, pressing backwards against the wall and unsettled by this strange new world.

Perhaps one-third of fetal clones survive; the pregnancies can fail or a clone can be born with deformities that require euthanasia, Cerantola said. Clones of Viatina-19 are due in a few months, he said.

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But some ranchers wouldn't even want a big herd of her clones. High-maintenance cows like Viatina-19 aren't profitable on a commercial scale because they couldn't meet their energy needs from grass alone, said P.J. Budler, a cattle judge and international business manager for Trans Ova Genetics, an Iowa-based company focused on improving the bovine gene pool.

"For the environment and the resources that it would take to run a cow like (Viatina-19), she fits the mold ideally, but she's not the answer for all cattle everywhere," he said.

Another Texas cattleman who traveled to ExpoZebu in 2023 to scope out the genetics scene was more critical, calling Viatina-19, and cows like her, "man-made freaks."

"In my opinion, she needs a bullet in her head. She's poison for the industry," Grant Vassberg said by phone. "We still need cows to be efficient on grass. That's how you feed the world."

Viatina-19's owner, Pereira, said she gets special treatment to boost egg cell production, but would thrive were she put to pasture — where almost all his elite cattle feed.

Meanwhile, Viatina-19 is pregnant for the first time, which helps maintain hormone cycles, Pereira said, and he's eyeing expansion; her egg cells have sold to Bolivian buyers and he wants to export to the United Arab Emirates, India and the US.

"If she is the best in the world — not just her price, but I believe she is the world's best — we need to share her around the world," Pereira said.

His veterinarian daughter, Martins, is looking even farther ahead.

"I hope she is the basis for an even better animal in the future, decades from now," she said.

Biden lays into Trump over convictions and says he now poses a greater threat than in 2016

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

GREENWICH, Conn. (AP) — President Joe Biden laid into his predecessor and likely opponent in November's election, Donald Trump, for being convicted by a Manhattan jury on 34 felony counts related to hush money payments, saying Monday night that "this campaign has entered uncharted territory."

Speaking at a fundraiser in Greenwich, Connecticut, Biden said the former president "wants you to believe it's all rigged. Nothing could be further from the truth."

Echoing comments he made in reaction to the verdict at the White House last week, Biden said, "It's reckless and dangerous and downright irresponsible for anyone to say that it's rigged just because you don't like the verdict."

He added that the justice system was a core of American democracy and "we should never allow anyone to tear it down."

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was convicted on all counts related to a scheme during his 2016 presidential campaign to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels, who said the two had sex. The former president slammed the verdict as politically motivated, and has blamed it on Biden — while seeking to make himself a political martyr in the eyes of supporters, suggesting that if this could happen to him, similar things might befall them.

As he did last week, Biden noted that Trump's was a state case rather than a federal one, was heard by a jury chosen the same way all juries nationwide are chosen, and featured five weeks of evidence. He said the verdict was unanimous and Trump can appeal.

But Biden went farther Monday, accusing Trump of equating the justice system and elections. He said the former president was "attacking both the judiciary and elections system as rigged."

"Nothing could be more dangerous for the country, more dangerous for American democracy," Biden said.

The president made no mention of the federal gun case against his son, Hunter, which began Monday in Delaware. Jason Miller, a senior adviser for the Trump campaign, seized on that, responding to Biden's comments by asserting that the president "will do anything to distract from Hunter's trial."

Both Trump's convictions and his son's case aside, Biden added, "Here's what is becoming clearer and clearer every day: The threat Trump poses in his second term would be greater than it was in his first."

"This isn't the same Trump that got elected in 2016," Biden said. "He's worse."

Biden was attending a fundraiser hosted by Richard Plepler, the former CEO of HBO, and featuring Shonda Rhimes, who created such television smashes as "Bridgerton," "Scandal" and "Grey's Anatomy." Biden went on to reference a television ad his campaign has produced featuring another of his celebrity backers, actor Robert De Niro, narrating and asserting that Trump "snapped" after losing to Biden in 2020.

"Something snapped in this guy — for real — when he lost in 2020," Biden said, suggesting the former president was "unhinged" and was the driving force behind a mob of his supporters overrunning the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"He can't accept the fact that he lost, it's literally driving him crazy," Biden said. He added that the former president "wants to terminate the Constitution" and "says if he loses there will be a bloodbath in America."

"What kind of man is this?" Biden asked.

French children hail D-Day veterans as heroes as they arrive in Normandy for anniversary events

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

DEAUVILLE AIRPORT, France (AP) — "To our forever heroes: Thank you" — those words inscribed by French schoolchildren on a big poster greeted dozens of U.S. World War II veterans, many in their 100s, as they arrived on Monday in Normandy to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

France's first lady Brigitte Macron and top French officials met the 48 veterans from around the U.S. as they arrived at the Deauville-Normandy Airport on board a special flight from Atlanta, on a trip organized by the non-profit Best Defense Foundation.

Children from local schools held up the poster, and sang the French and U.S. national anthems.

"Welcome to France," Brigitte Macron said, speaking in English, expressing her "deepest respect" and "deepest love" to the veterans. "You fought for our freedom. You have always decided to educate the younger generation so that we never forget. Thank you for your commitment, thank you for the sacrifices you have made."

Among the veterans was Jake Larson, a 101-year-old American best known on social media under the name "Papa Jake." He joined the National Guard when he was 15 for the money and landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day, where he ran under machine-gun fire and made it to the cliffs without being wounded.

"I am the luckiest man in the world," Larson said as he arrived in Normandy for D-Day commemorations. Papa Jake has more than 800,000 followers on TikTok.

After the landing, Larson remembers that he slept close to a comrade who had put his rifle by their side. "In the morning, when we got up, he picked up his rifle from my litter where I was going to sleep and it fell in two. A piece of shrapnel came down and hit the rifle and broke it in two," he said.

Bob Gibson, 100, was drafted into the Army in 1943 and was sent to Britain. On June 6, 1944, Gibson and his unit landed on Utah Beach in the second wave of Allied landings.

He remembers it "like it happened yesterday." Upon arriving at the Deauville airport, he said, "I want to see the beach again."

The veterans will take part in parades, school visits and ceremonies — including the official June 6 commemoration of the landings by soldiers from across the United States, Britain, Canada and other Allied nations on five beaches.

The trip also includes high school and college students selected to escort the veterans and learn about their experiences. Charter flights also took veterans from Atlanta to France in 2022 and 2023.

On Sunday, the group of veterans, donning customized jackets commemorating the anniversary, arrived at the Atlanta airport to the clapping and cheering from the flight crew and the Dutchtown High School marching band from Hampton, Georgia. The veterans were then guided through the airport to their terminal in a parade headed by the marching band.

Biden prepares an order that would shut down asylum if a daily average of 2,500 migrants arrive

By SEUNG MIN KIM, STEPHEN GROVES and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is telling lawmakers that President Joe Biden is preparing to sign off on an executive order that would shut down asylum requests at the U.S.-Mexico border once the average number of daily encounters hits 2,500 between ports of entry, with the border reopening only once that number declines to 1,500, according to several people familiar with the discussions.

The impact of the 2,500 figure means that the executive order could go into immediate effect, because daily figures are higher than that now.

The Democratic president is expected to unveil the actions — his most aggressive unilateral move yet to control the numbers at the border — at the White House on Tuesday at an event to which border mayors have been invited.

Five people familiar with the discussions on Monday confirmed the 2,500 figure, while two of the people confirmed the 1,500 number. The figures are daily averages over the course of a week. All the people insisted on anonymity to discuss an executive order that is not yet public.

While other border activity, such as trade, is expected to continue, the 1,500 threshold at which the border would reopen for asylum seekers could be hard to reach. The last time the daily average dipped to 1,500 encounters was in July 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior White House officials, including chief of staff Jeff Zients and legislative affairs director Shuwanza Goff, have been informing lawmakers on Capitol Hill of details of the planned order ahead of the formal rollout Tuesday. But several questions remain about how the executive order would work, particularly how much cooperation the U.S. would need from Mexican officials to carry out the executive order.

The president has been deliberating for months over how to act on his own after bipartisan legislation to clamp down on asylum at the border collapsed because Republicans defected from the deal en masse at the urging of Donald Trump, the former president and presumptive Republican presidential nominee. Biden continued to consider executive action even though the number of illegal crossings at the southern border has declined for months, partly because of a stepped-up effort by Mexico.

Biden administration officials had waited until after Mexico's presidential elections, held Sunday, to move on the U.S. president's border actions. Mexico elected Claudia Sheinbaum, the nation's first female leader, and Biden said in a statement Monday that he was committed to "advancing the values and interests of both our nations to the benefit of our peoples." The two spoke on the phone Monday, although White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to say whether they spoke about the pending order.

"We continue to look at all options on the table," Jean-Pierre told reporters traveling with Biden on Air Force One on Monday evening.

The executive order will allow Biden to declare that he has pushed the boundaries of his own power after lawmakers, specifically congressional Republicans, killed off what would have been the toughest border and asylum restrictions in some time. Biden's order is aimed at trying to head off any potential spike in border encounters that could happen later this year, closer to the November elections.

For Biden's executive order, the White House is adopting some policies directly from the bipartisan Senate border deal, including the idea of limiting asylum requests once the encounters hit a certain number. The administration wants to encourage migrants to seek asylum at ports of entry by using the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's CBP One app, which schedules about 1,450 appointments per day.

Administration lawyers have been planning to tap executive powers outlined in Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which gives a president broad authority to block entry of certain immigrants into the U.S. if it is deemed "detrimental" to the national interest. It is the same legal rationale used by Trump to take some of his toughest actions on migration as president.

That has advocacy groups already preparing to challenge Biden's immigration order in court.

"We will need to review the (executive order) before making final litigation decisions," said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union who led several of the most high-profile challenges to

Trump's border policies. "But a policy that effectively shuts down asylum would raise clear legal problems, just as (it) did when the Trump administration tried to end asylum."

The White House is also sure to encounter vocal resistance from many Democratic lawmakers. California Sen. Alex Padilla, an outspoken critic of the Senate's earlier border bill, said the pending executive order was "just not the solution we need and it's very incomplete as a strategy."

Padilla, who was also briefed by the White House on the proposal, wants an approach that works with countries throughout Latin America to address the poverty and unrest that drives migration to the United States. In recent weeks, Padilla has also pressed the White House for executive actions that benefit immigrants and said the message he has heard in return is, "We're working on it."

Biden will unveil his executive order flanked by several border mayors whom the White House invited for the announcement. Texas Mayors John Cowen of Brownsville and Ramiro Garza of Edinburg both confirmed their invitations, and San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria's office also said the White House invited the mayor, but he could not attend due to scheduling difficulties.

Rep. Henry Cuellar, a Texas Democrat who said he was briefed on the plan, said he wishes the White House would have taken executive action a long time ago and said cooperation from Mexico would continue to be critical as the administration implements the order.

"If you think about the logistics, where else can they go?" Cuellar said. "If they're not going to let them in, where do they go? Do they return them (to Mexico), or do they try to deport as many as they can? We did add a lot more money into ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) so they can deport, but the easiest thing, of course, is just send them back to Mexico. You've got to have the help of Mexico to make this work."

Jennifer Babaie, an attorney at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso, Texas, said she would be alarmed if Biden issued formal deportation orders without an opportunity to seek asylum. Advocates worry he may attempt that under the 212(f) provision.

Pandemic-era expulsion authority known as Title 42 had "a silver lining" for migrants because they could try again without fearing legal consequences, Babaie said. But a formal deportation order would expose them to felony prosecution if they attempted again and it would impose bars on legally entering the country in the future.

"This is even more extreme than (Title 42), while still putting people in harm's way," Babaie said.

Biden takes a big swing at hostage-for-truce deal, puts onus on Israeli, Hamas officials to step up

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is looking past resistance from key Israeli officials as he presses Israel and Hamas to agree to a three-phase agreement that could immediately bring home dozens of Israeli hostages, free Palestinian prisoners and perhaps even lead to an endgame in the nearly eight-month-old Gaza war.

Biden's big swing — during a tough reelection battle — could also demonstrate to a significant slice of his political base demoralized by his handling of the conflict that he's doing his part to end the war that has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians and left hundreds of thousands struggling to meet basic needs.

White House officials on Monday said Biden's decision to make public what it describes as an Israeli proposal — just one day after it was delivered to Hamas — was driven by a desire to put Hamas on the spot. The move diverged from the U.S. administration's position throughout the conflict to allow the Israelis to speak for themselves about hostage negotiations.

"The president felt that where we are in this war, where we are in the negotiations to get the hostages out, that it was time for a different approach and a time to make the proposal public, to try to energize the process here and catalyze a different outcome," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said.

Almost immediately after Biden detailed the proposal — which includes a cease-fire and phased Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza if Hamas releases all hostages — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office

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said it would continue its war until Hamas was destroyed.

NETANYAHU FACING PRESSURE FROM FAR-RIGHT

Netanyahu's political survival depends on a far-right coalition that is adamant about eradicating Hamas. He sowed further doubt about proposal's viability Monday when he told an Israeli parliament committee that there are certain "gaps" in how Biden laid out the proposal. The prime minister said Israelis "reserve the right to return to war."

Kirby played down differences between Biden and Netanyahu and underscored that the proposal was an Israeli one. He added that Biden agrees with Israelis that Hamas should not govern postwar Gaza nor does he "expect that Israel should have to live next door to that kind of a terrorist threat."

"This wasn't about jamming the prime minister, the war cabinet," Kirby said. "This was about laying bare for the public to see how well and how faithfully and how assertively the Israelis came up with a new proposal. It shows how much they really want to get this done."

But even if Hamas agreed to terms, it would require Netanyahu to make some difficult political calculations. Two leading members of his far-right coalition — National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich — have threatened to leave Netanyahu's government if he signs off on the proposal. That would cause the coalition to collapse.

Smotrich said Monday that agreeing to a cease-fire would amount to a humiliation of Israel and a surrender. Increased military pressure, he said, is "the only language understood in the Middle East."

Biden last week expressed concern about those in the Israeli government who "want to keep fighting for years" and don't see freeing the hostages as a "priority." Administration officials on Monday warned Israeli officials that getting bogged down in Gaza could be detrimental to Israel's national security.

"Endless conflict in Gaza in pursuit of some idea of total victory is not going to make Israel safer," said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

Netanyahu has also faced pressure from families of hostages — officials say about 80 people captured by militants in the Oct. 7 attack are still alive and Hamas is holding the bodies of 43 others — to reach an agreement to free their loved ones. Opposition leader Yair Lapid, however, vowed over the weekend to provide a political safety net to Netanyahu, ensuring his government would not fall over the deal.

OPTIMISM DESPITE HEADWINDS

Even as the proposal faces stiff headwinds, the Biden administration said it was cautiously optimistic that a deal could be reached.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan urged world leaders to rally behind the proposal.

"They need to train their eyes on Hamas this week and say it's time to come to the table to do this deal," Sullivan said in an appearance at the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition conference in Washington.

To that end, Biden on Monday spoke with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, a key Hamas interlocutor, and said it was "the best possible opportunity for an agreement," the White House said.

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. envoy to the United Nations, said the U.S. circulated a draft resolution seeking support for the proposal from the 14 other members of the U.N. Security Council.

Sullivan, meanwhile, spoke to his Turkish counterpart, Akif Cagatay Kilic, about Turkey using its influence with Hamas to get them to accept the proposal. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has defended Hamas and hosted the group's political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, for talks in April.

Group of Seven leaders on Monday also endorsed the deal.

"We call on Hamas to accept this deal, that Israel is ready to move forward with, and we urge countries with influence over Hamas to help ensure that it does so," the G7 leaders said in a statement.

EVEN GETTING TO PHASE ONE IS A CHALLENGE

Biden acknowledged last week that getting beyond the first phase of the proposal would be difficult.

The first phase would last for six weeks and would include a 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.

The Israelis, under the proposal, would also allow 600 humanitarian aid trucks into Gaza each day dur-

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

Hamas is likely to make enormous demands about which Palestinian prisoners will be released and call on Israel to assure that it won't continue to target top Hamas leaders.

Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. Middle East peace negotiator, said even getting to phase one — and the six-week pause in fighting — would bring about a “downshift in the escalation of the military campaign, fewer people dying.”

“I'm not sure they can expect much more,” said Miller, now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “Negotiations work in the end only if the parties feel sufficient pain accompanied by the prospects of gain, and that generates urgency. The only party that is in a hurry here is the Biden administration.”

Indeed, Israeli officials view the conflict on a far longer timeline.

Just last week, Israeli national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said he expected the war to drag on for another seven months, in order to destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group.

But with Election Day in the U.S. now just over five months away, Biden faces tightening pressure to more quickly resolve the Mideast conflict that's left him bleeding support.

Louisiana lawmakers approve surgical castration option for those guilty of sex crimes against kids

By SARA CLINE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana judges could order surgical castration for people convicted of sex crimes against young children under legislation approved Monday, and if Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signs it into law, the state apparently would be the first with such a punishment.

The GOP-controlled Legislature passed the bill giving judges the option to sentence someone to surgical castration after the person has been convicted of certain aggravated sex crimes — including rape, incest and molestation — against a child under 13.

A handful of states — including California, Florida and Texas — have laws in place allowing for chemical castration. In some of those states, offenders can opt for the surgical procedure if they prefer. But the National Conference of State Legislatures said it is unaware of any states that allow judges to impose surgical castration.

For more than 16 years, judges in Louisiana have been allowed to order those convicted of such crimes to receive chemical castration, though that punishment is rarely issued. Chemical castration uses medications that block testosterone production to decrease sex drive. Surgical castration is a much more invasive procedure.

“This is a consequence,” Republican state Sen. Valarie Hodges said during a committee hearing on the bill in April. “It's a step over and beyond just going to jail and getting out.”

The bill received overwhelming approval in both of the GOP-dominated chambers. Votes against the bill mainly came from Democrats. However a Democratic lawmaker — state Sen. Regina Barrow — authored the legislation.

Currently, there are 2,224 people imprisoned in Louisiana for sex crimes against children younger than 13. If the bill becomes law, it can only be applied to those who have convicted a crime that occurred on or after Aug. 1 of this year.

Barrow has said it would be an extra step in punishment for horrific crimes. She hopes the legislation will serve as a deterrent.

“We are talking about babies who are being violated by somebody,” Barrow said during an April committee meeting. “That is inexcusable.”

While castration is often associated with men, Barrow said the law could be applied to women. She also stressed that imposing the punishment would be by individual cases and at the discretion of judges. The

punishment is not automatic.

If an offender “fails to appear or refuses to undergo” surgical castration after a judge orders the procedure, they could be hit with “failure to comply” charge and face an additional three to five years in prison, based on the bill’s language.

The legislation also stipulates that a medical expert must “determine whether that offender is an appropriate candidate” for the procedure before it’s carried out.

Louisiana’s current chemical castration law has been in place since 2008 but officials said from 2010 to 2019, they could only find one or two cases where it was used.

The bill, and chemical castration bills, have received pushback, with opponents saying it is “cruel and unusual punishment” and questioned the effectiveness of the procedure. Additionally some Louisiana lawmakers have questioned if the punishment was too harsh for someone who may have a single offense.

“For me, when I think about a child, one time is too many,” Barrow responded.

With its top editor abruptly gone, The Washington Post grapples with a hastily announced restructure

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The struggling Washington Post found itself in some turmoil on Monday following the abrupt departure of the newspaper’s executive editor and a hastily announced restructuring plan aimed at stopping an exodus of readers over the past few years.

Post publisher Will Lewis and Matt Murray, a former Wall Street Journal editor named to temporarily replace Sally Buzbee, met with reporters and editors at the Post on Monday to explain changes that had been outlined in a Sunday night email.

The plan includes splitting the newsroom into three separate divisions with managers who report to Lewis — one that encompasses the Post’s core news reporting, one with opinion pieces and the third devoted to attracting new consumers through innovative uses of social media, video, artificial intelligence and sales.

Although Murray is temporarily replacing Buzbee through the November presidential election, the eventual plan places no one in the role of an executive editor who oversees the entire newsroom. Buzbee was said to disagree with the plan and chose to leave rather than be put in charge of one of the divisions, the Post reported.

Lewis was not made available for an interview Monday, and Buzbee did not immediately return a message.

“It definitely kind of blindsided people,” said Paul Farhi, a recently retired media reporter at the Post. “But it shows you that Will Lewis is working out of a sense of crisis and urgency. He’s only been there five months and he’s making gigantic changes to the newsroom.”

LOSING MONEY, LOSING READERS

Like most news organizations, the Post has lost readers — a decline more acute because the Washington-based outlet boomed with the interest in politics during the Trump administration. The Post’s website had 101 million unique visitors a month in 2020, and had dropped to 50 million at the end of 2023. The Post lost a reported \$77 million last year.

“Although (Post owner) Jeff Bezos is very rich, it has been my observation that billionaires don’t like to lose money,” said Margaret Sullivan, a former Post columnist and now the executive director for the Craig Newmark Center for Journalism Ethics and Security at the Columbia Journalism School.

Lewis told staff members on Monday that “I’m not interested in managing decline. I’m interested in growth,” according to a person who attended the meeting. The new publisher also bluntly told staffers that “people are not reading your stuff. We need to take decisive action.”

The new division designed to attract new customers — the Post called it a “third newsroom” — is steeped in some mystery. While the Post at one time headquartered the people running its digital products in a separate building, for several years it has integrated that and social media into the regular newsroom, as have many organizations. It’s hard to predict how the new structure will work, and there are likely to be changes as they are put in place, Sullivan said.

"Maybe it's brilliant and innovative," she said. "But it just strikes me as being odd."

LOOKING FORWARD OR LOOKING BACK?

There are significant questions surrounding the restructuring — including suggestions that dividing the newsroom into three parts could create fragmentation of the Post's overall news report. Will separation into different units hinder the kind of collaboration that creates fluid multiplatform journalism?

"It feels so retro — reminiscent of search engine optimization, social media and pivoting to video, just as AI and agents threaten to become a new web," said Jeff Jarvis, author of "The Gutenberg Parenthesis: The Age of Print and its Lessons for the Age of the Internet."

Murray will be in charge of this division following the election. After that, Robert Winnett, a longtime editor at the Telegraph in England who worked with Lewis there, will take over the core reporting functions at the Post, the newspaper said.

There was some concern expressed by Post staff members about three men — all of them new to a newspaper that takes some pride in journalists working their way up through the ranks and two of them British-born — being in charge at a crucial time.

"In a few months, two British-born editors will be running the leading newspaper in the capital of the United States," Farhi said. "It was kind of unimaginable a couple of months ago."

They won't be alone. Other U.S.-based news organizations with British-born leaders included The Wall Street Journal, with editor in chief Emma Tucker; CNN, with chairman and CEO Mark Thompson; and The Associated Press, with Daisy Veerasingham as president and CEO.

Lewis was also questioned about his commitment to diversity after the first woman to be the editor in charge of the Post has left. He said he was committed to it "and you'll see it going forward," according to the person at the meeting.

Lewis has said that the Post will be experimenting with different pay tiers for digital subscriptions, for people who may be interested in particular topics or stories instead of the entire package, similar to products offered by Politico, for example. As editor, Buzbee has been beefing up the Post's coverage on topics like cooking and climate that appeal to particular readers.

Lewis has talked about searching for ways to reach millions of Americans who want to keep informed but don't feel like traditional news products serve their needs.

In one sense, efforts to make organizations like the Post and the Times more attractive to subscribers may contribute to the trends hurting local news, Farhi said. As the newspapers seek out more national and international customers, he said, they are much less likely to invest in covering local news.

In Indonesia, women ranger teams go on patrol to slow deforestation

By VICTORIA MILKO and DITA ALANGKARA Associated Press

DAMARAN BARU, Indonesia (AP) — In a lush jungle at the foothills of a volcano in Indonesia's Aceh province, the song of gibbons in the trees mixes with the laughter of the seven forest rangers trekking below them. An hour into their patrol, the rangers spot another mammal in the forest with them.

"Where are you going? What are you doing?" they pleasantly ask a man walking past, farming tools in hand. "Remember to not cut down trees wherever you go, OK?"

The friendly engagement is just one tactic the women-led forest ranger group has been using to safeguard the forest their village relies on from deforestation and poaching. After years of patrols have accompanied a sharp decrease in deforestation, the rangers are now sharing their strategies with other women-led groups striving to protect their forests across Indonesia.

A vast tropical archipelago stretching across the equator, Indonesia is home to the world's third-largest rainforest, with a variety of endangered wildlife and plants, including orangutans, elephants and giant forest flowers. Some live nowhere else.

Since 1950, more than 285,715 square miles (740,000 square kilometers) of Indonesian rainforest — an

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area twice the size of Germany — have been logged, burned or degraded for development of palm oil, paper and rubber plantations, nickel mining and other commodities, according to Global Forest Watch. In recent years deforestation has slowed, but continues.

In Damaran Baru, which borders one of the richest expanses of tropical rainforest in Southeast Asia, many villagers rely on the forest for their livelihoods. Farmers harvest coffee from mountainside shrubs and the water flowing from the mountainside provides water for drinking and cooking in the village.

But unregulated deforestation from irresponsible farming practices and abuse of forest resources have led to disastrous consequences, said villager Sumini, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

In 2015, torrential rains spurred flash floods in the village, forcing hundreds to evacuate. When the water receded, Sumini went to the forest and saw that the village's tree-filled watershed had been illegally cut.

"I looked at it and thought, 'This is what caused the landslides and disaster,'" Sumini said in an interview.

Her next thought was what spurred the creation of the woman-led patrol: "As a woman, what do we want to do? Do we have to be silent? Or can we not get involved?"

Indonesia has rangers in its national parks, and a patchwork of watch groups elsewhere, including some Indigenous groups. But Sumini's idea was new.

After lobbying women in the village to start a patrol, Sumini was met with pushback in the traditionally patriarchal province that is governed under Islamic law, known as Sharia. But after persuading village leaders and husbands of women interested — including allowing men to accompany them on the patrol — Sumini was granted permission to start the group.

Sumini began working with the Forest, Nature and Environment Aceh Foundation to help legally register the patrol group with a social forestry permit — formalized, government-supported permission that allows local communities to manage their forests.

After the permit was processed, the foundation began teaching the rangers-to-be standardized methods of forest conservation, said Farwiza Farhan, chairperson of the foundation. The first training, she said, was learning how to read a map and teaching other standardized methods of forestry, such as recognizing wildlife markings and using GPS.

"The way outsiders navigate around the forest is very different than how the local communities do. They know it, but it's not necessarily translated into a standardized language that we use, like maps and GPS," said Farhan. "Finding and creating that space where we speak the same language when talking about the forest was key."

In January 2020, the group had their first official patrol. Since then, their monthly treks through the jungle have include mapping and monitoring tree coverage, cataloguing endemic plants and working with farmers to replant trees. They periodically measure individual trees and mark their locations, tagging them with ribbons warning against cutting them. When they spot someone in the forest, they remind them of the jungle's importance for their village and give them seeds to plant.

Sumini says the low-key tactics the women use, rather than brusque confrontation, have been effective in getting people to change their habits. They carry no weapons, apart from large blades they use to cut their way through the forest when needed, but expressed little fear for their own safety. Violence in the jungle is almost unheard of, and the rangers typically outnumber those they meet. The women don't have the power to arrest people, but can report them to authorities.

Even before the forest patrols started, some women in the group were already trying their gentle diplomacy at home.

For years, Muhammad Saleh, 50, would light parts of the forest on fire, hunting tigers he could kill and sell to help feed his family. The then-raging civil war had hurt the local economy, and each tiger would fetch him about \$1,250. Other days he'd cut down trees for firewood or trap birds that could be sold at the market.

His wife, Rosita, 44, pleaded with him not to go. She reminded him about the animals that would be affected by his actions.

It took years, but eventually Saleh felt the message of his wife. He stopped poaching and cutting down

trees and began joining his wife on patrols of the forest. He said he's seen the improvement since he began patrols: the forest has more birds and tree cover is denser.

"Our forest is no longer deforested: the animals are awake and we're more awake," he said. "The whole world feels the impact, not just us."

Now the rangers' methods are being picked up elsewhere in Indonesia, as local organizations, nongovernmental organizations and international foundations help bring together other women-led forestry groups.

Members of the Aceh group have met women from provinces across Indonesia heavily affected by deforestation, sharing information about leading local forestry programs, teaching people how to participate in wilderness mapping, how to draft proposals and apply for permits for forestry management and how to better demand enforcement against illegal poaching, mining and logging.

"There's now more connectivity between mothers, grandmothers and wives talking about how to navigate issues and being environmental champions," said Farhan.

The centering of women in forest management is crucial for the success of social forestry programs, said Rahrpriananto Alam Surya Putra, The Asia Foundation's program director for environmental governance in Indonesia, which has helped organize meetings between the women-led groups.

A survey of 1,865 households conducted by the foundation found that when women are involved in community forest management, it leads to increased household income and more sustainable forest governance.

But women-led forestry management still faces challenges in Indonesia, he concedes. Some traditionally patriarchal communities lack an understanding of the benefits of women's participation. And even when women are empowered to engage in forestry, they're still expected to take care of household chores and children.

But the women rangers of Damaran Baru say the positive impact they've already had has motivated them to continue their work for future generations.

"I invite other mothers to teach their children and community about the forest like we have ... we want them to protect it," she said. "Because when forests remain green, people remain prosperous."

A grant program for Black women business owners is discriminatory, appeals court rules

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A U.S. federal court of appeals panel suspended a venture capital firm's grant program for Black women business owners, ruling that a conservative group is likely to prevail in its lawsuit claiming that the program is discriminatory.

The ruling against the Atlanta-based Fearless Fund is another victory for conservative groups waging a sprawling legal battle against corporate diversity programs that have targeted dozens of companies and government institutions.

The case against the Fearless Fund was brought last year by the American American Alliance for Equal Rights, a group led by Edward Blum, the conservative activist behind the Supreme Court case that ended affirmative action in college admissions.

Blum applauded the ruling, saying "programs that exclude certain individuals because of their race such as the ones the Fearless Fund has designed and implemented are unjust and polarizing."

Fearless Fund CEO and Founder Arian Simone said the ruling was "devastating" for the organizations and the women it has invested in.

"The message these judges sent today is that diversity in Corporate America, education, or anywhere else should not exist," she said in statement. "These judges bought what a small group of white men were selling."

Alphonso David, Fearless Fund's legal counsel who serves as president and CEO of The Global Black Economic Forum, said all options were being evaluated to continue fighting the lawsuit.

The legal effort to dismantle workplace diversity programs has suffered its share of setbacks as well, reflecting polarized opinions among liberal and conservative judges on the issue. Last week, for example,

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a federal district judge in Ohio dismissed a lawsuit against the insurance company Progressive and fintech platform Hello Alice challenging a program that offers grants to help Black-owned small businesses purchase commercial vehicles. Similar lawsuits have been dismissed against Amazon, Pfizer and Starbucks.

The case against the Fearless Fund has been closely watched by civil rights groups, philanthropic organizations, employment lawyers and the venture capital industry as a bellwether for how the courts are viewing programs intended to level the playing field for racial minorities and other groups that have historically faced discrimination in businesses and workplaces.

In a 2-1 ruling, the panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Miami found that Blum was likely to prevail in his lawsuit claiming the grant program violates section 1981 of the 1866 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race when enforcing contracts. The Reconstruction-era law was originally intended to protect formally enslaved people from economic exclusion, but anti-affirmative action activists have been leveraging it to challenge programs intended to benefit minority-owned businesses.

The court ordered the Fearless Fund to suspend its Strivers Grant Contest, which provides \$20,000 to businesses that are majority owned by Black women, for the remainder of the lawsuit that is being litigated in a federal court in Atlanta. The ruling reversed a federal judge's ruling last year that the contest should be allowed to continue because Blum's lawsuit was likely to fail. However, the grant contest has been suspended since October after a separate panel of the federal appeals court swiftly granted Blum's request for an emergency injunction while he challenged the federal judge's original order.

The appeals court panel, consisting of two judges appointed by former President Donald Trump and one appointed by former President Barack Obama, rejected the Fearless Fund's arguments that the grants are not contracts but charitable donations protected by the First Amendment right to free speech.

"The fact remains, though, that Fearless simply —and flatly — refuses to entertain applications from business owners who aren't 'black females,'" the court's majority opinion said, adding "every act of race discrimination" would be deemed expressive conduct under the Fearless Fund's argument.

The appeals panel also rejected the Fearless Fund's contention that Blum had no standing because the lawsuit was filed on behalf of three anonymous women who failed to demonstrate that they were "ready and able" to apply for the grant or that they had been injured by not being to do so.

Judge Robin Rosenbaum, an Obama appointee, disagreed in a blistering dissent, likening the plaintiffs' claims of harm to soccer players trying to win by "flopping on the field, faking an injury." Rosenbaum said none of the plaintiffs demonstrated that they had any real intention to apply for the grants in what she called "cookie-cutter declarations" that were "threadbare and devoid of substance."

The court's ruling wasn't surprising because of its conservative leaning and previous skepticism towards the argument presented by the Fearless Fund, said David Glasgow, executive director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at New York University's School of Law.

"We are going to see some pro-DEI outcomes in liberal circuits and anti-DEI outcomes in conservative circuits," Glasgow said.

Glasgow said he expects one of the lawsuits to land in the conservative-dominated Supreme Court. Even so, he said it's unlikely that any one ruling could settle the legal debate over corporate DEI because of the complexity and wide-ranging programs and policies that fall under the category.

The Strivers Grant Fund is one of several programs run by the foundation arm of the Fearless Fund, which was founded to address the wide racial disparity in funding for businesses owned by women of color. Less than 1% of venture capital funding goes to businesses owned by Black and Hispanic women, according to the nonprofit advocacy group digitalundivided.

The National Venture Capital Association, an trade group with hundreds of member VC firms, filed an amicus brief defending the Fearless Fund's grant program as "modest but important" step to toward creating equal opportunity in an industry that has historically excluded Black women.

Only 2% of investment professionals at venture capital firms were Black women in 2022, according to a study conducted every two years by Deloitte and Venture Forward, the nonprofit arm of the National

Venture Capital Association, and the consulting firm Deloitte. Just 1% of investment partners were Black women, according to study, which surveyed of 315 firms with 5,700 employees representing \$594.5 billion in assets under management.

But in his statement, Blum said "our nation's civil rights laws do not permit racial distinctions because some groups are overrepresented in various endeavors, while others are under-represented."

Philanthropic groups are also watching the case because of its possible implications for charitable giving.

"If legal decisions curtail people's ability to give in ways that align with their values or their experience, it's going to hurt not only philanthropy and nonprofits, but our own country as a whole," said Kathleen Enright, president and CEO of the Council on Foundations, whose organizations filed an amicus brief supporting the Fearless Fund with the nonprofit Independent Sector.

How Trump's deny-everything strategy could hurt him at sentencing

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump has had plenty to say since his hush money trial conviction last week. He's claimed the case was rigged, incorrectly linked President Joe Biden to the state prosecution, called the star witness against him a "sleazebag" and said the judge was a "devil" and "highly conflicted."

What he hasn't done is utter any variation of the words that might benefit him most come sentencing time next month: "I'm sorry."

It's a truism of the criminal justice system that defendants hoping for lenient treatment at their sentencing are expected to take responsibility for their actions, even express remorse. But that flies in the face of Trump's longtime refusal to acknowledge any wrongdoing, a tone that he often strikes to portray strength and present himself as a fighter under ceaseless attack. While the strategy may resonate with his most loyal political supporters, it failed during his New York criminal trial and could complicate his legal team's efforts to avoid a tough sentence.

"The fact, I think, that he has no remorse — quite the opposite, he continues to deny his guilt — is going to hurt him at sentencing," said Jeffrey Cohen, an associate professor at Boston College Law School and a former federal prosecutor in Massachusetts. "It's one of the things that the judge can really point to that everybody is aware of — that he just denies this — and can use that as a strong basis for his sentence."

Trump is set to be sentenced on July 11 by Judge Juan M. Merchan, who raised the specter of jail time during the trial after the former president racked up thousands of dollars in fines for violating a gag order. He has been the target of Trump's relentless ire.

The 34 felony counts of falsifying business records Trump was found guilty of are charges punishable by up to four years in prison. It's not clear whether prosecutors intend to seek imprisonment — Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg dodged a question on that Thursday — or whether Merchan would sentence him behind bars even if that's the recommendation.

As part of a broader, rambling broadside against the case, Trump has sought to downplay any concerns about his sentence, saying in a "Fox & Friends Weekend" interview that aired on Sunday that he was "OK" with the prospect of imprisonment or home confinement.

"I saw one of my lawyers the other day on television saying, 'oh, no, you don't want to do that'" to a former president. "I said, don't, you know, beg for anything. It's just the way it is."

He will have the option to address the judge at his sentencing hearing though he is not required to do so, and some legal experts have said it would be inadvisable for him to speak. He did not testify in his own defense at the trial, something he later suggested had to do with concerns that prosecutors would try to catch him in a trivial falsehood.

"If he turns around and blames the court, attacks prosecutors, decries this as a witch hunt, lies — you should have no misgiving: There will be consequences and there should be consequences," said Jeremy Saland, a former assistant district attorney in Manhattan.

In addition, Trump's constant attacks on the prosecutors, judge and court system and his aggressive

trial strategy — outright denying claims of an extramarital affair by porn actor Stormy Daniels as well as involvement in the subsequent scheme to buy her silence — would make any change of tune at his sentencing seem disingenuous.

"I don't see any real benefit of him speaking at sentencing because even if he did say something, he's saying the exact opposite outside the courtroom and the judge is not unaware of that," Cohen said.

To be sure, there are multiple other factors that could tilt against a prison sentence — Trump's apparent lack of contrition notwithstanding. Merchan could conclude, for instance, that there's a strong societal interest against having a former, and potentially future, president in jail.

"Sometimes as a judge and a prosecutor, you have to look at the proverbial scoreboard and say, 'That's enough.' And that scoreboard here is a permanent brand that you'd see on the side of cattle of a big fat 'F' for felony," Saland said.

"It is far worse than any scarlet letter could ever be," he added. "And no matter what he says, no matter how he spins it, no matter if it's a day in jail or not, he will always be a convicted felon. Period."

Jury is chosen in Hunter Biden's federal firearms case and opening statements are set for Tuesday

By CLAUDIA LAUER, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, COLLEEN LONG and RANDALL CHASE Associated Press WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — A jury was seated Monday in the federal gun case against President Joe Biden's son Hunter, after prospective panelists were questioned about their thoughts on gun rights and drug addiction while the first lady watched from the front row of the courtroom.

Opening statements were set to begin Tuesday after the jurors — six men and six women plus four women serving as alternates — were instructed by Judge Maryellen Noreika not to talk or read about the case.

Hunter Biden has been charged in Delaware with three felonies stemming from a 2018 firearm purchase when he was, according to his memoir, in the throes of a crack addiction. He has been accused of lying to a federally licensed gun dealer, making a false claim on the application by saying he was not a drug user and illegally having the gun for 11 days.

The case is going to trial following the collapse of a plea deal that would have avoided the spectacle of a trial so close to the 2024 election. Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty and has argued he's being unfairly targeted by the Justice Department, after Republicans decried the now-defunct plea deal as special treatment for the Democratic president's son.

The proceedings are unfolding just days after Donald Trump, the presumptive 2024 Republican presidential nominee, was convicted of 34 felonies in New York City. A jury found the former president guilty of a scheme to cover up a hush money payment to a porn actor to fend off damage to his 2016 presidential campaign. The two criminal cases are unrelated, but their proximity underscores how the courts have taken center stage during the 2024 campaign.

Jury selection moved at a clip. The pool was chosen from roughly 65 people. Those who answered "yes" on an initial questionnaire were quizzed individually by Noreika to determine whether they could be fair and impartial. Their names were not made public.

The questions tested their knowledge of the case, surveyed their thoughts about gun ownership and inquired whether they or anyone close to them have struggled with substance abuse or addiction. Other questions focused on the role politics may have played in the charges.

One potential juror who was sent home said she didn't know whether she could be impartial because of the opinion she had formed about Hunter Biden based on media reports.

"It's not a good one," she replied when an attorney asked her opinion.

Another was excused because he was aware of the case and said, "It seems like politics is playing a big role in who gets charged with what and when."

Jurors who were chosen included a woman whose sister was convicted about 10 years ago of credit card fraud and drug charges in Delaware. One male juror's father had been killed in a crime involving a gun, and his brother went to jail for possession of a narcotic. Another woman on the panel has a husband

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who is a gun owner and formerly in law enforcement. A third juror, also a woman, gets her news from YouTube and said she was vaguely aware of the case.

Hunter Biden also faces a separate trial in California in September on charges of failing to pay \$1.4 million in taxes. Both cases were to have been resolved through the deal with prosecutors last July, the culmination of a yearslong investigation into his business dealings.

But Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, questioned some unusual aspects of the deal, which included a proposed guilty plea to misdemeanor offenses to resolve the tax crimes and a diversion agreement on the gun charge, which meant as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years the case would be dismissed. The lawyers could not come to a resolution, and the deal fell apart. Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed the top investigator, former U.S. attorney for Delaware, David Weiss, as a special counsel in August, and a month later Hunter Biden was indicted.

This trial isn't about Hunter Biden's foreign business affairs — which Republicans have seized on without evidence to try to paint the Biden family as corrupt. But it will excavate some of Hunter Biden's darkest moments and put them on display.

The president's allies are worried about the toll the trial may take on the elder Biden, who's long been concerned about his only living son and his sobriety and who must now watch as his son's painful past mistakes are publicly scrutinized.

Allies are also worried the trial could become a distraction as the president tries to campaign under anemic poll numbers and as he is preparing for an upcoming presidential debate with Trump.

In a statement Monday, the president said he has "boundless love" for his son, "confidence in him and respect for his strength."

"I am the President, but I am also a Dad," he said, adding that would have no further comment on the case. "Jill and I love our son, and we are so proud of the man he is today."

The president was nearby, in their Wilmington home, which he left shortly after court adjourned for a campaign reception in Greenwich, Connecticut. He is traveling to France on Tuesday and will be gone the rest of the week. The first lady is scheduled to join him later. Hunter Biden's sister, Ashley Biden, was also in court, and his wife, Melissa.

Aboard Air Force One on the way to Connecticut on Monday night, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was asked if the case might affect the president's ability to do his job and replied, "Absolutely not."

"He always puts the American people first, and is capable of doing his job," said Jean-Pierre, who declined to say if Biden got updates on the trial throughout the day or spoke to his son after the proceedings' conclusion.

Earlier, when the court took a break for lunch, Hunter Biden walked over to his mother and leaned over the railing that separates the audience from the trial participants to hug and kiss her on the cheek. Monday was the first lady's 73rd birthday.

A family friend, Ricky Smith, sat in the audience and embraced him warmly during a break.

"It ain't right for him to be sitting there because he was a drug addict," Smith said.

The case against Hunter Biden stems from a period when, by his own public admission, he was addicted to crack. His descent into drugs and alcohol followed the 2015 death of his brother, Beau Biden, from cancer. He bought and owned a gun for 11 days in October 2018 and indicated on the gun purchase form that he was not using drugs.

Defense attorneys have suggested they may argue that Hunter Biden didn't see himself as an addict when prosecutors say he checked "no" to the question on the form. They will also attack the credibility of the gun store owner.

If convicted, Hunter Biden faces up to 25 years in prison, though first-time offenders do not get anywhere near the maximum, and it's unclear whether the judge would give him time behind bars.

University of Michigan regent's law office vandalized with pro-Palestinian graffiti

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. (AP) — Pro-Palestinian graffiti spray-painted on the exterior of a Michigan law firm is being investigated as a hate crime, police in suburban Detroit said Monday.

University of Michigan regent and attorney Jordan Acker called the vandalism "antisemitic" and said staff at the Goodman Acker law firm's Southfield headquarters discovered it Monday morning.

Spotches of red paint were left on the "Goodman Acker" sign above the building's doors. "FREE PALESTINE" was spray-painted in black upon the building's walls, while "DIVEST NOW" and "U-M KILLS" — a reference to the University of Michigan — were spray-painted in red upon at least one window and a sidewalk.

Southfield Police Chief Elvin Barren said investigators believe the graffiti was left between 1:39 and 1:46 a.m. Monday. The FBI and other agencies are assisting in the investigation.

"Make no mistake that targeting individual Jewish elected officials is antisemitism," Acker, who is Jewish, told reporters.

"This has nothing to do with Palestine or the war in Gaza or anything else," Acker continued. "This is done as a message to scare Jews. I was not targeted here today because I am a regent. I am a target of this because I am Jewish."

Acker was elected to the university board in 2018 and is one of eight regents. Other board members have also been the targets of recent protests.

Protest camps have sprung up across the U.S. and in Europe in recent weeks. Students have demanded their universities stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support its war in Gaza. Organizers seek to amplify calls to end Israel's war with Hamas, which they describe as a genocide against the Palestinians.

The Associated Press has recorded at least 85 incidents since April 18 where arrests were made at campus protests across the U.S. More than 3,110 people have been arrested on the campuses of 64 colleges and universities. The figures are based on AP reporting and statements from universities and law enforcement agencies.

On May 21, police broke up a monthlong pro-Palestinian encampment on the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus. About 50 people were cleared from the school's Diag, known for decades as a site for campus protests. At least four were arrested.

A group of 30 protesters showed up May 15 at the home of Board of Regents Chair Sarah Hubbard and placed stuffed, red-stained sheets on her lawn to resemble body bags. They banged a drum and chanted slogans over a bullhorn.

People wearing face coverings also posted demands at the doors of other board members.

Protesters have demanded that the school's endowment stop investing in companies with ties to Israel. But the university insists it has no direct investments and less than \$15 million placed with funds that might include companies in Israel. That's less than 0.1% of the total endowment.

MLB player Tucupita Marcano faces possible lifetime ban for alleged baseball bets, AP source says

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — San Diego Padres infielder Tucupita Marcano is under investigation by Major League Baseball for allegedly betting on baseball and could be subject to a lifetime ban, according to a person familiar with the probe.

MLB is looking into allegations Marcano bet on games involving the Pittsburgh Pirates while on the team's injured list last season, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing.

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Marcano could be the second pro athlete banned for life over sports betting this year after the NBA punished Toronto Raptors player Jontay Porter in April following a league probe that found he disclosed confidential information to sports bettors and wagered on games.

It's believed that no active MLB player has been banned for betting on baseball since 1924. Pete Rose was retired when he agreed to a lifetime ban in 1989.

Marcano, 24, has not played since tearing his right ACL last July 24. He was claimed by the Padres off waivers on Nov. 2 and placed on the 10-day injured list March 19.

MLB's investigation was first reported Monday by The Wall Street Journal, which also reported four other players were under investigation for betting on baseball while in the minor leagues.

"We are aware of an active investigation by Major League Baseball regarding a matter that occurred when the player in question was a member of another organization and not affiliated with the San Diego Padres," the team said in a statement. "We will not have any further comment until the investigative process has been completed."

"We are aware of the matter that's under investigation and are fully cooperating," Pirates senior vice president of communications Brian Warecki said in a statement. "We will refrain from further comment at this time."

Marcano's agent, Michel Velasquez of Rimas Sports, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. The Major League Baseball Players Association declined to comment.

Major League Rule 21, posted in every clubhouse, states betting on any baseball game in which a player, umpire, league official or team employee has no duty to perform results in a one-year suspension. Betting on a game in which the person has a duty to perform results in a lifetime ban.

In addition, betting on other sports with an illegal bookmaker is subject to discipline deemed appropriate by the baseball commissioner.

Rose, baseball's career hits leader, agreed to a lifetime ban in 1989 after an MLB investigation concluded he bet on Cincinnati Reds games while managing the team.

The last active MLB player suspended under the gambling provision appears to be New York Giants outfielder Jimmy O'Connell, banned for life along with coach Cozy Dolan in 1924 for offering a \$500 bribe to Philadelphia Phillies shortstop Heinie Sand to throw a game that Sept. 27.

Marcano made his major league debut on April 1, 2021, and has a .217 average with five homers, 34 RBIs and seven stolen bases in 149 games. He has played in both the infield and outfield.

U.S. sports leagues have increased monitoring over gambling since the U.S. Supreme Court in May 2018 struck down a federal law that had barred betting on football, basketball, baseball and other sports in most states. Sports books have opened at stadiums across the country across the major U.S. pro sports.

Shohei Ohtani's interpreter, Ipe Mizuhara, was fired by the Los Angeles Dodgers after the season opener on March 21 when a federal gambling investigation became public. Mizuhara agreed to plead guilty to bank and tax fraud in a sports betting case in which prosecutors allege he stole nearly \$17 million from the two-time AL MVP to pay off debts.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said last month that the sport's department of investigations deferred to the government probe. He noted that MLB has superior methods of monitoring potentially illicit bets with legal sports books than with illegal bookmakers. It is not clear how Marcano might have made his alleged bets.

MLB's top concern with legal sports betting is on action besides the score or outcome, known as prop bets. For instance, wagers that a certain player would steal at least one base in a given game.

"There are certain kinds of prop bets that are of concern to us and continue to be of concern to us," Manfred said. "Obviously, the potential for something happening in the game that nobody notices is much higher with a lot of kinds of prop bets and you could see where a player would be more tempted to — all you need to do is miss three free throws; it doesn't necessarily change the outcome of your game. Your team may pick you up and life moves on. It's just easier to have a problem on a prop bet. I think it's just human nature. So, yeah, we remain concerned about them and have lobbied for certain types of prop bets not to be allowable."

Market jitters follow election of first woman as Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum

By MARÍA VERZA and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Hours after declaring victory, Mexico's newly elected president, the first woman to win the job, faced a market meltdown Monday and a tough path toward reconciling a country deeply divided by outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Claudia Sheinbaum has promised to continue the political course set by her populist predecessor despite widespread discontent with persistent cartel violence, the weakening of democratic institutions and fears among investors that an already hostile environment might become much worse.

Hours after the election results were announced, the Mexican peso dropped over 4% in value to close at 17.71 to \$1, and the Mexican stock exchange took a dive to close off 6%.

Gabriela Siller, director of analysis at Nuevo Leon-based Banco Base, noted that Sheinbaum's victory, along with an apparent super-majority in Congress for her Morena party, raised fears.

It "opened the possibility of changes in the Constitution, which alters, or better put, deteriorates the risk balance of Mexico, causing capital to leave the country," Siller said.

The strong peso — which has gained steadily against the dollar on the back of increased remittances in the last year — was something López Obrador counted as his own achievement. But analysts have suggested for some time the Mexican currency is over-valued.

With words like "capital flight" and "black Monday" flying around financial markets, quick action to calm markets was urgently needed. But Sheinbaum's team's immediate reaction appeared muddled; they announced — and then quickly canceled — plans for her to hold a news conference.

López Obrador appeared determined Monday to push through his highly divisive constitutional changes — many of which opponents fear will fatally weaken Mexico's democracy — before he leaves office on Sept. 30.

The Morena party that López Obrador founded and in which he remains far more personally popular than Sheinbaum, appeared to be on track to win the two-thirds majority needed to change the Constitution. López Obrador has already laid out 20 constitutional changes he plans to submit, including the elimination of independent oversight agencies and stricter limits on private investment.

That worries foreign investors. López Obrador has already cracked down on private and foreign investment in the energy sector, and now wants to ban new industrial sites in any area of Mexico suffering water stress — essentially the whole, economically vibrant north of the country.

But other political provisions also worry and divide Mexicans.

"The climate of political polarization has gotten worse during the current administration," Moody's Analytics Director Alfredo Coutiño wrote in a report Monday. "The country is significantly divided and will require the new president's political leadership to restore national unity."

Sheinbaum appeared conscious of the need to heal divisions, but it was unclear how she might go about achieving it.

"Even though the majority of the people backed our project, our duty will always be to look out for each and every Mexican, without distinctions," the president-elect said in her victory speech after long-delayed initial vote counts gave her a crushing margin of victory, higher even than the one López Obrador won in 2018.

With about 78% of votes counted, Sheinbaum had some 59% of votes, about twice as many as her nearest competitor Xóchitl Gálvez, who got around 28%.

For the moment, López Obrador struck a note more celebratory than vengeful, though throughout most of his six-year term he has piled far more contempt on journalists and opponents than on the country's drug cartels, which he has not confronted.

"This is something really historic," López Obrador said of the election of the first woman to Mexico's presidency. "We are living through exceptional, extraordinary, glorious times."

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U.S. President Joe Biden issued a statement congratulating Sheinbaum on her "historic" election, and saying, "I look forward to working closely with President-elect Sheinbaum in the spirit of partnership and friendship that reflects the enduring bonds between our two countries."

Sheinbaum quickly replied in a statement that "I am convinced that we will continue to collaborate in benefit of our peoples and our countries, as the neighbors, partners and friends that we are, with the respect that our sovereignties deserve."

The bilateral relationship has been complicated by López Obrador's refusal to acknowledge that Mexican cartels produce the synthetic opioid fentanyl that kills tens of thousands of Americans annually. Under his administration, however, Mexico has proved more than willing to try to prevent migrants from reaching the U.S. border, a valuable contribution for the Biden administration.

It is not clear whether Mexico's anti-drug cooperation — which suffered under López Obrador — will improve under Sheinbaum. López Obrador repeated his pledge Monday to allow Sheinbaum room to govern, without trying to rule from behind the scenes after he leaves office.

He also suggested he might give Sheinbaum some latitude to change his proposals for constitutional reforms — though without promising anything.

"We have to reach an agreement with Claudia on these bills," he said. "I don't want to impose anything."

He went on to list the historic names for the times, from the 1500s to the 1930s, when Mexican leaders tried to rule from behind the scenes.

"I do not aspire to be a 'moral leader,' a 'maximum boss,' a 'caudillo,' nor much less a 'cacique,'" he said, using a pre-Hispanic term for a life-long autocratic leader.

Sheinbaum, a climate scientist and former Mexico City mayor, has vowed to continue López Obrador's policies, and in her victory speech Monday gave little sign of how she will make her own mark on the presidency. Her cool temper offers a sharp contrast in style with López Obrador's folksy populism, and a break with Mexico's male-dominated political culture.

It was an election that guaranteed Mexico would make history. The two leading candidates were women, and Sheinbaum is also the first person from a Jewish background to lead the overwhelmingly Catholic country.

Sara Ríos, 76, a retired literature professor at Mexico's National Autonomous University, expressed confidence Sheinbaum will reconcile the country.

"The only way that we move forward is by working together," Ríos said. "She is going to work to bring peace to the country, and is going to manage to advance, but it is a slow process."

On Monday, however, López Obrador, showed little appetite for reconciliation with one of his favorite targets for criticism — the middle class — saying that at a polling place in a middle-income neighborhood he had heard "very classist remarks, very angry, let's hope they get over it ... little by little."

The elections were widely seen as a referendum on López Obrador, who has expanded social programs but largely failed to reduce cartel violence in Mexico. The 61-year-old Sheinbaum is unlikely to enjoy the kind of unquestioning devotion that López Obrador has.

In Mexico City's main plaza, the Zocalo, Sheinbaum's lead did not draw the cheering crowds that greeted López Obrador's victory in 2018.

Fernando Fernández, a 28-year-old chef, joined the relatively small gathering hoping for a Sheinbaum victory, but he acknowledged there were problems.

"You vote for Claudia out of conviction, for AMLO," Fernández said, referring to López Obrador by his initials, as most Mexicans do.

But his highest hope is that Sheinbaum can "improve what AMLO couldn't do, the price of gasoline, crime and drug trafficking, which he didn't combat even though he had the power."

Sheinbaum stressed the long struggle it took for a woman to reach the presidency.

"I do not arrive alone," she said. "We all arrived, with our heroines who gave us our homeland, with our mothers, our daughters and our granddaughters."

Kylian Mbappé finally joins Real Madrid in a union of soccer's top player and club

By TALES AZZONI and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press
MADRID (AP) — Kylian Mbappé is finally a Real Madrid player.

Madrid said on Monday it reached a deal with the France star for the next five seasons, bringing together one of soccer's top talents and its most successful club.

Madrid did not release any financial details. It also didn't immediately say when it will officially introduce Mbappé, who is with France preparing for the European Championship.

The announcement came after years of flirtation by Madrid with the player who inherited the status of the best in the game from Lionel Messi.

"A dream come true," Mbappé said on X. "So happy and proud to join the club of my dream. Nobody can understand how excited I am right now. Can't wait to see you, Madridistas (Madrid fans), and thanks for your unbelievable support. ¡Hala Madrid!"

The post, with the message written in English, Spanish and French, was accompanied by photos of a young Mbappé wearing a Madrid jacket while visiting the club. One photo was with Madrid great Cristiano Ronaldo.

The club also posted a video on its website showing Mbappé highlights. At the beginning, a voiceover says, "Are you watching closely?"

The 25-year-old World Cup winner joins a Madrid team that is already loaded with talent and still celebrating its latest European triumph — and sixth in 10 seasons.

Just two days ago, Madrid won a record-extending 15th European Cup title when it beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 in the Champions League final in London.

Mbappé joins a team that already features young stars in Vinícius Júnior, Rodrygo and Jude Bellingham. His signing could revive Madrid's "galatico" squads, when it had some of the world's top players including Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Brazil's Ronaldo, David Beckham, Luis Figo and Karim Benzema, among others.

The current Madrid players were quick to welcome their newest teammate.

"Welcome to the best club in the world," forward Brahim Díaz said.

"I don't know if we won the Champion League on Saturday or if we won it today with Mbappé's signing," former Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas said.

Until now, Mbappé has played club soccer only for French teams — first at Monaco and for the past seven seasons at Paris Saint-Germain, which he left as a free agent after it failed to persuade him to renew his contract. Mbappé didn't take the option for an extra year on the deal he signed two years ago.

Monaco wished Mbappé success and posted a photo of the player as a youngster holding Monaco's jersey in front of several posters of Madrid players, including Ronaldo.

The Spanish league said "a new star in the universe of Real Madrid."

In 2021, Madrid was rejected after offering PSG a bid of 180 million euros, the same amount PSG paid Monaco for a teenage Mbappé years earlier.

Madrid president Florentino Pérez made signing Mbappé a strategic club priority since the powerhouse failed to lock him up when Mbappé visited the club's facilities at age 14.

He, instead, opted to join Monaco's youth academy, and became a teenage sensation when he helped lead the Principality club to the Champions League semifinals in 2017.

The Qatar-backed PSG turned down Madrid's 2021 bid, but with Mbappé's contract expiring the next year, Madrid took it for granted that Mbappé, who had never hid his desire to one day play for the Spanish club, would come south of the Pyrenees in 2022.

But French President Emmanuel Macron encouraged him to stay, and Mbappé stunned Pérez and most of the soccer world by signing a contract extension to "continue his adventure" in Paris.

Madrid won the 2022 Champions League after beating Mbappé's PSG in the knockout rounds.

Pérez said after Mbappé turned down his club two years ago that perhaps it was best he didn't come after all, but there were no bridges burned and Madrid is getting a once-in-a-generation player as a free agent.

Mbappé studied Spanish while he was with Monaco and speaks it well, which should help him blend well into a team that also features French players Eduardo Camavinga, Aurélien Tchouaméni and Ferland Mendy.

Mbappé's resume features winning the World Cup at 19, a World Cup final hat trick at 23, seven French leagues, four French Cups, and a proven prowess for dominating games with his scoring ability.

Mbappé captains France. When they won the World Cup in 2018, he was the second teenager after Pelé to score in a World Cup final. Four years later, he was one of only two players in history to score a hat trick in a World Cup final when France fell to Messi's Argentina.

Mbappé was unable to lead PSG to the ultimate goal of a Champions League crown, losing the only final he played in 2020. He also failed to score in both semifinal legs against Dortmund this season.

Mbappé left PSG as its all-time leading scorer with 256 goals, including a club record 175 in the French league. His highest scoring season with PSG was 44, and he was the top scorer of the French league for the sixth consecutive season (27).

Fauci pushes back partisan attacks in fiery House hearing over COVID origins and controversies

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert until leaving the government in 2022, was back before Congress on Monday, calling "simply preposterous" Republican allegations that he'd tried to cover up origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A GOP-led subcommittee has spent over a year probing the nation's response to the pandemic and whether U.S.-funded research in China may have played any role in how it started — yet found no evidence linking Fauci to wrongdoing.

He'd already been grilled behind closed doors, for 14 hours over two days in January. But Monday, Fauci testified voluntarily in public and on camera at a hearing that quickly deteriorated into partisan attacks.

Republicans repeated unproven accusations against the longtime National Institutes of Health scientist while Democrats apologized for Congress besmirching his name and bemoaned a missed opportunity to prepare for the next scary outbreak.

"He is not a comic book super villain," said Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., saying the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic had failed to prove a list of damaging allegations.

Fauci was the public face of the government's early COVID-19 response under then-President Donald Trump and later as an adviser to President Joe Biden. A trusted voice to millions, he also was the target of partisan anger and choked up Monday as he recalled death threats and other harassment of himself and his family, threats he said still continue. Police later escorted hecklers out of the hearing room.

The main issue: Many scientists believe the virus most likely emerged in nature and jumped from animals to people, probably at a wildlife market in Wuhan, the city in China where the outbreak began. There's no new scientific information supporting that the virus might instead have leaked from a laboratory. A U.S. intelligence analysis says there's insufficient evidence to prove either way -- and a recent Associated Press investigation found the Chinese government froze critical efforts to trace the source of the virus in the first weeks of the outbreak.

Fauci has long said publicly that he was open to both theories but that there's more evidence supporting COVID-19's natural origins, the way other deadly viruses including coronavirus cousins SARS and MERS jumped into people. It was a position he repeated Monday as Republican lawmakers questioned if he worked behind-the-scenes to squelch the lab-leak theory or even tried to influence intelligence agencies.

"I have repeatedly stated that I have a completely open mind to either possibility and that if definitive evidence becomes available to validate or refute either theory, I will readily accept it," Fauci said. He later invoked a fictional secret agent, decrying a conspiracy theory that "I was parachuting into the CIA like Jason Bourne and told the CIA that they should really not be talking about a lab leak."

Republicans also have accused Fauci of lying to Congress in denying that his agency funded "gain of function" research — the practicing of enhancing a virus in a lab to study its potential real-world impact

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– at a lab in Wuhan.

NIH for years gave grants to a New York nonprofit called EcoHealth Alliance that used some of the funds to work with a Chinese lab studying coronaviruses commonly carried by bats. Last month, the government suspended EcoHealth's federal funding, citing its failure to properly monitor some of those experiments.

The definition of "gain of function" covers both general research and especially risky experiments to "enhance" the ability of potentially pandemic pathogens to spread or cause severe disease in humans. Fauci stressed he was using the risky experiment definition, saying "it would be molecularly impossible" for the bat viruses studied with EcoHealth's funds to be turned into the virus that caused the pandemic.

In an exchange with Rep. H. Morgan Griffith, R-Va., Fauci acknowledged that the lab leak is still an open question since it's impossible to know if some other lab, not funded by NIH money, was doing risky research with coronaviruses.

Fauci did face a new set of questions about the credibility of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which he led for 38 years. Last month, the House panel revealed emails from an NIAID colleague about ways to evade public records laws, including by not discussing controversial pandemic issues in government email.

Fauci denounced the actions of that colleague and insisted that "to the best of my knowledge I have never conducted official business via my personal email."

The pandemic's origins weren't the only hot topic. The House panel also blasted some public health measures taken to slow spread of the virus before COVID-19 vaccines, spurred by NIAID research, helped allow a return to normalcy. Ordering people to stay 6 feet apart meant many businesses, schools and churches couldn't stay open, and subcommittee chairman Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio, called it a "burdensome" and arbitrary rule, noting that in his prior closed-door testimony Fauci had acknowledged it wasn't scientifically backed.

Fauci responded Monday that the 6-feet distancing wasn't his guideline but one created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention before scientists had learned that the new virus was airborne, not spread simply by droplets emitted a certain distance.

Sally Buzbee steps down as executive editor of The Washington Post

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Washington Post said Sunday that its executive editor, Sally Buzbee, has stepped down after three years at the top of one of journalism's most storied brands.

She will be replaced by Matt Murray, former editor in chief of The Wall Street Journal, through this fall's presidential election. Following that, Robert Winnett, deputy editor of the Telegraph Media Group, will take over as editor as the newsroom restructures its operations.

No reason was given for Buzbee's departure. She wasn't quoted in the news release announcing that she was leaving, and did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

The Post also announced that it was launching a new division in its newsroom dedicated to reaching audiences who want to pay for and consume news in a different way.

Buzbee, former top editor at The Associated Press, was selected as the Post's top editor in May 2021. She replaced a renowned predecessor, Martin Baron, after the Post exploded in popularity during the Trump administration.

Buzbee was the first woman to serve as executive editor of The Washington Post. And like Jill Abramson, the first woman to be top editor at The New York Times, her tenure was short: Abramson had her job from 2011 to 2014.

It has been a miserable few years financially for the news industry, including for the Post. It has bled subscribers to the point where new publisher, Will Lewis, told employees last month that the newspaper lost \$77 million last year.

"To speak candidly, we are in a hole, and have been for some time," Lewis said, according to the Post. Lewis was named late last year to replace Fred Ryan as Post publisher. He has worked at both The Wall

Street Journal and The Telegraph in England, the places he turned to to find the new executives.

He's talked about creating a multi-tier subscription plan for The Post, similar to that in place at Politico. In an email to employees late Sunday, Lewis said the new department will focus on more video storytelling, will embrace artificial intelligence and flexible payment methods. It will begin this fall, he said.

In an earlier meeting, "we highlighted the need to move away from the traditional one-size-fits-all approach in the news media industry and focus on creating news for a broader range of readers and customers."

It augurs a change to the traditional structure of the Post. In his memo, Lewis mentioned "three newsrooms." Winnett will not take on the title of executive editor, but he will be responsible for the "core coverage areas" of politics, investigations, business, technology, sports and features. He has run The Telegraph's news operations since 2013, the Post said.

Murray will take over as leader of the newly-created department starting Nov. 6, the Post said. No one will have the title of executive editor: Murray, Winnett and David Shipley, the editorial page editor who will lead the "opinions newsroom," will each report directly to Lewis, the Post said.

"By creating three strong journalism functions — core, service/social and opinions — we are taking a definitive step away from the 'one size fits all' approach and moving towards meeting our audiences where they are," Lewis said.

The Post won three Pulitzer Prizes last month, including one in national reporting for a vivid series on the impact of the AR-15 rifle.

Fraud trial juror reports getting bag of \$120,000 and promise of more if she'll acquit

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A juror was dismissed Monday after reporting that a woman dropped a bag of \$120,000 in cash at her home and offered her more money if she would vote to acquit seven people charged with stealing more than \$40 million from a program meant to feed children during the pandemic.

"This is completely beyond the pale," Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Thompson said in court on Monday. "This is outrageous behavior. This is stuff that happens in mob movies."

These seven are the first of 70 defendants expected to go to trial in a conspiracy that cost taxpayers \$250 million. Eighteen others have pleaded guilty, and authorities said they recovered about \$50 million in one of the nation's largest pandemic-related fraud cases. Prosecutors say just a fraction of the money went to feed low-income kids, while the rest was spent on luxury cars, jewelry, travel and property.

During the trial that began in April, defense attorneys questioned the quality of the FBI's investigation and suggested that this might be more of a case of record-keeping problems than fraud as these defendants sought to keep up with rapidly changing rules for the food aid program.

These seven initial defendants were affiliated with a restaurant that participated in the food aid program. Those still awaiting trial include Feeding our Future's founder Aimee Bock, who has pleaded not guilty and denied any wrongdoing.

The 23-year-old juror said she immediately turned over the bag of cash to police. She said a woman left it with her father-in-law Sunday with the message that she'd get another bag of cash if she voted to acquit, according to a report in the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Defense attorney Andrew Birrell told the judge that the bag of cash is "a troubling and upsetting accusation."

Before allowing the trial to continue with more closing arguments on Monday, U.S. District Judge Nancy Brasel questioned the remaining 17 jurors and alternates, and none reported any unauthorized contact. Brasel decided to sequester the jury for the rest of the proceeding as a precaution.

"I don't do it lightly," Brasel said. "But I want to ensure a fair trial."

She didn't decide immediately whether to detain the defendants, but she did order an FBI agent to confiscate the defendants' phones.

The aid money came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was administered by the state Depart-

ment of Education. Nonprofits and other partners under the program were supposed to serve meals to kids.

Two of the groups involved, Feeding Our Future and Partners in Nutrition, were small nonprofits before the pandemic, but in 2021 they disbursed around \$200 million each. Prosecutors allege they produced invoices for meals that were never served, ran shell companies, laundered money, indulged in passport fraud and accepted kickbacks.

Biden says Hamas is sufficiently depleted. Israel leaders disagree, casting doubts over cease-fire

JULIA FRANKEL and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — At the start of its devastating offensive on the Gaza Strip, Israel set an ambitious goal: destroy Hamas. At the time, the Biden administration committed to the objective, giving Israel considerable stocks of weaponry and voicing its support.

Nearly eight months into the war, however, cracks have emerged between the close allies over what defeating Hamas actually looks like. Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden said the militant group was no longer capable of launching an attack on Israel like the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war and that it was time for the fighting to end. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and far-right ministers disagree.

Where the U.S. seeks a quick end to the fighting, Israel's leadership appears determined to push onward.

Here is how the leaders define the destruction of Hamas.

BIDEN: NO ABILITY TO POSE A THREAT

Biden on Friday said it was time to end the Israel-Hamas war, signaling that the objective of destroying Hamas had already been met because the militant group was "no longer capable" of carrying out a large-scale attack on Israel like the one on Oct. 7.

That day, Hamas militants astonished Israel with a large-scale assault, killing some 1,200 people and dragging about 250 hostages back to Gaza as rocket fire targeted Israeli cities and towns.

In the nearly eight months since then, Israel says its air and ground offensive has significantly depleted Hamas' military capabilities. It claims to have killed 15,000 militants, half of Hamas' fighting force, and wounded thousands of others. It also says it has destroyed a significant portion of Gaza's labyrinthine tunnel network, command and control centers and rocket launchers.

Biden appeared Friday to believe this was enough to satisfy Israel's objective. He urged Israel and Hamas to reach an agreement to release about 85 remaining hostages, along with the bodies of around 40 more, for an extended cease-fire.

NETANYAHU: ELIMINATE REMAINING MILITARY AND GOVERNING ABILITY

In response to Biden's suggestion that Hamas was significantly depleted, Netanyahu said Israel would not agree to a permanent cease-fire until "the destruction of Hamas' military and governing capabilities, the freeing of all hostages and ensuring that Gaza no longer poses a threat to Israel."

The Israeli army says the eradication of Hamas is still incomplete, with battalions of militants remaining in the southernmost city of Rafah and fighting still raging in Gaza's north. Hamas has continued to launch rockets into Israel, although with far lower intensity than in the first months of war. The extent of the group's governance across the strip remains unclear, though no alternative has emerged.

Still, Netanyahu admits it may be impossible to fully stamp out the ideology of Hamas, which seized control of Gaza in 2007, a year after winning legislative elections against the rival Fatah party. Hamas has managed to survive despite a 16-year blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt, and four previous wars against Israel.

"Hamas has to be eliminated, not as an idea," Netanyahu said in late March. "Nazism was not destroyed as an idea in World War II, but Nazis don't govern Germany."

ISRAEL'S FAR RIGHT: ERADICATE HAMAS AND RESETTLE GAZA

The far-right firebrands within Israel's ultranationalist government have staunchly rejected Biden's cease-fire proposal, saying Israel must continue its war in Gaza until the militant group is completely stamped out.

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Israel's minister of national security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich have both threatened to leave Netanyahu's government if he endorsed Biden's proposal. That would cause the coalition to collapse.

Smotrich said Monday that agreeing to a cease-fire would amount to a humiliation of Israel and a surrender. Increased military pressure, he said, is "the only language understood in the Middle East."

Ben-Gvir has called for the "voluntary" emigration of Palestinians from Gaza and for a return of Israeli settlements. Israel unilaterally pulled out of more than 20 Jewish settlements in Gaza in 2005, ending a 38-year presence.

Speaking at a resettlement conference in May, Ben-Gvir said that the only way to make sure "the problem won't come back" was to "return to Gaza now."

"Return home!" he chanted, "Return to our holy land!"

Powder kegs: 50 years ago, 10-cent beers helped turn a Cleveland baseball game into a bloody riot

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Beer flowed and a little blood and bruises followed. There was some baseball played in between.

On a warm spring night along Lake Erie five decades ago, a well-intended promotion meant to attract fans for the perpetually lousy Cleveland Indians turned ugly and triggered a booze-fueled riot now known as one of the most notorious events in American sports history.

On Tuesday, 10-cent beer night turns 50.

Cheers. Burp.

A game that began with a handful of fans tipsy on cheap beer running across the outfield grass — some of them naked — collapsed into chaos.

During a scary ninth inning, Texas manager Billy Martin, never one to back down from a fight, turned to his players in the dugout and told them to grab bats before leading a charge onto the Municipal Stadium field and into mayhem.

Looking back to June 4, 1974, it's hard to imagine anyone thought it would be a good idea to sell beers for just a dime. But it was a different world then, maybe not innocent but certainly naive.

By the time the Rangers escaped to their clubhouse with a win via forfeit after surviving hundreds of fans storming the field as the Indians were rallying, it became apparent this was a big mistake.

"It kind of fit in with the times," said former Cleveland manager Mike Hargrove, who was a 24-year-old rookie first baseman with the Rangers. "They had Disco Demolition Night in Chicago, and to me it was almost a sign of what was to come 50 years later with all that's going on in the world right now."

Even before the first keg was tapped or 10-ounce beer poured, there was already simmering tension between the Rangers and Indians. A week earlier, the teams had brawled in Texas, where Rangers fans pelted the Indians' players with debris.

After the skirmish, Martin lit a proverbial match when asked if he feared retribution on an upcoming trip to Cleveland.

"They don't have enough fans there to worry about," he quipped.

The comment didn't sit well back in Cleveland, where civic pride runs deeper than the Cuyahoga River and passionate fans aren't averse to quaffing a brew or two while watching their pro sports teams.

In the week leading up to 10-cent Beer Night, local radio host Pete Franklin fanned flames by vowing revenge against the Rangers. Martin was booed when he presented the lineup card.

Hargrove sensed trouble long before being pelted with dozens of hot dogs thrown from the stands. He barely dodged being hit by a wine bottle.

"About the second inning, fans started running back and forth across the outfield from the left-field bullpen to the right-field bullpen," Hargrove told The Associated Press in a phone call last week. "It started

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out with a couple of people doing it and then it was five, then 10, and then it was a whole bunch.”

From his seat in the upper deck, Jack Barno, who went to the game with high school buddies, could see things were escalating in a bad way.

“When people were streaking across the field and the cops were chasing them, they were laughing like, ‘You can’t catch me,’” recalled the 67-year-old resident of Westlake, Ohio. “There was a handful of cops on the other side with billy clubs. And when they came over that fence, they met them with a couple whacks to the head and dragged them off.”

Other problems percolated around the giant ballpark.

With long lines making their wait too long to get a refill, unruly fans, some of them college kids just home for summer break, chased off concession workers manning the beer trucks set up beyond the center-field wall. The beer was now free.

Stadium security was outnumbered and overwhelmed by the crowd of 25,134, the season’s second-largest.

Still, it was mostly good-natured fun — Morganna, the famed “kissing bandit” of the 70s, ran onto the field and tried to kiss umpire Nestor Chylak. A father and son mooned the crowd.

Then came the ninth and a scene from a low-budget horror film.

After trailing 5-3, the Indians scored twice to tie it and had runners on when a fan scaled the outfield wall, sprinted toward Rangers right fielder Jeff Burroughs and tried to steal the player’s cap.

In the dugout, Martin screamed for his players to follow him. Hargrove headed to right to assist Burroughs, who at that point had been surrounded. The Indians burst from their dugout to help the Rangers.

“Some great big guy, drunk guy took Jeff’s hat, and I was one of the first ones to get there,” Hargrove said. “I tackled him and knocked him down and it took like three cops to handcuff him. Thank goodness he was on the ground. I took off — or else.”

The rest is something of a hazy blur.

“I remember nothing about the game, other than in that inning we were in trouble,” Hargrove said. “They had runners on and it looked like they were getting ready to score and go ahead and then all of a sudden all hell broke loose.”

While players escaped major harm, Chylak’s head was split open by a thrown chair as fights broke out all over the field.

Even a half-century later, Hargrove can recall his emotions from the unforgettable night.

“I don’t remember being scared,” he said. “I don’t remember feeling like I was threatened. I didn’t feel that way when it was going on until we got to the clubhouse looking back out there at what went on and could have gone on.

“Then, I got a little shaky.”

While the night was another blow to the city’s already battered image, Clevelanders mostly shrugged. Today, the ugly event is commemorated with throwback T-shirts marking the night beer, blood and baseball mixed.

The rest of the country was outraged.

The Indians held another beer night a month later.

Proposed Gaza cease-fire puts Netanyahu at a crossroads that could shape his legacy

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The cease-fire proposal announced by President Joe Biden has placed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a crossroads, with either path likely to shape the legacy of Israel’s longest-serving and deeply divisive leader.

The proposal offers the possibility of ending Israel’s war against Hamas, returning scores of hostages held by the Islamic militant group, quieting the northern border with Lebanon and potentially advancing a historic agreement to normalize ties with Saudi Arabia.

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But it would also likely shatter Netanyahu's governing coalition, potentially sending him into the opposition and making him more vulnerable to a conviction in his corruption trial. The full withdrawal of Israeli forces called for in the agreement could allow Hamas to claim victory and reconstitute itself.

Netanyahu's rejection of the deal, on the other hand, could deepen Israel's international isolation, worsen ties with an American administration eager to wind down the war and expose him to accusations of having abandoned the hostages to save his own skin.

It's a conundrum, and that may explain the strange choreography of Biden's Friday night address: An American president, announcing what he says is an Israeli proposal, during the Jewish sabbath, when Israel's political class goes largely silent.

Netanyahu acknowledged the proposal, which has been shared with Hamas through mediators, but then appeared to contradict Biden's remarks. He said Israel remains committed to dismantling Hamas' military and governing capabilities and that any talk of a permanent cease-fire before then was a "nonstarter."

On Monday, he said the destruction of Hamas is "part of the proposal" and was quoted as telling a closed parliamentary hearing that Israel reserves the right to return to war if its objectives are not met.

But it has never been clear what the destruction of Hamas entails or whether it's even possible. Biden said Israel had degraded Hamas to the point where it could no longer carry out an Oct. 7-style attack, and that that by continuing the war, Israel risked getting bogged down in Gaza.

But Netanyahu appears to be seeking a much bigger victory.

'NETANYAHU'S ENDGAME IS TO SURVIVE'

Netanyahu's critics fear he will reject any cease-fire to appease his ultranationalist governing partners, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. They want to continue the war, fully reoccupy Gaza and rebuild Jewish settlements there.

They have already vowed to leave the government if the proposal announced by Biden comes to pass. Netanyahu's political opponents have offered a safety net if he reaches a deal to release hostages but they are unlikely to help him stay in office long-term.

"Everything that Ben-Gvir and Smotrich demand or threaten to do, you see Netanyahu is very attentive to that," said Tal Schneider, an Israeli political commentator. "Netanyahu's endgame is to survive."

Netanyahu's current government, formed in late 2022 after five consecutive elections, is the most nationalist and religious in Israel's history. Months before the war, it pushed policies that entrenched Israel's occupation of the West Bank, deepened the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community's reliance on state subsidies and set in motion an overhaul of the judicial system that tore the country apart.

The coalition initially had a slim majority of 64 seats in Israel's 120-seat parliament -- enough to govern but with a fragility that would keep Netanyahu's fate tied to the whims of any of the smaller parties that form the government.

A VETERAN OF 'DIFFICULT' POLITICS

Shortly after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war in Gaza, Benny Gantz, a former military chief and a top political rival of Netanyahu, joined the government in a show of unity. Netanyahu, Gantz and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant formed a three-man War Cabinet to direct the offensive.

Mazal Mualem, a Netanyahu biographer, said that effort largely succeeded in sidelining the ultranationalists and allowing Netanyahu to govern in a more pragmatic mold that has defined his 17 years in office going back to the 1990s.

She pointed to Israel's limited response to an aerial attack by Iran in April, which Ben-Gvir criticized as "weak," and to a cease-fire and hostage release deal reached with Hamas in November that Smotrich had initially opposed but later voted for.

"Over the years, Bibi has taught himself to do what he wants to do in difficult political environments," she said, referring to Netanyahu by his popular nickname.

But Gantz has threatened to quit the government unless Netanyahu lays out a postwar plan by June 8, which would leave him far more reliant on Smotrich and Ben-Gvir.

Netanyahu's decision to press ahead with Israel's massive military campaign in Gaza as scores of hos-

tages languish in captivity has opened him up to fierce criticism from many Israelis, including families of the captives. Thousands have joined weekly mass protests.

"The government of Israel has given up on the hostages," Yehi Yehud, who has an adult child being held hostage in Gaza, told Israeli Army Radio. "Bibi, you don't have the permission or the moral validity to sacrifice them on the altar of your political survival."

OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Netanyahu's hard-line stance has also weighed heavily on Israel's relations with its closest ally, the United States, which has provided crucial military support but expressed exasperation with civilian casualties and the lack of any realistic Israeli postwar plans.

Internationally, it has exposed Israel to charges of genocide, which it denies, and a potential international arrest warrant against Netanyahu himself.

In his address on Friday, Biden appeared to be offering Netanyahu a way out: Claim victory by saying a battered Hamas can no longer mount an Oct. 7-style attack, bring all the hostages home and then work with the U.S. and Arab nations to build a new regional security architecture.

But the fear of losing power could prevail.

Netanyahu has spent years nurturing an image that only he can lead Israel through its myriad diplomatic and security challenges. That legacy suffered a major blow on Oct. 7, with many Israelis directly blaming him for the most devastating security failure in the country's history. Public opinion polls indicate that Netanyahu is trailing behind Gantz and would struggle to form a government if elections were held today.

For all their threats, his far-right allies are in a similar predicament. They would likely join him in the opposition if early elections are held, losing the power he has granted them over the Israeli police and settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank.

If Netanyahu can hold his coalition together until the next scheduled elections in 2026, he might be able to rehabilitate his image. His poll numbers have already started to climb from the depths they hit after Oct. 7 as he has presented himself as withstanding international pressure to end the war.

Aviv Bushinsky, a former Netanyahu adviser, said Netanyahu's wartime decision-making has less to do with immediate political survival and more with securing a legacy that would not be entirely overshadowed by Oct. 7. That requires some kind of victory over Hamas.

"From a historical perspective, Netanyahu's only option is to go all the way," he said. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich "are helping him reach that destination, to keep his head above water."

A Black medic wounded on D-Day saved dozens of lives. He's finally being posthumously honored

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Waverly Woodson Jr., a medic who was part of the only Black combat unit to take part in the D-Day invasion of France during World War II, is being posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in recognition of the heroism and determination he showed treating troops under heavy enemy fire.

The Distinguished Service Cross is the second-highest honor that can be bestowed on a member of the Army and is awarded for extraordinary heroism.

The announcement was made Monday by Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, who has been working for years with Woodson's family for more recognition of his exploits on that fateful day.

"This has been a long time coming," Van Hollen said during an interview with The Associated Press. "Woodson's bravery on D-Day was heroic. We have numerous accounts of what he did to save his fellow soldiers even as he was wounded. And so we've been pursuing this recognition for a long time along with the family."

The announcement comes just days before the 80th anniversary of the June 6 anniversary of the assault that led to the liberation of France and the rest of Western Europe from Nazi Germany.

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Members of the First Army, which included Woodson's unit during World War II, is taking a World War II-era Distinguished Service Cross with them to France. They will hold a ceremony on the Colleville-sur-Mer section of the beach, under what was a German fighting position known as WN61 where Woodson cared for troops, and place the medal in the sands there. Later this summer it will be given to his family in a ceremony.

Woodson was just 21 years old when his unit, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, took part in the Allied operation. His battalion, the only African American combat unit there that day, was responsible for setting up balloons to deter enemy planes.

At a time when the U.S. military was still segregated by race, about 2,000 African American troops are believed to have taken part in the D-Day invasion.

Woodson died in 2005. He spoke to the AP in 1994 about how his landing craft came under intense fire from the Germans as it approached the beach.

"The tide brought us in, and that's when the 88s hit us," he said of the German 88mm guns. "They were murder. Of our 26 Navy personnel there was only one left. They raked the whole top of the ship and killed all the crew. Then they started with the mortar shells," Woodson said.

Capt. Kevin Braafladt, the First Army historian, said Woodson's landing craft — LCT 856 — was hit by two shells, wounding Woodson. The vessel lost power and was pushed toward the shore by the tide. Woodson likely had to jump in the water to wade ashore.

For the next 30 hours he treated 200 wounded men all while under intense small arms and artillery fire before collapsing from his injuries and blood loss, according to accounts of his service. At the time he was awarded the Bronze Star.

Although 1.2 million Black Americans served in the military during World War II, none was among the original recipients of the Medal of Honor awarded in the conflict. The Army commissioned a study in the early 1990s to analyze whether Black troops had been unjustly overlooked during an era of widespread racism and segregation in the military. Ultimately, seven Black World War II troops were awarded the Medal of Honor in 1997.

At the time, Woodson was considered for the award and the authors interviewed him. But, they wrote, his decoration case file couldn't be found and his personnel records were destroyed in a 1973 fire at a military records facility. Woodson's supporters believe not just that he is worthy of the Medal of Honor but that there was a recommendation at the time to award it to him that has been lost.

Braafladt said after the war the U.S. military made a deliberate effort to reduce its massive amounts of paperwork. The fire at a military records facility in Missouri also destroyed countless documents. But Braafladt, who's been working on the Woodson case for roughly four years, said there's no doubt in his mind that Woodson was absolutely deserving of the Medal of Honor and that he was recommended for it at the time. It's a matter of finding the documentation, he said.

"For me and for the First Army, the hunt continues," he said.

Van Hollen's office became involved in Woodson's case years ago when Woodson's wife reached out to seek Van Hollen's assistance in helping get Woodson's the recognition she felt he deserved.

"Waverly would have felt honored to be recognized for what he knew was his duty. But we all know it was far more than duty; it was his desire to always help people in need," said Joann Woodson in the announcement from the senator's office.

Woodson's story is also being told as part of a four-part National Geographic docuseries called "Erased: WW2's Heroes of Color." The docuseries highlights the stories of people whose contributions were deliberately overlooked at a time of entrenched racism.

Van Hollen said he and Woodson's family were still working to have Woodson awarded the Medal of Honor but called the awarding of the Distinguished Service Cross an "extremely significant" moment.

"This moment is extremely significant at overcoming what has been an historic injustice and righting this wrong," said Van Hollen.

The first woman elected to lead Mexico faces pressing gender-related issues

By SARA ESPAÑA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Claudia Sheinbaum's name will go down in Mexican history.

The governing party candidate won Mexico's presidential election on Sunday, a turning point in a mostly conservative nation that for more than two centuries has been exclusively ruled by men.

Elsewhere in Latin America, women have led countries including Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Guyana, Nicaragua, Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Haiti and Costa Rica.

Mexican women won the right to vote in 1953. No law prevented female candidates from holding office, but sexism and "macho" culture continue to permeate the country of 129 million people.

Prior to the current presidential race, during which Sheinbaum maintained a comfortable lead against opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez, only two women had officially sought Mexico's presidency. Both failed.

In her bid to replace outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Sheinbaum struggled to construct an image of her own, leaving many wondering whether she can escape the shadow of her mentor.

Women currently lead some key Mexican institutions, such as the Senate, the Supreme Court and the National Electoral Institute. Mexico ranks third among Latin American nations with the most women in the national Cabinet — 44% — and has 10 female governors among its 32 states.

In some Indigenous villages, though, men still hold the power.

Among the issues that Mexican women face are femicide, or women killed because of their gender, a gender employment gap and inadequate policies guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights. Sheinbaum, 61, will need to address these after she takes office on Oct. 1.

Here's a look at the issues.

FEMICIDE AND GENDER VIOLENCE

Demonstrations on International Women's Day on March 8 are painful reminders that many Mexican women disappear or are killed on a daily basis.

According to U.N. Women, up to 10 women are victims of femicide each day in Mexico. The number totaled 3,000 in 2023.

Thousands more have disappeared. In many cases, it is their mothers, feeling abandoned by the government, who have taken on the task of searching for them.

Most femicides go unpunished due to Mexico's inefficient justice system, which frequently dismisses reported crimes or fails to properly investigate and prosecute them.

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, more than 40% of Mexican women who are 15 years old or older say they have been victims of some sort of violence in their lives.

During her campaign, Sheinbaum said she would replicate measures against gender-based violence that were implemented when she was mayor of the capital. They include the creation of an anti-femicide prosecutor's office and legislation that would force offenders to leave their homes.

"We transform, we are warriors who open paths for other women," Sheinbaum said.

In spite of this, Sheinbaum has been criticized by feminists and activists arguing that her government lacked gender-related policies. Excessive use of force against women during demonstrations has been flagged as well.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Teenage pregnancy in Mexico has raised concern.

According to official figures from 2021, the latest available, there were 147,279 births among adolescents between 15 and 19 years old, and 3,019 among girls under 15.

Mexico's Supreme Court ruled in 2023 that national laws prohibiting abortions are unconstitutional and violate women's rights, but further state-by-state legal work is pending to remove all penalties.

Twelve of Mexico's 32 states have decriminalized abortion, most of them in the past five years. A few more states allow abortion if the mother's life is in danger, and it is legal nationwide if the pregnancy is the result of rape.

In most states where it has been decriminalized, advocates say they face persistent challenges in making abortion safe, accessible and government funded.

Sheinbaum did not address the topic during her campaign.

GENDER EMPLOYMENT GAP

According to official figures, 76% of Mexican men and only 47% of women are employed.

Among working women, 54% have informal jobs and they dedicate close to 43 hours per week to household chores. According to the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, this limits the time that women can devote to the labor market. Education and access to public transportation are determining factors as well.

Women usually earn less money than men. In Mexico City, the difference is 6%, while in other states the gap can reach up to 25%.

Palestinian officials apply to join South Africa's case at top UN court accusing Israel of genocide

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Palestinian officials have applied at the top U.N. court for permission to join South Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza.

The request published Monday alleges that Israel's ongoing military operation is "part of a systematic effort to wipe Palestinian society and its culture and social institutions from the map." The request to the International Court of Justice was made on behalf of the "State of Palestine" and signed by Palestinian Authority foreign ministry official Ammar Hijazi.

South Africa filed its case with the world court late last year accusing Israel of breaching the genocide convention in its military assault that has laid waste to large swaths of Gaza. Israel denies it is committing genocide in its military operation to crush Hamas triggered by the deadly Oct. 7 attacks.

Israel is expanding its offensive in the southern city of Rafah, once the main hub of humanitarian aid operations. The Israeli invasion has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians facing widespread hunger.

Israeli bombardments and ground operations in Gaza have killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

The court has issued three preliminary orders in the case calling on Israel to do all it can to prevent deaths in the enclave, ramp up humanitarian aid and, most recently, halt its offensive in Rafah.

It is unclear how long the court's judges will take to rule on the request. If granted, Palestinian officials will be able to address the court in writing and during public hearings.

In their request, the Palestinians said they are directly affected by South Africa's case against Israel.

"The Israeli onslaught has obliterated and damaged, beyond recognition, Gaza's hospitals, mosques, churches, universities, schools, homes, shops, and infrastructure, as part of a systematic effort to wipe Palestinian society and its culture and social institutions from the map," the request says.

The request adds that, Israel is violating the court's orders and continuing with "its genocidal acts including deliberately and systematically impeding humanitarian aid, resulting in an intentionally engineered situation of starvation and a creeping famine that is increasingly imminent."

The Palestinians have been to the court before. In 2018, The Palestinian Authority filed a case asking its judges to order Washington to remove the relocated U.S. embassy from Jerusalem. The case followed the decision of the administration of then-U.S. President Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to move the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv.

That case remains before the court, where cases can take years to resolve.

The International Court of Justice rules in cases between states. The United Nations General Assembly voted last month to give Palestine some new rights and privileges, but it reaffirmed that it remains a non-member observer state without full U.N. membership and the right to vote in the General Assembly or at any of its conferences.

The United States has made clear that it will block Palestinian membership and statehood until direct negotiations with Israel resolve key issues, including security, boundaries and the future of Jerusalem, and lead to a two-state solution.

'SNL' lampooned men in artistic swimming.

Bill May could be the sport's first male Olympian

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Bill May chuckles at the mere mention of the words "Saturday Night Live," knowing that the conversation is about to turn to the TV show's 1984 skit starring Martin Short as one of two brothers attempting to make it to the Olympics in what then was called synchronized swimming.

If you want to laugh, too, go ahead and Google the mockumentary-style 4 1/2 minutes, which include Short's character earnestly looking into the camera and admitting, "I don't swim," and show him wearing an orange life vest in the pool. It's satire, of course, and a sign of the long-ago times: They were poking fun at the mere idea of male participants in that then-women-only sport, which now is known as artistic swimming and changed the rules so men can compete at the Summer Games.

The first opportunity arrives in Paris this August, and May, a 45-year-old who lives in California, hopes to take advantage. He'll find out on Friday whether he is one of the eight athletes (plus one alternate) picked by a five-person panel to be on the U.S. roster for the team event.

He has zero issues with what "SNL" did 40 years ago. Anything that draws attention to his life's focus is fine by him. Indeed, May would love to meet Short at some point. Maybe even throw a couple of floaties on him and jump in the pool together.

"It's hilarious. That lightheartedness is really what acknowledges a sport," May said. "It may look silly, but it's also saying, 'OK, you know it does take time; you can't just walk in and do any sport.' So I think any publicity is great for our sport."

May was part of the squad at the Aquatic World Championships in Doha, Qatar, in February, when the United States qualified for the Olympics in the team event for the first time since 2008. The expectation is that he would be the only man competing in Paris, if he is there; another top male athlete in artistic swimming, Giorgio Minisini of Italy, was ruled out of his country's Olympic plans in April.

Both May and Adam Andrasko, the CEO of USA Artistic Swimming, see this as promoting inclusion in the sport by helping those who previously haven't been encouraged — or even permitted — to take part.

"It's a challenge for any one athlete to come into a sport that they're not traditionally gender-specific in and, usually, in most American conversations, that's a female entering a male sport," Andrasko said. "We just have the reverse scenario here."

One that May believes can send a broader message.

"You see these sports grow because, when they're at the Olympics, that's where heroes are made," he said. "They're going to see a male in the Olympics, and it's going to inspire them, whether it be a male, female — anyone that has a dream to know that, 'If I work hard enough, and if I dream big enough, then that can be me there someday.'"

The Phone Call

May remembers the place (his kitchen), the date (Dec. 17, 2022) and even the exact time (9:42 p.m.) that the phone call arrived with the news he was waiting for: Male artistic swimmers would be permitted at the 2024 Games.

How does he know the precise minute?

"When your greatest dream happens," May said, "then you never forget."

"I never thought it would happen for my career," he said. "I knew it would happen, because I knew that it had to happen for the sport to grow. ... I just kind of got chills all over my body and thought: 'OK, am I going to do this? Yes, I'm going to do this!'"

He started in the sport in the late 1980s, when he was 10, after his sister tried it first. He felt welcome right away.

His path has included performing with Cirque du Soleil and coaching at Santa Clara Artistic Swimming.

"He was already a star when I started. Bill May had a huge name. I remember going to a few of his exhibitions. ... I would watch him, and his swimming was so beautiful," said Megumi Field, an 18-year-old who competes for the U.S. "It was inspiring to see someone like Bill go as far as he has."

Growing Artistic Swimming

Andrasko, the CEO, would love to grow artistic swimming and recognizes that May could play a key role. "We want to expand the sport. We want it to be more popular. We want more people to participate in it. And if you exclude half of the population, you're not doing a very good job of that," Andrasko said. "I don't know if putting a male in this Games was a direct intention to drive popularity; obviously, it's a strong storyline."

If he does go to Paris, May might get a lot of attention, and everything else, that comes with being a "first" to do something. Andrasko said he pitched NBC on a "reboot" of Short's decades-old skit.

"The minute that we qualified in Doha, Adam and I joked," said Kennedy Shriver, the communications manager for USA Artistic Swimming. "He was like, 'Your job is going to get a lot harder.' And it did, but in a great way."

May says he always wanted to do what he could to "complement the other athletes in the sport." And just as importantly, he added, "set an example that anyone can do anything that they want to do."

Populist campaigner Nigel Farage makes an about-face and says he will run in the UK election

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Pro-Brexit, anti-immigration campaigner Nigel Farage stepped back into front-line British politics on Monday, announcing he will take the helm of the right-wing party Reform U.K. and run for Parliament in the July 4 election.

Farage said he'll run in the seaside town of Clacton-on-Sea in his eighth attempt to win a seat in the House of Commons. His seven previous tries all failed.

The announcement, a headache for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, came just days after Farage said he would not be a candidate because it was more important to support his ally Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential election in November.

While Farage stands some chance of defeating Clacton's Conservative incumbent and getting elected on July 4, he acknowledged that his larger goal is to lead the "real" opposition to a Labour Party government if the governing Conservative Party loses, as many expect.

Farage said he wanted to lead a "political revolt ... a turning of our backs on the political status quo."

He's aiming to repeat the populist political pressure that pushed for, and then won, a 2016 referendum on taking the U.K. out of the European Union.

"I can't turn my back on those millions of people who followed me, believed in me," Farage said. "I've changed my mind because I can't let down millions of people."

In a bullish announcement speech, Farage, who served as a member of the European Parliament for more than 20 years until Brexit, stuck to his familiar script of decrying career politicians, out-of-touch elites and mass immigration.

The 60-year-old politician also said he would take over as leader of Reform, successor to the Brexit Party. That role has been held since Reform was founded by Richard Tice, with Farage serving as honorary president and charismatic figurehead.

The center-right Conservatives, who have been in office for 14 years, are battling a widespread sense that voters want change. On July 4 voters across the U.K. will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons. The leader of the party that can command a Commons majority — either alone or in coalition — will become prime minister.

The favorite is Labour Party leader Keir Starmer, who pledged Monday to keep the U.K.'s nuclear weapons as he seeks to dispel criticisms that his center-left party is soft on defense.

His campaign is centered on his claim to have transformed the party since he replaced Jeremy Corbyn, a longtime opponent of nuclear weapons and critic of NATO, as Labour leader in 2020.

"My commitment to the nuclear deterrent is absolute," Starmer said Monday during a campaign appear-

ance at a military museum in Bury, northwest England.

"Nobody who aspires to be prime minister would set out the circumstances in which it would be used. That would be irresponsible, but it is there as part of a vital part of our defense, so of course we would have to be prepared to use it," he said.

Britain has been a nuclear power since the 1950s, and both Labour and Conservative governments have consistently supported atomic weapons. Since the 1990s, Britain's nuclear deterrent has consisted of four Royal Navy submarines armed with Trident missiles.

Starmer said his entire top team shared his commitment to the nuclear arsenal, even though several members, including deputy leader Angela Rayner and foreign affairs spokesman David Lammy, voted against renewing Trident in 2016.

Starmer said a Labour government would build the four new nuclear submarines that the Conservatives have already committed to.

He also pledged that a Labour government would increase defense spending to 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product, though he has not set a deadline. Sunak says his Conservatives will meet the target by 2030.

Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system — in which the candidate with the highest number of votes in each area wins — makes it unlikely that Reform could win many seats. But the party could contribute to Conservatives' defeat in some areas.

Farage has said he is modelling his strategy on Canada's Reform Party, which helped push that country's Conservatives to the verge of wipeout in a 1993 election before reshaping Canadian conservative politics.

The U.K. Conservatives, trailing in the polls, have focused their campaign on shoring up its vote by targeting older voters and social conservatives — the groups most likely to defect to Reform. Conservative campaign promises include a boost to the state pension and a plan to make all 18-year-olds undertake a year of civilian or military national service.

The Conservative Party said in a statement that "Farage knows that Reform won't win any seats, but he doesn't seem to care that a vote for Reform only helps Labour. He's doing exactly what Keir Starmer wants him to do."

Iran's hard-line parliament speaker emerges as the theocracy's top figure in the presidential vote

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's hard-line parliament speaker emerged on Monday as the most-prominent candidate from within the country's Shiite theocracy in the race for the June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, killed in a helicopter crash last month.

The entry of Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a former Tehran mayor with close ties to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, catapulted him to the front of the bevy of candidates, just a day after hard-line former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also registered his bid for the presidency.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave a speech earlier Monday, alluding to qualities that Qalibaf himself has highlighted and potentially signaling his support for the speaker.

However, many know Qalibaf who as a former Revolutionary Guard general was part of a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999. He also reportedly ordered live gunfire to be used against students in 2003, while serving as the country's police chief.

Those events could play into an election that follows years of unrest gripping Iran, both over its ailing economy and the mass protests sparked by the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died after being arrested for allegedly not wearing her headscarf, or hijab, to the liking of security forces.

The election also comes at a time of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, its arming of Russia in that country's war on Ukraine and its wide-reaching crackdowns on dissent.

Meanwhile, Iran's support of militia proxy forces throughout the wider Middle East have been increas-

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ingly in the spotlight as Yemen's Houthi rebels attack ships in the Red Sea over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Qalibaf, 62, registered his candidacy with the Interior Ministry in front of a crowd of journalists Monday. Speaking later to the media, he said he would continue on the same path as Raisi and the late Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a figure revered by many in Iran after his 2020 killing in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad.

Qalibaf insisted he would not allow "another round of mismanagement" to happen in the country and mentioned poverty and price pressures affecting Iranians as the country strains under international sanctions.

"If I didn't register, the work we have started for resolving economic issues of the people in the popular government (of Raisi) and the revolutionary parliament, and is now at the stage of fruition, would remain unfinished," Qalibaf said.

He did not elaborate and it remains unclear what those plans actually would entail as Iran's currency, the rial, continues to spiral and again nears 600,000 to the dollar. The currency was trading at 32,000 rials to the dollar when Tehran signed the 2015 nuclear accord with world powers.

Like other candidates, Qalibaf stayed away from directly discussing the tattered nuclear deal — or the recent comments by officials that Iran potentially could seek the atomic bomb. Such matters of state remain the final decision of Khamenei, 85, but presidents in the past have leaned either toward engagement or confrontation with the West over it.

Along with Ahmadinejad, another former parliament speaker, Ali Larijani, and former Iranian Central Bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati, who also ran in 2021, have also registered for the June balloting. Eshaq Jahangiri, a former vice president under moderate President Hassan Rouhani whose administration reached the nuclear deal, has also registered for the race.

Acting President Mohammad Mokhber, who took over after Raisi's death, apparently did not register despite being seen with Khamenei in recent major meetings. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said "about 80" hopefuls registered during the five-day registration period.

A 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei, will decide on a final candidate list by June 12.

The panel has never accepted a woman or anyone calling for radical change to the country's governance. Ahmadinejad, who increasingly challenged Khamenei toward the end of his term and is remembered for the bloody crackdown on the 2009 Green Movement protests, found himself disqualified in the last election by the panel.

Qalibaf ran unsuccessfully for president in 2005 and 2013. He withdrew from the 2017 presidential campaign to support Raisi in his first failed presidential bid. Raisi won the 2021 election, which had the lowest turnout ever in a presidential vote in Iran, after every major opponent found themselves disqualified.

A trained pilot, Qalibaf served in the paramilitary Guard during the country's bloody war with Iraq in the 1980s. After the conflict, he served as the head of the Guard's construction arm, Khatam al-Anbia, for several years leading efforts to rebuild the country.

Qalibaf then served as the head of the Guard's air force, and in 1999, he co-signed a letter to reformist President Mohammad Khatami amid student protests in Tehran over the government's closing of a reformist newspaper and a subsequent security force crackdown. The letter warned Khatami that the Guard would take action unilaterally unless he agreed to put down the demonstrations.

Violence around the protests saw several people killed, hundreds wounded and thousands arrested.

Qalibaf then served as the head of Iran's police, modernizing the force and implementing the country's 110 emergency phone number. But a leaked recording of a later meeting between Qalibaf and members of the Guard's volunteer Basij force included him claiming that he had ordered the use of gunfire against demonstrators in 2003, as well as praising the violence used against the 2009 protests.

In comments Monday morning before Qalibaf registered, Khamenei told an audience that Iran needed a president who was "active, hardworking, attentive and loyal to the basics" of 1979 Islamic Revolution — a statement that Qalibaf later echoed.

"Concerns about the future of the country was a reason that the elites and entrepreneurs invited me to run in the election," Qalibaf said. "Who else can take responsibility for finishing jobs in this situation?"

As pharmacies shutter, some Western states, Black and Latino communities are left behind

By TOM MURPHY and KASTURI PANANJADY Associated Press

Opening stores used to mean everything to pharmacy chains.

CVS Health once boasted of opening or buying more than 2,900 locations in a five-year period. Now it's shuttering hundreds, while Walgreens, Rite Aid and independent drugstores also pull back.

An industry that saw waves of store growth before the COVID-19 pandemic faces headwinds like falling prescription reimbursement, persistent theft and changing shopping habits. But as drugstores right-size their physical footprint, experts say they can leave behind communities that have come to depend on them as trusted sources of care and advice — both of which can be hard to find in many urban and rural areas.

"That trust, you just can't quantify it," said Omolola Adepoju, a University of Houston health services researcher. "And I don't think it gets spoken about enough when we talk about pharmacy closures."

There's a pattern to who has access to pharmacies, with gaps forming in urban and rural neighborhoods.

Residents of neighborhoods that are largely Black and Latino have fewer pharmacies per capita than people who live in mostly white neighborhoods, according to an Associated Press analysis of licensing data from 44 states, data from the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs and the American Community Survey. It's consistent with prior research that documents where urban "pharmacy deserts" are more likely to be concentrated.

The AP also analyzed data from 49 states and found those with the fewest retail pharmacies per capita include Alaska, Oregon and New Mexico. About two-thirds of retail pharmacies in those states were owned by chains, while independent pharmacies tend to concentrate more in urban markets or states with bigger populations.

PHARMACY AS A CARE LOCATION

Drugstores have become bigger sources of care in recent years, sometimes by design or necessity — especially for customers who work multiple jobs and can't easily get to a doctor. Many pharmacies, including the two largest chains, offer clinics and more than a dozen vaccines to treat patients. They've also encouraged pharmacists to counsel patients more on managing conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure.

Prakash Patel at Bert's Pharmacy in Elizabeth, New Jersey, said sometimes the pharmacy is a sick customer's "first stop."

"There is no easy access to a doctor's office. You need an appointment. They have limited hours," the store owner and pharmacist said. "So any time any child or adult — whoever is sick — where are they going to go first? To the pharmacy."

In rural areas, drugstores often serve multiple roles for their communities, with pharmacists seeing regular customers more than a doctor does, said Megan Undeberg, a community pharmacy expert at Washington State University. That means they may be the first to notice signs of things like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease and suggest the patient seek help.

"You're the smoking cessation counselor, you're the suicide prevention counselor," she said. "You know just about everything about everyone, but it's confidential."

A few weeks before the CVS in Herscher, Illinois, closed in early March, farmer Kip Harms picked up a muscle relaxer for a back injury. He asked the staff if he could take it with Tylenol.

Harms said he'll have other options in the rural area that's nearly 80 miles south of Chicago, but it won't be the same.

"You can stand here and have a conversation," said Harms, 56, from nearby Cullom. "You go to the big giant one where there's 40 people in line, you feel like you're inconveniencing the person that's helping you."

PACE OF DRUGSTORES CLOSING

The big drugstore chains still have thousands of locations, and the AP's analysis counted more than 24,000 independent pharmacies. But drugstores routinely close because they aren't doing well or the population has dropped — and the pace of closures is picking up.

CVS said in 2021 that it planned to close 900 stores over three years; more than 600 already have shut-

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tered. Rite Aid is expected to close hundreds as it works through a bankruptcy reorganization.

Across the U.S., more than 7,000 pharmacies have closed since 2019, according to data from University of Pittsburgh researcher Lucas Berenbrok, who considers that estimate conservative. Of those pharmacies, 54% were independent drugstores, an AP analysis of Berenbrok's data found.

"I think what (drugstores) have realized in the past couple years is that they are a little thinly spread out," said Keonhee Kim, an analyst at the research firm Morningstar.

Blame the closings on problems like sliding revenue and rising expenses. For years, the reimbursement that drugstores receive for filling most prescriptions has shrunk while things like utilities and employee pay continue to climb.

Theft also is a problem, and Walgreens has cited it as one of the many reasons it closes stores. Drugstores often carry small, pricey items like beauty supplies, batteries and baby formula that are easy to steal and resell, said Burt Flickinger III, managing director of the retail consulting firm Strategic Resource Group.

It can take new pharmacy locations as many as three years to build a customer base and break even, said Jeff Jonas, a portfolio manager at Gabelli Funds who follows the industry. That's tough when customers also are less reliant on drugstores now than in decades past.

He said shoppers buy more things online or during bigger trips to Costco or Walmart, and discount stores look even more attractive when inflation pushes up prices.

"I don't think (consumers are) walking into the pharmacy two or three times a week and doing those little impulse buys in the front of the store as often," Jonas said.

Drugstores say they haven't forgotten the communities left behind when a store closes. Walgreens, for instance, delivers some prescriptions for free within a 15-mile radius.

But deliveries don't involve seeing a pharmacist or a pharmacy staff. And pharmacy technicians and others behind the counter often look like their customers or may speak a language that's dominant in the neighborhood.

At least one in six retail pharmacies reported offering services in Spanish, according to the AP's analysis of pharmacies in 49 states and data from the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs.

That connection can't easily be replaced "by telling patients, 'Go to the next pharmacy,'" Adepoju at the University of Houston said.

Governments are starting to pay attention, too, with some states planning to study pharmacy closures, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Adepoju would like to see more regulation, given the growing role pharmacies play in providing care.

"If health care is seen as a right, not a privilege," she said, "then you shouldn't be able to just shut it down because you submitted paperwork and you put a notice on the front of your door."

Brigitte Bierlein, Austria's first woman chancellor, dies at 74

BERLIN (AP) — Brigitte Bierlein, the former head of Austria's Constitutional Court who became the country's first female chancellor in an interim government in 2019, has died. She was 74.

Her death on Monday was announced by Chancellor Karl Nehammer, who wrote that "for future generations, she will remain a shining example of self-determination, equal rights and breaking through glass ceilings." He said that Austria lost one of its most distinguished legal experts.

Austria's Constitutional Court said she passed away after a short, serious illness.

Bierlein sat on the court first as vice-president and then as president from February 2018 until her appointment as chancellor on June 3, 2019.

She was named interim leader after then-Chancellor Sebastian Kurz lost a confidence vote following the collapse of the governing coalition between his right-wing People's Party and the far-right Freedom Party.

It followed the publication of a video showing Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache appearing to offer lucrative government contracts to a purported Russian investor.

When Bierlein was sworn in as chancellor, she appealed to the country's youth, and particularly young women, to help make a "strong, livable and tolerant Austria."

"Our land, our democracy needs all of you, your creative strength and your belief in Austria," she said. "Your engagement is irreplaceable for the health of our republic and all of Europe."

Bierlein led Austria from June 2019 to January 2020. She headed a cabinet of civil servants that was often referred to in public as a government of experts. After the newly elected government took up its work in early 2020, she effectively ended her public career, Austrian news agency APA said.

The Constitutional Court said in a statement that in addition to her professional duties, Bierlein was active for decades in the public prosecutor's office and on an independent victim protection commission against abuse and violence. She was also known as a lover of theater and arts.

The Viennese native had no children, APA reported, often telling Austrian media that she could not have imagined combining a job and children. Her partner of many years, judge Ernest Maurer, died in 2021, the agency reported.

Nehammer praised Bierlein's commitment and love for Austria.

"She took on responsibility at a difficult time out of love for the republic and her homeland Austria," he wrote on X. "Our country owes her a great debt of gratitude."

Zelenskyy in Manila to promote peace summit, which he says China and Russia are trying to undermine

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the Philippine president on Monday in a rare Asian trip to urge regional leaders to attend a Swiss-organized global peace summit on the war in Ukraine that he accuses Russia, with China's help, of trying to undermine.

Zelenskyy arrived unannounced and under heavy security in Manila late Sunday after speaking over the weekend at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore. He was given a red-carpet welcome with military honors Monday at the presidential palace before meeting with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., after which he left the Philippines.

Marcos pledged that his country would take part in the peace summit, Philippine Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said.

"I'm happy to hear today from you that you'll participate in our peace steps," Zelenskyy told Marcos. "It's a very strong signal."

The White House said Vice President Kamala Harris will represent the U.S. at the meeting in Lucerne on June 15.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine needs more mental health workers for its soldiers. Marcos promised to help and welcomed a decision by Ukraine to open an embassy in Manila this year which would hasten efforts to deliver assistance.

"We have ourselves been trying to promote the continuing adherence to international law in our part of the world," Marcos said. "The issues that you are facing are similar and in parallel to ours and, therefore, the position the Philippines takes is always to promote peace."

Both leaders spoke critically of China at the Singapore forum, which was attended by top defense and government officials from around the world, including from Washington and Beijing. The talks were held amid the raging wars in Gaza and Ukraine as well as growing tensions and rivalry for influence between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region.

At a news conference in Singapore on Sunday, Zelenskyy accused China of helping Russia to disrupt the Swiss-organized peace summit by pressuring other countries not to attend.

"Russia, using Chinese influence in the region, using Chinese diplomats also, does everything to disrupt the peace summit," he said, without elaborating. "This is unfortunate that such a big independent powerful country as China is an instrument in the hands of (Russian leader Vladimir) Putin."

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning denied the allegation. "Our position is open and transparent, and there is no such thing as pressuring other countries" Mao said.

China has taken what it says is a neutral position on the war, putting it at odds with Ukraine, the U.S. and most of Europe. Its trade with Russia has grown, easing the economic impact of Western sanctions. American, Ukrainian and other intelligence agencies say there is evidence that Chinese parts are winding up in Russian weaponry, even if China is not directly arming its neighbor.

Switzerland had been hoping China would attend the peace conference in mid-June, but Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning suggested Friday that was unlikely.

At the security forum, Zelenskyy urged top defense officials to participate in the talks in Switzerland, expressing disappointment over the failure of some countries to commit to attending. Ukraine, he said, has proposals to make at the summit as a basis for peace, addressing nuclear security, food security, the release of prisoners of war and the return of Ukrainian children abducted by Russia.

He said Ukraine is "ready to hear various proposals and thoughts that lead us ... to an end of the war and a sustainable and just peace."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the conference and renewed U.S. commitments to Ukraine. In an address to the forum Saturday, Austin said that "Putin's war of aggression has provided us all with a preview of a world that none of us would want."

Marcos, whose country has had escalating clashes with China over disputed islets in the South China Sea, bluntly underscored the dangers of the regional flashpoint Friday at the defense forum. He said that if "a willful act" should result in a Filipino dying in the high-seas hostilities, "that is, I think, very, very close to what we define as an act of war."

"That would certainly increase the level of response," Marcos said in response to a question.

"Illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions continue to violate our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdictions," Marcos said, without naming China, but he added that the Philippines remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the disputes.

Austin said at the forum that the U.S. commitment to the Philippines as a treaty ally is "ironclad" but reiterated 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."

How AP covered the D-Day landings and lost photographer Bede Irvin in the battle for Normandy

By VALERIE KOMOR Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Associated Press correspondent Don Whitehead arrived with other journalists in southern England to cover the Allies' imminent D-Day invasion of Normandy, a U.S. commander offered them a no-nonsense welcome.

"We'll do everything we can to help you get your stories and to take care of you. If you're wounded, we'll put you in a hospital. If you're killed, we'll bury you. So don't worry about anything," said Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Heubner of the U.S. Army 1st Infantry Division.

It was early June 1944 — just before the long-anticipated Normandy landings that ultimately liberated France from Nazi occupation and helped precipitate Nazi Germany's surrender 11 months later.

On D-Day morning, June 6, 1944, AP had reporters, artists and photographers in the air, on the choppy waters of the English Channel, in London, and at English departure ports and airfields. Veteran war correspondent Wes Gallagher — who would later run the entire Associated Press — directed AP's team from the headquarters in Portsmouth, England, of Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The greatest armada ever assembled — nearly 7,000 ships and boats, supported by more than 11,000 planes — carried almost 133,000 troops across the Channel to establish toeholds on five heavily defended beaches; they were code-named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword and stretched across 80 kilometers (50 miles) of Normandy coast. More than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded in the first 24 hours.

Having heard on German radio that the landings had begun, Gallagher hurried to the British Ministry

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of information to await the official communique. It came just before 9 a.m. with this brief instruction: "Gentlemen, you have exactly 33 minutes to prepare your dispatches."

At precisely 9:32 a.m., the doors opened and the journalists poured out to release their reports. Gallagher's FLASH appeared via teletype in the New York headquarters of AP just one minute later.

LONDON—EISENHOWERS HEADQUARTERS ANNOUNCES ALLIES LAND IN FRANCE.

The 1,300-word story that followed began: "Allied troops landed on the Normandy coast of France in tremendous strength by cloudy daylight today and stormed several miles inland with tanks and infantry in the grand assault which Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called a crusade in which 'we will accept nothing less than full victory.'"

As men on either side of him were killed, AP correspondent Roger Greene waded ashore on the eastern end of the landing front. Sheltering in a bomb crater, Greene pounded out the first AP report from the beachhead, with wind flicking sand into his typewriter keys and rattling the paper.

"Hitler's Atlantic Wall cracked in the first hour under tempestuous Allied assault," he wrote.

On Omaha, the deadliest invasion beach, AP's Whitehead lost his bedroll and equipment and nearly his life as he landed with the 16th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division.

"So many guys were getting killed that I stopped being afraid. I was resigned to being killed, too," he later recalled.

He witnessed German heavy machine-gun fire, mortar and artillery rounds raking landing craft and pinning down U.S. soldiers, vehicles and supplies that "began to pile up on the beach at an alarming rate."

Whitehead never forgot the calmness of Col. George A. Taylor urging troops onward by yelling: "Gentleman, we're being killed on the beach. Let's go inland and be killed."

The Battle of Normandy was underway, with Allied forces pushing off the beaches and fighting their way inland in the following days and weeks. By June 30, the Allies had landed 850,000 soldiers, nearly 150,000 vehicles and more than half a million tons of supplies.

Casualties mounted on all sides and among French civilians. By the second half of August, with Paris being liberated, more than 225,000 Allied troops had been killed, wounded or were missing. On the German side, more than 240,000 had been killed or wounded and 200,000 captured.

The dead included 33-year-old AP photographer Bede Irvin, killed July 25 near the Normandy town of Saint Lo as he was photographing an Allied bombardment that went horribly wrong, with some of the bombers mistakenly dropping their payloads on their own forces.

As well as Irvin — hit by shrapnel as he was diving for the shelter of a roadside ditch — more than 100 American soldiers were killed and almost 500 others wounded, said Ben Brands, a historian with the American Battle Monuments Commission. It manages the the Normandy American Cemetery where Irvin is buried, overlooking Omaha Beach.

On Monday, colleagues from AP's Paris bureau, covering the 80th anniversary of the landings, laid flowers at the foot of the white stone cross on his grave. Irvin's is one of 9,387 graves in what was the first American cemetery in Europe of World War II, set up two days after D-Day.

In its September 1944 edition, AP's in-house magazine said the native of Des Moines, Iowa, had until then survived some of the worst fighting in Normandy and "had only one complaint — that he was not seeing enough action."

In a letter after his death to one of Irvin's AP colleagues, his widow, Kathryn, poured out her sorrow. Muriel Rambert, an ABMC guide at the cemetery, read out an extract Monday at his grave, after she'd used sand from Omaha Beach to highlight Irvin's name on his headstone and planted American and French flags in front of it.

"There are so many hopes and plans between a husband and wife," she said, reading from the letter. "Plans that won't for Bede and me ever come true."

UN monitor says Russia recognizes it would be unsafe now to restart Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Russia may eventually restart the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant that it seized in southeastern Ukraine but shares the view of international monitors that it's not practical and possibly dangerous to do so now, the U.N. nuclear watchdog chief said Monday.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi said he gained an understanding of Russia's position during a meeting last week in Kaliningrad with Alexey Likhachev, the director-general of the Russian nuclear energy agency Rosatom.

Grossi told reporters at a meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors in Vienna that Russia does not plan to decommission the plant. Moscow has "the intention of using this plant" but also recognizes "that at the moment this would be not practical and perhaps even dangerous," Grossi said.

Grossi said his May 28 discussions with Russian officials were to "assure that we are on the same wavelength" but that the outcome could not be characterized as a "formal agreement."

Zaporizhzhia is Europe's largest and one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world. While its six reactors have been shut down for months, it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial systems to cool the reactors and the spent fuel pools.

Russian forces seized the Zaporizhzhia plant days after Russian president, Vladimir Putin, ordered the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and since then Russia and Ukraine have repeatedly traded blame for shelling near the plant.

Grossi said the main dangers of restarting the nuclear plant are the continuing military operations in the region and the precarious nature of the external power supply, where he said there continues to be "oscillations or even blackouts."

Grossi said that for the nuclear plant to be restarted safely, there must not be "any bombing or any activity of this type," and there needs to be a stable external power supply along with several other safety assessments.

The IAEA last reported on May 23 that the Zaporizhzhya plant temporarily lost the connection to its sole remaining off-site power line "due to a reported short-circuit, leaving it reliant on a single back-up line for more than three hours" which it said underlined "the extremely precarious nuclear safety and security situation" at the plant.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly expressed alarm about the plant amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe.

Grossi last met Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in March.

Mexico elects Claudia Sheinbaum as its first female president

By MARÍA VERZA and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's projected presidential winner Claudia Sheinbaum will become the first female president in the country's 200-year history.

Sheinbaum, the favored successor of outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, vowed to continue on the direction set by the populist leftist leader. But the cool-tempered scientist offers a sharp contrast in style — and a break with Mexico's male-dominated political culture.

"I promise that I am not going to let you down," Sheinbaum said, greeting supporters in Mexico City's colonial-era main plaza, the Zocalo.

The National Electoral Institute's president said Sheinbaum had between 58.3% and 60.7% of the vote, while opposition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez had between 26.6% and 28.6% and Jorge Álvarez Máynez had between 9.9% and 10.8% of the vote. Sheinbaum's Morena party was also projected to hold its majorities in both chambers of Congress.

The climate scientist and former Mexico City mayor said that her two competitors had called her and

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conceded her victory.

The official preliminary count put Sheinbaum 28 points ahead of Gálvez with nearly 50% of polling places reporting.

The fact that the two leading candidates were women had left little doubt that Mexico would make history Sunday.

"As I have said on other occasions, I do not arrive alone," Sheinbaum said shortly after her victory was confirmed. "We all arrived, with our heroines who gave us our homeland, with our mothers, our daughters and our granddaughters."

Sheinbaum will also be the first person from a Jewish background to lead the overwhelmingly Catholic country.

She will start her six-year term Oct. 1. Mexico's constitution does not allow reelection.

The leftist has said she believes the government has a strong role to play in addressing economic inequality and providing a sturdy social safety net, much like her political mentor.

López Obrador's anointed successor, the 61-year-old Sheinbaum consistently led in polls despite a spirited challenge from Gálvez. This was the first time in Mexico that the two main opponents were women.

"Of course, I congratulate Claudia Sheinbaum with all my respect who ended up the winner by a wide margin," López Obrador said shortly after the electoral authorities' announcement. "She is going to be Mexico's first (female) president in 200 years."

If the margin holds it would approach his landslide victory in 2018. López Obrador won the presidency after two unsuccessful tries with 53.2% of the votes, in a three-way race where National Action took 22.3% and the Institutional Revolutionary Party took 16.5%.

Still, Sheinbaum is unlikely to enjoy the kind of unquestioning devotion that López Obrador has enjoyed.

In the Zocalo, Sheinbaum's win did not draw the kind of cheering, jubilant crowds that greeted López Obrador's victory in 2018. Those present were enthusiastic, but comparatively few in number.

Sara Ríos, 76, a retired literature professor at Mexico's National Autonomous University, celebrated after hearing that Gálvez had conceded.

"The only way that we move forward is by working together," Ríos said. "She is going to work to bring peace to the country, and is going to manage to advance, but it is a slow process."

Fernando Fernández, a chef, 28, said he voted for Sheinbaum because of her ties to López Obrador, using the president's initials, AMLO. But his highest hope is that Sheinbaum can "improve what AMLO couldn't do, the price of gasoline, crime and drug trafficking, which he didn't combat even though he had the power."

The main opposition candidate, Gálvez, a tech entrepreneur and former senator, had promised a more aggressive approach toward organized crime.

In her concession speech, she said "I want to stress that my recognition (of Sheinbaum's victory) comes with a firm demand for results and solutions to the country's serious problems."

López Obrador claims to have reduced historically high homicide levels by 20% since he took office in December 2018. But that's largely a claim based on a questionable reading of statistics. The real homicide rate appears to have declined by only about 4% in six years.

Julio García, a Mexico City office worker, said he voted for the opposition because of crime. "They've robbed me twice at gunpoint. You have to change direction, change leadership," the 34-year-old said. "Continuing the same way, we're going to become Venezuela."

On the fringes of Mexico City in the neighborhood of San Andres Totoltepec, 34-year-old homemaker Stephania Navarrete said she planned to vote for Sheinbaum despite her own doubts about López Obrador and his party.

"Having a woman president, for me as a Mexican woman, it's going to be like before when for the simple fact that you say you are a woman you're limited to certain professions. Not anymore."

She said the social programs of Sheinbaum's mentor were crucial, but added that deterioration of cartel violence in the past few years was her primary concern in this election.

Nearly 100 million people were registered to vote and turnout appeared to be about 60%, similar to earlier elections.

Voters were also electing governors in nine of the country's 32 states, and choosing candidates for both houses of Congress, thousands of mayorships and other local posts, in the biggest elections the nation has seen and ones that have been marked by violence.

The elections were widely seen as a referendum on López Obrador, a populist who has expanded social programs but largely failed to reduce cartel violence in Mexico. His Morena party currently holds 23 of the 32 governorships and a simple majority of seats in both houses of Congress.

Sheinbaum promised to continue all of López Obrador's policies, including a universal pension for the elderly and a program that pays youths to apprentice.

Just as the upcoming November rematch between U.S. President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump has underscored deep divisions in the U.S., Sunday's election revealed how severely polarized public opinion is in Mexico over the direction of the country, including its security strategy and how to grow the economy.

President Milei's surprising devotion to Judaism and Israel provokes tension in Argentina and beyond

By ISABEL DEBRE and ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — At the base of the sacred Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City, President Javier Milei of Argentina appeared to be in a spiritual trance.

With head and hands pressed against the ancient stone, he prayed with the Orthodox rabbi who introduced him to Judaism three years ago. Although born and raised Roman Catholic, Milei has increasingly shown public interest in Judaism and even expressed intentions to convert.

Stepping back from the wall, Milei broke down. He hugged Rabbi Shimon Axel Wahnish close, sobbing onto his shoulder.

"In that moment, I felt proud that we have such a determined leader, with such deep spiritual values," Wahnish told The Associated Press in a recent interview, recalling their state trip to Israel in February.

For many Argentines, that pride was fraught with peril.

Breaking decades of policy precedent, Milei has gone further in his support of right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government than perhaps any other world leader as Israel faces growing isolation over its bombardment and invasion of Gaza that has killed over 36,000 Palestinians and pushed the enclave to the brink of famine.

His posture could not stand in starker contrast to most of Latin America — where Bolivia and Colombia have severed ties with Israel and at least five regional countries, most recently Brazil, have pulled ambassadors from Tel Aviv.

"Among great nations that should be pillars of the free world, I see indifference in some and fear in others about standing on the side of truth," Milei told Jewish community leaders at an event last month commemorating the 81st anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It was a veiled swipe at Western powers — including the United States — for criticizing Israeli military conduct.

The crowd leapt to its feet in applause.

The president's supporters insist his newfound Jewish fervor has no bearing on his foreign policy. But Milei's infatuation with Judaism and outspoken support for Israel has generated fears and exposed fissures within Argentina's Jewish community, among the biggest in the world, and roiled relations with its neighbors.

Argentine Jews remain deeply scarred by a pair of lethal bombings targeting Israel's embassy in 1992 and the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association, a community center known by its Spanish acronym AMIA, in 1994. Authorities allege Iran plotted the attacks and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group carried them out. No one has been held responsible. Argentina's investigation has been mired in controversy.

"Milei has a messianic mind, and this is quite dangerous," said Diana Malamud, whose husband was among the 85 people killed in the AMIA attack. "His policies can not only stoke conflicts at the international level ... but also generate anti-Semitism within our country."

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Milei's curiosity about Judaism began as a kind of penitence in 2021, when he faced accusations of harboring pro-Nazi sympathies and wanted to prove in speech that he bore no animus toward Jews. He connected with Sephardic leader Rabbi Wahnish to have "a chat that was supposed to last 10 minutes and ended two hours later," Wahnish said.

As Milei evolved from TV pundit to "anarcho-capitalist" president, Wahnish guided him through the study of Torah. Seeking common ground between his vision of radical libertarianism and the prophecy of the Old Testament, Milei's casual interest morphed into a regular religious practice.

Wahnish, recently appointed Argentina's ambassador to Israel, declined to comment on Milei's conversion. "In Judaism and Moses, Milei sees a cultural and spiritual revolution toward freedom," Wahnish said. Since childhood, he added, Milei "felt Moses was his idol, his hero."

Milei, who owns four clones of his dead dog Conan, has never been the most conventional occupant of Argentina's highest office. Still, his foray into Judaism has come as a particular surprise.

On the campaign trail, Milei quoted the Torah, made multiple Brooklyn pilgrimages to the tomb of influential Hasidic leader Menachem Mendel Schneerson and sounded the shofar, the ram's-horn trumpet blasted during the Jewish High Holy Days, to close his electoral campaign.

Ahead of Milei's victory, nearly 4,000 Argentine Jewish intellectuals signed a petition voicing concern over Milei's "political use of Judaism."

"It's perverse ... to use the shofar, which is played during religious ceremonies, to announce himself," said Pablo Gorodneff, secretary-general of the progressive Argentine Jewish Appeal group. "It makes me very frustrated, very sad."

As fighting raged in Gaza, Milei flew to Israel for his first foreign visit and praised Netanyahu without reservation. Following in the footsteps of former U.S. President Donald Trump, he pledged to move Argentina's Embassy from a beachfront bastion near Tel Aviv to the contested capital of Jerusalem — aggravating an emotional issue at the heart of the conflict. Netanyahu called Milei "a great friend." Hamas called him "a partner of the Zionist occupier."

Last month, Milei's government upended Argentina's traditional recognition of Palestinian statehood, joining the U.S. and Israel to vote against Palestinian membership at the U.N.

His foreign policy shift has thrilled Jewish community leaders, but also left them on edge.

"If Milei's supposed defense of Israel is an attack on Palestinian rights, it puts the Jewish community in Argentina at risk," said Héctor Shalom, director of Argentina's Anne Frank Center. "The decades of impunity for past attacks show our vulnerability."

The 1994 bombing, Argentina's most notorious cold case, still spreads unease. After Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, the mood in the Jewish community went from worried to alarmed.

Jewish high schools requested that students stop wearing their uniforms, so as not to identify as Jewish. Authorities jacked up security at synagogues. Two bomb scares emptied out the AMIA building.

"Security levels have always been high but now there is a much greater sensitivity," said Amos Linetzky, head of AMIA.

Government officials have also grown anxious, lashing out at Iran and warning that the Israel-Hamas war has stoked the embers of Islamic militancy and blown them all the way to Latin America.

Upon news of the first Iranian assault on Israeli territory April 14, local media reported Milei's pro-Israel stance had made him a target. He cut his state visit to Denmark short and flew home to convene a crisis committee alongside the Israeli ambassador.

Milei's hardline security minister, Patricia Bullrich, singled out left-wing neighbors Bolivia and Chile as Islamist hotbeds, ordering reinforcements to Argentina's northern border.

"We are on high alert," Bullrich said, alleging that Bolivia — which last year struck a defense agreement with Iran — teems with Iranian Revolutionary Guard operatives. "Politically correct messages like calling for peace are not Argentina's position."

Without providing evidence, Bullrich also claimed that Chile — home to the largest Palestinian population outside the Arab world — hosts Hezbollah.

The accusations, decried as baseless by Bolivia and Chile, prompted both governments to pull their ambassadors from Buenos Aires.

On Saturday, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, a 57-member group describing itself as "the collective voice of the Muslim world," issued a furious denunciation of what it described as Milei's anti-Islamic rhetoric.

For years, U.S. and Argentine intelligence services have subjected the Triple Frontier, where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet, to intense surveillance, scouring the large population of Lebanese and Syrian immigrants for Islamist sympathies.

"One of the things I don't think gets enough attention is how long Hezbollah has had a presence in our hemisphere," Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee this spring.

Washington claims Hezbollah funds its activities through drug traffickers in the area. The U.S. Treasury has sanctioned dozens of individuals in South America over alleged ties to Hezbollah, most recently last fall. Authorities have reported thwarting attacks, with Israel's Mossad spy agency helping Brazil arrest alleged Hezbollah recruits last November.

Hezbollah denies running operations in the region.

"What would Hezbollah want with Latin America?" the group's spokesperson, Rana Sahili, asked the AP. She accused Milei of playing loose with facts to score points in a "political game."

Experts say the true threat lies somewhere in the middle.

"Some say Hezbollah's presence in Latin America is a complete fabrication, while others say the group uses the region as a base and we're doomed," said Fernando Brancoli at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

"Neither is correct."

More women made the list of top paid CEOs in 2023, but their numbers are still small compared to men

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

More women are attaining the top job at companies in the S&P 500, but their numbers are still minuscule compared to their male counterparts.

Of the 341 CEOs included in the AP's annual compensation survey, 25 are women. That's the most women making the list since the survey began in 2011. But the numbers haven't budged very much. The second highest tally was 21 women in 2017.

The survey, based on data analyzed for The Associated Press by Equilar, includes CEOs at S&P 500 companies who have served at least two fiscal years at their companies, which filed proxy statements between Jan. 1 and April 30, 2024.

Christy Glass, a professor of sociology at Utah State University who studies equity, inclusion and leadership, said that while seeing more female CEOs this year is a positive, overall the trends are discouraging.

"We'll see a year where there's kind of a banner year of women CEOs," she said. "But then a year or two down the road, we'll see a significant turnover."

Lisa Su, CEO and chair of the board of chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices, was the highest paid female CEO in the AP survey for the fifth year in a row in fiscal 2023, bringing in total compensation worth \$30.3 million — flat with her compensation package a year earlier. Her rank rose to 21 overall from 25.

Su received a base salary of \$1.2 million and a performance bonus of more than \$1.4 million. The bulk of her package was \$21.8 million in stock awards.

Su has been chief of AMD, based in Santa Clara, California, since 2014. The company is part of a growing number of companies trying to take advantage of a broader interest from businesses looking for new AI tools that can analyze data, help make decisions and potentially replace some tasks currently performed by human workers. AMD's stock price surged 127% in 2023.

The others in the top five highest paid female CEOs include Mary Barra of automaker General Motors

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with total compensation of \$27.8 million; Jane Fraser of banking giant Citigroup with a package worth \$25.5 million; Kathy Warden of aerospace and defense company Northrop Grumman Corp. at \$23.5 million; and Carol Tome of package deliverer UPS Inc., whose pay was valued at \$23.4 million.

Some notable female CEOs aren't included since they became CEO less than two years ago or their company files proxy statements outside of the January through April window, including Julie Sweet of consultant Accenture and Sue Nabi, CEO of Coty Inc.

The median pay package for female CEOs rose 21% to \$17.6 million. That's better than the men fared: Their median pay package rose 12% to \$16.3 million.

But the highest paid men still make far more than the highest paid women. Broadcom CEO Hock Tan raked in \$161.8 million — the vast majority of that in stock awards.

Part of the issue of the disproportionate numbers of men to women is the "glass cliff," Glass said. Her research shows women are more likely to be appointed CEO at disadvantaged companies.

"It's kind of like one step forward, two steps back," she said. "One of the factors driving that is the fact that women tend to have opportunities to serve as CEO when organizations are in crisis. ... That means that they start their leadership trajectory at a disadvantage."

Today in History: June 4

World War II's Battle of Midway begins in the Pacific

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 4, the 156th day of 2024. There are 210 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 4, 1942, the World War II Battle of Midway began, resulting in a decisive American victory against Japan and marking the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

On this date:

In 1812, the U.S. House of Representatives approved, by a vote of 79-49, a declaration of war against Britain.

In 1919, Congress approved the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which said that the right to vote could not be denied or abridged based on gender. The amendment was sent to the states for ratification.

In 1939, the German ocean liner MS St. Louis, carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees from Germany, was turned away by U.S. officials on the Florida coast.

In 1940, during World War II, the Allied military evacuation of some 338,000 troops from Dunkirk, France, ended. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

In 1944, U-505, a German submarine, was captured by a U.S. Navy task group in the south Atlantic; it was the first such capture of an enemy vessel at sea by the U.S. Navy since the War of 1812. The U.S. Fifth Army began liberating Rome.

In 1967, "Mission: Impossible" won outstanding dramatic series and "The Monkees" won outstanding comedy series at the 19th Primetime Emmy Awards.

In 1985, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling striking down an Alabama law providing for a daily minute of silence in public schools.

In 1986, Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, pleaded guilty in Washington to conspiring to deliver information related to the national defense to Israel. (Pollard, sentenced to life in prison, was released on parole on Nov. 20, 2015; he moved to Israel after completing parole in December 2020.)

In 1989, a gas explosion in the Soviet Union engulfed two passing trains, killing 575.

In 1990, Dr. Jack Kevorkian carried out his first publicly assisted suicide, helping Janet Adkins, a 54-year-old Alzheimer's patient from Portland, Oregon, end her life in Oakland County, Michigan.

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In 1998, a federal judge sentenced Terry Nichols to life in prison for his role in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people.

In 2017, elite rock climber Alex Honnold became the first to climb solo to the top of the massive granite wall known as El Capitan in Yosemite National Park without ropes or safety gear.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia issued its first driver's licenses to women as the kingdom prepared to lift the world's only ban on women driving.

In 2020, in the first of a series of memorials set for three cities over six days, celebrities, musicians and political leaders gathered in front of George Floyd's golden casket in Minneapolis.

In 2021, Prince Harry and Meghan welcomed their second child, a girl born in California and named Lilibet Diana in a tribute both to Queen Elizabeth II and to the prince's late mother, Princess Diana.

In 2022, Ann Turner Cook, whose cherubic baby face was known the world over as the original Gerber baby, died at age 95.

Today's Birthdays: Sex therapist and media personality Dr. Ruth Westheimer is 96. Actor Bruce Dern is 88. Musician Roger Ball is 80. Actor-singer Michelle Phillips is 80. Jazz musician Anthony Braxton is 79. Rock musician Danny Brown (The Fixx) is 73. Actor Parker Stevenson is 72. Actor Keith David is 68. Blues singer-musician Tinsley Ellis is 67. Actor Eddie Velez is 66. Singer-musician El DeBarge is 63. Actor Julie White is 63. Actor Lindsay Frost is 62. Actor Sean Pertwee is 60. Former tennis player Andrea Jaeger is 59. Opera singer Cecilia Bartoli is 58. R&B singer Al B. Sure! is 56. Actor Scott Wolf is 56. Actor-comedian Rob Huebel is 55. Comedian Horatio Sanz is 55. Actor James Callis is 53. Actor Noah Wyle is 53. Rock musician Stefan Lessard (The Dave Matthews Band) is 50. Actor-comedian Russell Brand is 49. Actor Angelina Jolie is 49. Actor Theo Rossi is 49. Alt-country singer Kasey Chambers is 48. Actor Robin Lord Taylor is 46. Rock musician JoJo Garza (Los Lonely Boys) is 44. Model Bar Refaeli (ruh-FEHL'-lee) is 39. Olympic gold medal figure skater Evan Lysacek is 39. Americana singer Shakey Graves is 37. Rock musician Zac Farro is 34.