

Groton Daily Independent

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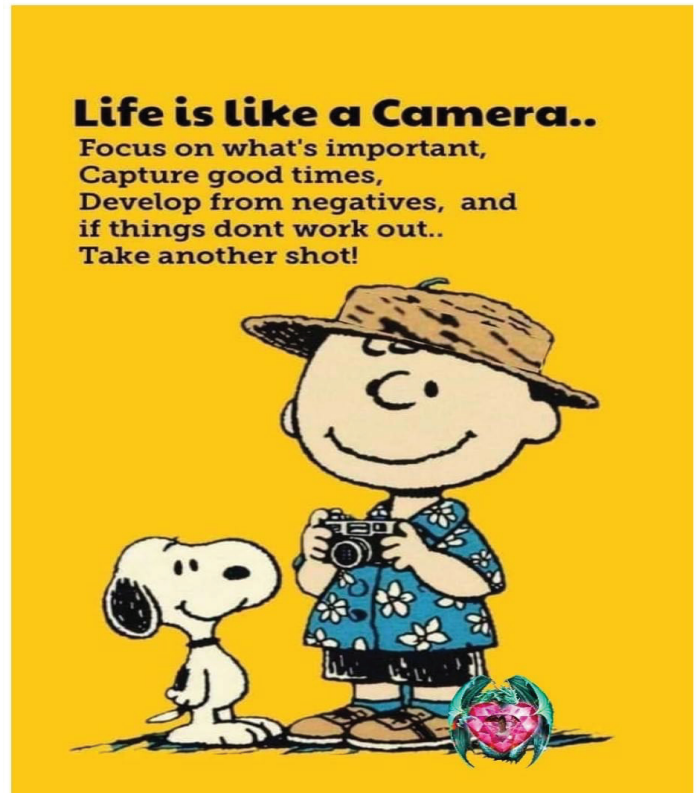
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Wednesday, June 5

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

- Junior Teeners hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U12 B/R at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- U10 R/B at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- U8 R/B hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (4)

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



Chamber Meeting, Noon, at City Hall
Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.
Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.
Olive Grove Men’s League
Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

Thursday, June 6

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

Friday, June 7

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

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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US Asylum Restrictions

President Joe Biden issued an executive order yesterday imposing new limits on the number of migrants allowed to enter the US at the southern border once a daily threshold is exceeded. The order allows border officials to turn away those crossing illegally without processing their asylum claims, using a law previously attempted by former President Donald Trump in 2018.

Under the policy, which takes effect immediately, asylum requests will be halted once the seven-day average of illegal crossings reaches 2,500 per day—April averaged 4,296 per day. Restrictions will be lifted when crossings decrease to under 1,500 per day for seven consecutive days. Limited exceptions will apply to migrants with prior authorization, unaccompanied minors, trafficking victims, individuals facing medical emergencies, and those with extreme threats to their safety. Those who cross illegally would be subject to a five-year ban from entering the US.

Republicans have criticized Biden's plan as a political maneuver ahead of the election, and legal challenges are expected.

MDMA Proposal Rejected

A federal advisory panel yesterday voted not to recommend the psychedelic drug MDMA for treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, flagging the drug's risks of abuse, potential for heart problems, and inadequate data. The vote comes amid a resurgence of medical interest in the hallucinogens long associated with high-risk recreational use.

MDMA is a synthetic stimulant developed by a Merck pharmaceuticals scientist in 1912, popularly known as ecstasy (in tablet form) and molly (as a powder). Users of the drug experience heightened sensations, distorted perceptions, and increased self-awareness as a result of the compound's increase in neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. MDMA is the first of a group of psychedelics—including LSD and psilocybin—expected to come up for federal approval.

Panelists noted flaws in the ostensibly blind clinical studies, specifically how recipients could recognize they had received MDMA and not the placebo due to the drug's powerful effects. The panel's recommendation now heads to the Food and Drug Administration for a final ruling by Aug. 11 (see relationship overview).

MLB Gambling Scandal

Major League Baseball yesterday banned San Diego Padres infielder Tucupita Marcano for life for violating its gambling policy by betting on the sport. Marcano is the first active MLB player to face a lifetime ban under the policy since New York Giants outfielder Jimmy O'Connell in 1924. (All-time MLB hits leader Pete Rose was banned in 1989, three years after retiring.)

Marcano, who hadn't played this season due to an injury, had placed 387 baseball bets totaling over \$150K from October 2022 through November 2023. Twenty-five bets were on Marcano's former team, the Pittsburgh Pirates, while he was on the team's injury list. MLB also suspended four players for one year, each of whom wagered under \$1K. League members who bet on baseball games in which they don't appear on the roster are suspended for a year, while those who bet on games in which they do appear on the roster are banned permanently.

Separately, Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani's former interpreter formally pleaded guilty to stealing nearly \$17M from Ohtani to pay off sports betting debts.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Sean "Diddy" Combs sells stake in Revolt, the media company he founded, amid sexual assault allegations. Eight-time Grammy-winning songwriter The-Dream accused in lawsuit of rape and trafficking.

Janis Paige, prolific Broadway and film actress, dies at 101. Brother Marquis, longtime member of rap group 2 Live Crew, dies at 58.

Three-time reigning champion Oklahoma to face off against Texas in 2024 NCAA Women's College World Series finals beginning tonight (8 pm ET, ESPN).

Science & Technology

AI models trained on human speech can be repurposed to analyze dog vocalizations; approach may help provide insight into animal communications.

Researchers discover the twin of an atmospheric effect nicknamed "Steve"; the phenomenon is similar to the aurora borealis but appears as purple ribbons in the sky at dusk and dawn.

New model predicts the mechanics of knitted materials, a complex mathematical problem despite its age-old use in textiles; results may help develop new wearable electronics and improve manufacturing processes.

Business & Markets

US stocks close higher (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.2%) amid interest rate uncertainty. US job openings in April fall to 8.1 million, the lowest level in three years, while layoffs also fall.

Microsoft and Google collectively lay off hundreds of employees in their cloud businesses as companies prioritize investment in AI.

Appeals court rules VC firm Fearless Fund cannot issue grants solely to Black women, an approach the court says likely violates the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which barred the use of race in contracts; Fearless Fund to consider going to trial.

Politics & World Affairs

Hunter Biden's gun case to continue today after opening statements and first witness called. Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul (D) brings felony forgery charges against three associates of former President Donald Trump for 2020 fake elector scheme.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on track for rare third term in narrower-than-expected victory as his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party loses outright majority. Two people arrested in the UK after former Brexit leader Nigel Farage assaulted with milkshake while announcing his candidacy for upcoming elections.

Rep. Andy Kim (D, NJ-3), Republican entrepreneur Curtis Bashaw win New Jersey Senate primaries; Kim and Bashaw will face off in November against indicted Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), who filed to run for reelection as an independent.

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Groton Police Log

April 29-May 5

City miles driven: 386

County miles driven: 0

Total miles driven: 386

1 Assist other law enforcement agency, 2 bad driving complaints, 1 citizen arrest, 1 dog complaint, 1 domestic disturbance, 1 locked vehicle assistance, 1 medical/rescue/ambulance, 1 gas drive-off, 1 suspicious activity, 2 traffic warnings issued, 5 summons issued, 5 speeding citations, 1 insurance violation, 1 equipment.

May 6 - May 12

City miles driven: 516

County miles driven: 76

Total miles driven: 592

2 assist other law enforcement agencies, 2 bad driving complaints, 2 welfare check on person, 6 citizen assistance, 2 domestic disturbances, 1 fire assistance, 1 lost/found item, 1 locked vehicle assistance, 1 motorist assist, 1 fingerprint person, 2 theft/burglary/shoplifting, 2 warnings issued, 2 parking violations, 2 warrant arrests.

May 13-May 19

City miles driven: 493

County miles driven: 32

Total miles driven: 525

1 assist other law enforcement agencies, 3 bad driving complaints, 1 citizen assistance, 1 cat complaint, 3 dog complaints, 1 funeral traffic, 1 individual ride home, 1 lost/found item, 1 locked vehicle assistance, 1 motorist assist, 1 request family crisis/transient, 3 serve papers, 1 theft/burglary/shoplifting, 2 county vehicle accidents, 1 warning issued, 6 summons issued, 7 speeding citations.

May 20 - May 26

City miles driven: 423

County miles driven: 2

Total miles driven: 425

2 assist other law enforcement agencies, 2 bad driving complaints 1 citizen assistance, 4 dog complaints, 2 domestic disturbances, 2 motorists assist, 1 911 misdial/hangup, 2 serve papers, 1 suspicious activity, 8 warnings issued, 3 summons issued, 9 speeding citations, 1 license violation, 1 equipment.

Part of city sidewalk could be replaced

The sidewalk on the north side of City Hall is in need of repair and there is also the issue of the storm sewer water standing in the curb getting all mossy and smelly. The Groton City Council will get a price estimate to replace the sidewalk and to redirect the sump pump pie directly to the storm drain.

Don Kadoun came before the council to ask about the best way to tear down a barn located in the alley between Railroad Avenue and 2nd Avenue and First Street and Broadway. The council told him it is his responsibility for removal and that it cannot be taken to the city's rubble site. Kadoun also asked about the procedure to fix it up and Kellie Locke explained the building permit process. Kadoun also asked about possibly making storage compartments and he was directed to Planning and Zoning.

The second reading of the new sewer rate was passed. The minimum bill would be \$20 a month. Any usages (based on water usage) will be billed out at \$5 per 1,000 gallons. Average water usage will be based on usage during November, December, January, February, March and April. The new fee will go into effect in the July bill.

Forever 605 Day – South Dakota’s June 5th Holiday

PIERRE, S.D. – June 5 (6/05) is a special day in South Dakota – it’s Forever 605 Day! It’s a time for South Dakotans to unite and celebrate the state’s only area code – and how to keep it beautiful and welcoming for all.

2024 marks Travel South Dakota’s second year of a stewardship campaign called Forever 605 — a campaign targeted at residents and visitors that promotes respectful and responsible travel throughout the state.

The Forever 605 campaign’s goal is to inspire citizens and visitors to respect the 605 State as much as they adore it. On Forever 605 Day, Travel South Dakota is encouraging all to embrace the opportunity to celebrate and appreciate the beauty of the state.

“Forever 605 seeks to balance the positive economic impact of visitors in South Dakota’s communities while being good stewards of the state’s resources, assets, and the South Dakota way of life,” said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. “Our 2024 focus with Forever 605 is to encourage industry leaders to provide the tools and resources our partners need to carry out the Forever 605 efforts, build more brand awareness amongst the general public, and provide tangible examples of how to practice responsible travel.”

Examples of the resources and creative messaging being used to support this campaign include:

- o Respecting wildlife (no bison selfies or feeding the animals)
- o Keeping our great outdoors clean
- o Shopping locally and respecting frontline workers

Travel South Dakota’s Forever 605 campaign includes a variety of touchpoints including video, display, paid & organic social, print, out-of-home, influencer advertising, web, and user-generated content.

To get involved, sign the Forever 605 pledge (and earn a sticker) at Forever605.com. Use #Forever605 on social media to celebrate your South Dakota favorites while showing the importance of taking care of the state.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.

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Free meals available for youth in many locations

South Dakota families can access nutritious, tasty food at summer feeding sites throughout the state. The Summer Food Service Program provides meals to children in low-income areas when school is not in session.

The meals are free for all children under the age of 18, with no sign-up necessary at eligible sites. Families can find sites by texting "Summer Meals" to 914-342-7744, by calling 1-866-348-6479, or by going to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's summer meals website at fns.ucsda.gov/summerfoodrocks.

"These sites are a great resource for families who rely on school lunch programs during the school year," said Secretary of Education Joe Graves. "The meals are prepared and served by members of the community, and they ensure that kids are able to stay healthy during the summer break."

Sponsors such as schools, private non-profit organizations, and government entities participate in providing meals throughout the summer months.

The Summer Food Service Program is an equal opportunity provider.

The following is available in Aberdeen.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER: Eat On-Site

Sponsoring Organization: YMCA OF ABERDEEN

Site Name: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Address: 6 South State Street Aberdeen, SD 57401

Start date: 5/28/2024

End date: 8/16/2024

Operating Days: M,T,W,TH,F

Lunch Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Snack Time PM: 3:15 - 3:45 p.m.

Eat On-Site offers meals that must be eaten at the site.

Meals To Go offer meals that can be eaten off-site.

*Summer sites offering meals-to-go are only available in rural areas.

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4,464 Ballots Cast
25,046 Registered Voters

17.82%

BROWN COUNTY RESULTS

12 out of 12
Precincts Reporting

100%

COUNTY COMMISSIONER AT LARGE - BROWN

FOLLOW THIS CONTEST

VOTE CENTERS FULLY: 12 / 12 | PARTIALLY: 0 / 12

EXPORT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DUANE SUTTON Republican	<div style="width: 35%;"><div style="background-color: #8B4513; height: 10px;"></div></div> 35%	2,133
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KYLER DINGER Republican	<div style="width: 39%;"><div style="background-color: #8B4513; height: 10px;"></div></div> 39%	2,333
MICHAEL W. CARLSEN Republican	<div style="width: 26%;"><div style="background-color: #8B4513; height: 10px;"></div></div> 26%	1,585

TOTAL VOTES **6,051**

MAP

VOTE CENTER

PRECINCT COMMITTEEWOMAN - BROWN - PRECINCT-02

FOLLOW THIS CONTEST

VOTE CENTERS FULLY: 12 / 12 | PARTIALLY: 0 / 12

EXPORT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAROL SCHAUNAMAN Republican	<div style="width: 87%;"><div style="background-color: #8B4513; height: 10px;"></div></div> 87%	99
JACLYNN MARIE DONNE Republican	<div style="width: 13%;"><div style="background-color: #8B4513; height: 10px;"></div></div> 13%	15

TOTAL VOTES **114**

GROTON

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

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Lincoln Krause With 3 Hits As Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Beat Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U

By GameChanger Media

Lincoln Krause collected three hits in three at bats, as Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 defeated Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U 16-4 on Tuesday. Krause singled in the first inning, tripled in the third inning, and singled in the first inning.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 won thanks in part to 13 runs in the first inning. Nicholas Morris singled, scoring one run, Carter Simon singled, scoring two runs, Nick Groeblichhoff drew a walk, scoring one run, Kellen Antonsen singled, scoring two runs, Krause singled, scoring two runs, Gavin Englund singled, scoring two runs, Morris singled, scoring one run, and Simon doubled, scoring two runs.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 extended their early lead with two runs in the bottom of the second thanks to RBI walks by Simon and Gavin Kroll.

A single by Morris extended the Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 lead to 16-4 in the bottom of the third inning.

Morris earned the win for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher gave up two hits and one run (zero earned) over two innings, striking out two and walking none. Tristin McGannon appeared in relief for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 accumulated 11 hits in the game. Simon provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with four runs batted in. The shortstop went 2-for-2 on the day. Morris led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with four hits in four at bats. Karsten Flihs paced Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up 10 walks for the game.

Camden Nearea, the number seven hitter for Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U, led the way with two runs batted in. They went 1-for-2 on the day. Keegan Hansen, Nearea, and Ethan Falk each collected one hit for Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U. Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U didn't commit a single error in the field. Hansen had the most chances in the field with five.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 welcome Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Jr Legion on Saturday for their next game.

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Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. 4 - 16 Groton Jr. Legion Post
 Legion 17U 39

📍 Home 📅 Tuesday June 04, 2024

	1	2	3	4	R	H	E
RDFL	0	1	3	0	4	3	0
GRTN	13	2	1	X	16	11	1

BATTING

Redfeild Clay Kiser	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Odland (SS)	2	0	0	0	1	2
N Johnson (CF, 3B)	1	1	0	0	1	0
N Johnson	1	1	0	0	0	0
M Zasrow	1	1	0	0	1	0
E Falk (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
K Hansen (C)	1	1	1	1	0	0
C Nearea (RF)	2	0	1	2	0	1
A Meolladolf	2	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	12	4	3	3	3	5

TB: E Falk, K Hansen, C Nearea, **HBP:** N Johnson, K Hansen, **SB:** N Johnson, K Hansen, **LOB:** 3

Groton Jr. Legion P	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause (RF)	3	4	3	2	1	0
K Fliehs (3B)	1	2	0	0	3	1
G Englund (C)	2	3	1	2	0	0
N Morris (P, CF, SS)	4	2	4	3	0	0
C Simon (SS, P)	2	1	2	4	2	0
J Erdmann (LF)	1	1	0	0	0	0
G Kroll (LF)	1	0	0	1	1	1
N Groeblichhoff (...)	0	1	0	0	2	0
B Fliehs (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K Antonsen (2B)	2	1	1	2	0	1
A Abeln (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
T McGannon (CF,...)	2	1	0	0	1	1
Totals	20	16	11	14	10	5

2B: C Simon, **3B:** L Krause, **TB:** C Simon 3, K Antonsen, N Morris 4, L Krause 5, G Englund, **HBP:** J Erdmann, G Englund 2, **SB:** C Simon, J Erdmann, N Morris, L Krause, **LOB:** 8

PITCHING

Redfeild Clay	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Ethridge	0.0	5	11	11	4	0	0
J Schmitt	3.0	6	5	5	6	5	0
Totals	3.0	11	16	16	10	5	0

L: J Ethridge, **P-S:** J Schmitt 94-45, J Ethridge 36-12, **WP:** J Schmitt, J Ethridge, **HBP:** J Schmitt, J Ethridge 2, **BF:** J Schmitt 22, J Ethridge 11

Groton Jr. Le	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris	2.0	2	1	0	0	2	0
T McGannon	1.0	1	3	3	2	3	0
C Simon	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	3.0	3	4	3	3	5	0

W: N Morris, **P-S:** C Simon 4-0, T McGannon 35-17, N Morris 29-19, **HBP:** T McGannon 2, **BF:** C Simon, T McGannon 8, N Morris 8

Powerful Pitching Performance From Dillon Abeln Carries Groton Post 39 Past Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180

By GameChanger Media

Dillon Abeln was dominant on the bump, as they rang up 12 strikeouts in Groton Post 39's 4-3 victory over Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180 on Tuesday. Abeln surrendered six hits and three runs over seven innings while walking none.

Despite falling down by four runs in the fourth inning, Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180 tried to fight back. Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180 closed the gap by scoring on a double, a double, and an error.

Groton Post 39 jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the third inning after Colby Dunker singled, scoring one run, and a steal of home scored two runs.

Kevin Weller took the loss for Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180. The right-handed pitcher went four innings, giving up four runs on seven hits, striking out none and walking one.

Bradin Althoff, Braxton Imrie, Dunker, Gavin Englund, Brevin Fliehs, Carter Simon, and Teylor Diegel each collected one hit for Groton Post 39. Dunker went 1-for-3 at the plate as the outfielder led the team with one run batted in. Imrie stole two bases. Groton Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Weller and Eli Morrissette were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in one run for Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180. Noah Johnson set the tone at the top of the lineup, leading Resfeild Post 92, Clay Kiser 180 with two hits in three at bats. Johnson stole two bases.

Groton Post 39 welcome Warner-Ipswich-Northwestern Legion on Saturday for their next game.

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- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles

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Ultima™ ZTS1 46
ZERO-TURN

- 22 HP^{††} 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 HP^{††} Kawasaki® FR691V V-twin OHV engine
- 50" AeroForce™ fabricated triple-blade deck
- Dual Hydro-Gear® EZT-2200™ transmission

\$3,299*

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Groton Area's Carly Guthmiller hit a hole-in-one on Hole 11 at state A Girls Golf Tourney at Bakkers Crossing in Sioux Falls!!! (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)

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Carly Guthmiller gets a hole-in-one on this hit. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



Carly Guthmiller is in disbelief of her hole-in-one. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)

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Carly Guthmiller is in disbelief of her hole-in-one. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



Carlee Johnson

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



Claire Schuelke

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)

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Carly Gilbert

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



Witnesses to Carly Guthmiller's hole-in-one were Alexis Cronk, Chamberlain (left) and Jaida Jacobs Little Wound (right). (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



Mia Crank

(Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)



The top 24 golfers at the State A Tournament received medals and Carly Guthmiller is in the midst of them. She is right in the middle of the second row. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.)

Guthmiller's hole-in-one propels her to eighth place finish at state

Carly Guthmiller was the highlight of the day at the State A Golf Tournament held in Sioux Falls. She hit a hole-in-one and finished eighth in the state tournament with a total score of 161, improving her score from 84 on the first day to 77 in the second day (tied for second in the second day). She moved up 10 places from the first day.

Carlee Johnson placed 40th with a total score of 185, shooting a 93 on the first day and a 92 on the second day.

Claire Schuelke was tied for 72nd with a total score of 218, shooting a 112 on the first day and a 106 on the second day.

Mia Crank placed 76th with a total score of 224, shooting a 116 on the first day and a 108 on the second day.

Carly Gilbert shot a 128 on the first day and withdrew in the second day.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Incumbent Republican legislators suffer losses as pipelines and property rights surge to the fore

BY: JOHN HULT, JOSHUA HAIAR AND SETH TUPPER - JUNE 5, 2024 2:10 AM

At least 14 Republican legislators lost their races Tuesday in the 2024 primary election, with a controversial carbon dioxide pipeline among the top wedge issues to emerge.

Voters also ousted two of the state’s Native American lawmakers (a mother and son), and brought back a Republican who served as speaker of the House until two years ago.

Some of the victors leaned heavily on their opposition to Summit Carbon Solutions’ carbon capture pipeline, a multibillion-dollar project that would collect CO2 from ethanol producers in South Dakota and other states and move it through an underground pipeline for sequestration in North Dakota.

The project has caused more than two years of legal and legislative wrangling over landowner rights and eminent domain, the legal maneuver through which a company can seize property for projects in the public interest.

Some of the losing incumbents endorsed Senate Bill 201’s “Landowner Bill of Rights,” a compromise bill adopted last winter that’s aimed at boosting landowner protections while maintaining a path for the pipeline project. Ethanol boosters have argued that carbon sequestration – and the tax incentives that would make it profitable – is critical to the corn-based fuel’s future in South Dakota. Project opponents are seeking to refer the new law to a public vote in November.

There were 44 Republican legislative primary races Tuesday and only one Democratic primary race. Winners advance to the Nov. 5 general election. One top finisher from each party advances in Senate primaries, and two top finishers from each party advance in House primaries (except for “split” House districts, where only one from each party advances). Residents of each district are ultimately served by two representatives and one senator.

Statewide voter turnout was 17%, according to the Secretary of State’s Office, which ranks low compared to past primary elections.

2024 state House Republican primaries



Two winners from each race advance as the party’s nominees for the general election, except in split districts (28A and 28B), where one winner advances.

District 01

District 01



[View a legislative district map](#) • All results from South Dakota Secretary of State's Office
Results are unofficial until canvassed

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Current legislators who lost

The current legislators who lost their races, according to unofficial results from the Secretary of State's Office:

Sen. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, fell by 48 votes (which is within the possible recount margin) to a political newcomer from Bonesteel named Mykala Voita, who campaigned on the primacy of landowner rights.

Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, who's served more than two decades between stints in the House and Senate, lost her latest bid for reelection to newcomer Lauren Nelson, 52% to 48%.

Rep. Byron Callies, R-Watertown, lost by 21 votes (pending a possible recount) to a Hayti doctor named Josephine Garcia, who spoke out against carbon pipelines and the Landowner Bill of Rights. Also winning a seat in the district was the top vote-getter, former Watertown City Attorney Matt Roby.

Rep. Tyler Tordsen, R-Sioux Falls, a Native American member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, lost his race by coming in third with 26% of the votes behind the second-place finisher, Sioux Falls businessman and prominent member of the Catholic community Tony Kayser (35%), and first-place finisher Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls (39%).

Tordsen's mother and fellow Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate member, Tamara St. John, R-Sisseton, also came in third place in her race with 28% of the vote, losing to Logan Manhart (38%) and Christopher Reder (34%) in northeastern South Dakota's District 1.

Rep. James Wangness, R-Miller, the House majority whip, earned 21% of the votes in his race and fell to former Speaker of the House Spencer Gosch of Glenham (37%) and incumbent Rep. Scott Moore (42%).

Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence, came up short against Rep. Stephanie Sauder of Bryant as each representative vied for an open state Senate seat; the 51% to 49% result could be subjected to a recount.

Sen. Ryan Maher, R-Isabel, lost by 12 points to Dupree rancher Jana Hunt in his attempt to switch to the House.

Republican Rep. Becky Drury came in third in her race with 28% of the vote, behind challenger Heather Baxter (35%) and the top vote-getter, Rep. Mike Derby (37%), all of Rapid City.

Sen. Mike Walsh, R-Rapid City, was appointed to an empty seat last winter but won't be headed back to Pierre after a 16-point loss to Greg Blanc, also of Rapid City (another candidate, Curtis Nupen, finished in a distant third).

Sen. David Johnson, R-Rapid City, lost to challenger Curt Voight 56% to 44%.

Rep. Gary Cammack, R-Union Center, received 28% of the vote and lost to challengers Terri Jorgenson and Kathy Rice.

Rep. Kirk Chaffee, R-Whitewood, lost by 18 points in his attempt to switch to the Senate against challenger John Carley.

Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller, R-Rapid City, lost to challenger Amber Hulse by four points.

All results from Tuesday's primary are unofficial until the election is canvassed.

Callies pondering recount

Callies' narrow loss could end up in a recount should he choose to ask for one, but he said Tuesday night that he hadn't made up his mind.

"Typically, the counting machines are pretty accurate," said Callies, who was targeted by mailers in recent weeks over his votes on education funding and the Landowner Bill of Rights. "If the voters have spoken the way it's indicated so far, I was pleased and proud to serve South Dakota."

Roby said he escaped being targeted by the kind of attack mailers used against Callies because Roby hasn't cast any legislative votes. He supports the Landowner Bill of Rights and said he values compromise.

"I managed to steer clear of that shrapnel," Roby said. "Hopefully that's not evidence that that stuff works."

Garcia had the support of South Dakota Right to Life PAC and Liberty Tree PAC, both of which backed anti-pipeline candidates. Garcia said she ran a positive campaign. The only mailers she authorized were the ones from her own campaign, which reported less than \$9,000 in income in the pre-primary campaign finance disclosure. She said she wasn't involved in mailers decrying Callies' pipeline vote.

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"I ran a poverty campaign," Garcia said. "I had very minimal funding over the past six to eight weeks. I had not been preparing, like the others, for over a year. It wasn't about the money. It was about the people."

When asked how important the pipeline debate was in the District 5 race, she said "tremendously important."

If Callies chooses not to do a recount, Roby and Garcia will face Democrats Amy D. Rambow and Diane M. Drake in the general election.

Hunhoff loss

Sen. Hunhoff sounded a positive note shortly after her race for state Senate was called Tuesday night. "I'm doing fine," Hunhoff said. "I congratulate Lauren for her win, and now I'll go gracefully into retirement."

Hunhoff lost to Nelson by 96 votes, with a final tally of 1,235-1,139.

After so many years as a lawmaker, she's looking forward to finding new ways to contribute to her community.

"Now I'm moving on to another aspect of my life, and hoping that I can fill it with something other than the Legislature," she said.

Nelson, who did not return a call from South Dakota Searchlight seeking comment, will face Democrat Dennis Menke in November.

Mother, son out

Kayser, who bested Tordsen by 286 votes, said he hadn't planned on running until this year. He had planned to go to Spain to participate in the Camino de Santiago, or the Way of St. James, which is a 500-mile walk across the country to the saint's grave. He walked the final 12 miles in 2023, but a neuropathy diagnosis put the 500-mile trek out of reach.

It wasn't long after the diagnosis that Kayser got a call from Rep. Jon Hansen, who is affiliated with the Right to Life PAC that would ultimately contribute to Kayser.

"I closed the door on my plan A, which was all about me, and two hours later Jon Hansen texted me and asked if I wanted to run for House of Representatives in my district," he said.

Opposition to the carbon pipeline was the most common and salient issue for the voters he met while knocking on doors, Kayser said.

"People know that a private company, with maybe foreign interests, doing something that doesn't necessarily need to be done on the whole Green New Deal, it was out of place. It was not put in a way that gave the farmers and the landowners the rights they need," Kayser said.

Kayser and Rehfeldt will be on the general election ballot with Democrats B.J. Motley and Keith Block.

Tordsen and his mother, St. John, did not respond to calls for comment Tuesday. Both voted for SB 201.

Shortly before midnight, Tordsen posted a statement to his candidate Facebook page thanking his family and voters and decrying the influence of "D.C.-style politics" in state races.

"I squeezed the work of multiple terms into one, and I'm able to keep my head high knowing I was honest with you all in my communication and actions every day — even through false and negative campaigning directed my way," he wrote.

Crabtree crushes Weible

Not every attempt to oust incumbents who backed pipeline-friendly legislation was successful. Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree, of Madison, defeated election skeptic Rick Weible in a landslide victory, 2,057 to 799.

Weible, a former mayor from Minnesota turned South Dakota resident, has become a prominent figure in the fight for hand-counting ballots. He has leveraged his background in computer consulting to scrutinize and challenge the security of machine voting systems.

Crabtree is unopposed in the November election.

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Gosch succeeds in comeback

Former speaker of the House of Representatives, Spencer Gosch, served in the chamber from 2017 until 2022. He held the speaker position from 2021 to 2022.

Gosch beat current House Majority Whip James Wangness, who said his support of the Landowner Bill of Rights likely made the difference.

"That 201 and eminent domain issue was a big deal," Wangness said. "I knew it would be a big battle, but not this big. Those people are animated, and they showed up."

Gosch and incumbent Rep. Scott Moore are unopposed in the November general election.

Pischke wins big despite being banned from House

Incumbent Sen. Tom Pischke, R-Dell Rapids, beat challenger and former legislator Jordan Youngberg 1,369 to 654 for District 25's Republican Senate nomination.

Pischke was banned from the House of Representatives floor and lobby during the final days of the 2024 legislative session for a breach of decorum.

The ban was imposed after Pischke placed a bottle of syrup on the desk of a representative who had moved to defeat a commemoration for the late Nancy Green, whose likeness was used for Aunt Jemima syrup advertising. Aunt Jemima branding was discontinued in 2021, causing Pischke and other supporters of the commemoration to claim Green's story was "sadly erased by politics."

Pischke will face Democrat Brian Wirth in November.

Schoenbeck's son flops

There won't be a Schoenbeck in the Legislature next year.

Longtime legislator and current Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, is not seeking reelection. His son, Jake Schoenbeck, of Sioux Falls, lost the District 2 Republican House primary to incumbents John Sjaarda, of Valley Springs, and David Kull, of Brandon. Schoenbeck pulled 475 votes compared to Sjaarda's 1,410 and Kull's 1,168.

Sjaarda and Kull are unopposed in November.

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.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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

Voters reject machine-counting ban in all three counties where it was on the ballot

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 5, 2024 12:01 AM

A majority of voters in three South Dakota counties showed their trust in the state's current election system Tuesday as they rejected proposed bans on tabulator machines.

The votes were in Gregory, Haakon and Tripp counties. Citizen groups petitioned the measures onto the ballots in an effort to ban vote-counting machines and force a switch to hand counting. The unofficial election results from the Secretary of State's Office:

Gregory County, 587 votes (54%) against the petition and 509 (46%) in favor.

Haakon County, 276 (61%) against the petition and 177 (39%) in favor.

Tripp County, 734 (57%) against the petition and 553 (43%) in favor.

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Nearly 40% of registered voters turned out for the Gregory County primary election. Auditor Julie Bartling is confident the results reflect how all voters across the county would have voted.

"They listened to the pros and cons, and I believe this vote shows they still have confidence in the tabulators and the work we do here in the auditor's office," Bartling said Tuesday night. "We're a small county and we know each other. You just want people to have a sense they can have trust and confidence in me not only as an elected official, but as a neighbor and friend."

Bartling said she'll continue to educate Gregory County residents about elections and answer their questions about the process. Tripp County Auditor Barb DeSersa said the result felt like a burden lifted from her shoulders knowing voters "got the facts," but she doesn't expect the issue of election security to die down.

"It's just such a hassle," DeSersa said. "I'm sure they'll keep fighting. It's so much work for my office and my girls, and the stress is just so much. It can be highly frustrating on our end."

Tripp County had a 37% voter turnout while Haakon had a 34% voter turnout.

Lead petition circulators in the counties said the decisions on the ballot initiatives don't change their distrust of machine tabulators. Steve McCance, one of the lead petition circulators for the Gregory County petition, said the fire won't die with Tuesday's vote.

"We've lost a battle," McCance said, "but the war still goes on as far as the hand count goes."

Fall River County officials voluntarily chose to hand count ballots, making it the only South Dakota county to do so in Tuesday's primary. The county's results began flowing onto the Secretary of State's website around 11 p.m. Mountain time.

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

Biden wins South Dakota Democratic presidential primary

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JUNE 4, 2024 9:49 PM

President and presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden won the South Dakota Democratic presidential primary on Tuesday.

With more than half of the state's precincts fully reported at 9:40 p.m. Central time, Biden had garnered 75% of the vote.

The vote totals for the other three candidates:

Author and speaker Marianne Williamson, of Washington, D.C., 11%.

U.S. Rep. Dean Phillips, of Minnesota (who withdrew from the race too late for his name to be removed from the ballot), 10%.

Educator Armando Perez-Serrato, of California, 4%.

Biden also won primaries Tuesday in New Mexico, New Jersey and Washington, D.C.

There was no Republican presidential primary race in South Dakota because nobody filed to run against Donald Trump, the former president and presumptive Republican nominee.

Executive order limiting asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border signed by Biden

South Dakota's Thune slams move as politically motivated

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 4, 2024 11:59 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Tuesday issued an executive order that will allow him to partially suspend asylum requests at the U.S.-Mexico border when daily unauthorized crossings reach a threshold of 2,500 migrants.

"I've come here today to do what Republicans in Congress refuse to do, take the necessary steps to secure our border," Biden said. "This action will help us gain control of our border."

The 2,500-crossing threshold would likely be triggered immediately, a senior administration official said

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on a Tuesday call with reporters previewing the executive order. The order would terminate once unauthorized crossings drop. It only applies to the southern border, including the southwest land border and southern coastal borders.

Biden was joined by lawmakers, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Democratic New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and local leaders from Texas cities.

Biden added that in the coming weeks he'll talk more about "how we can make our immigration system more fair and just."

Lawmakers from both parties panned the order Tuesday, while immigrant advocacy groups promised legal challenges.

Border changes

The White House has been dealing with the largest number of migrant encounters at the southern border in 20 years. In addition, presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has made it a top issue for voters. Biden's move marks his most drastic crackdown on immigration during his administration.

The order makes three changes to current asylum law under Title 8 of the Immigration and Nationality Act when that threshold of 2,500 migrants is reached, a senior administration official said. The first is that a noncitizen who crosses the border without authorization will be ineligible for asylum.

The second is any noncitizen who crosses the border while the order is in effect and is processed for removal will only be referred to a credible fear interview with an asylum officer "if they manifest or express a fear of return to their country or country of removal, a fear of persecution or torture, or an intention to apply for asylum," a senior administration official said.

And the third is raising the standard for credible fear interviews to a "reasonable probability of persecution or torture standard," which is "a new, substantially higher standard than is currently being applied at the border," a senior administration official said.

"Taken together, these measures will significantly increase the speed and the scope of consequences for those who cross unlawfully or without authorization and allow the departments to more quickly remove individuals who do not establish a legal basis to remain in the United States," a senior administration official said.

Thune slams Biden move as political

South Dakota Republican John Thune, the second-ranking Republican in the chamber, spoke Tuesday on the Senate floor in anticipation of Biden's action and described it as late and politically motivated.

Thune said "it's taking the fear of losing an election to motivate the president to take action on a national security crisis that has raged for more than three years."

"And it raises serious concerns about how long the president's interest in border security will last. If he wins another term, will he still care about the border?" Thune said. "Or does it take an election to keep him motivated about his national security responsibilities?"

— South Dakota Searchlight

Trump comparisons

The order, versions of which were reported ahead of the White House announcement, drew criticism from both parties.

Republican leaders said the order didn't go far enough. U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana called it a "weak executive order." Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky called the order "too little, too late."

Progressive Democrats, meanwhile, slammed it as a partial ban on asylum, and advocacy groups blasted the order for betraying Biden's campaign rhetoric.

Biden tried to frame the order as different from the immigration policies of the Trump administration

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by stating he would not separate children from their parents, bar people from the U.S. because of their religion or invoke white supremacist language that refers to immigrants as “poisoning the blood of a country” – all actions taken by Trump.

“I believe that immigration has always been a lifeblood of America, we’re constantly renewed by an infusion of people and new talent,” he said. “So I will never demonize immigrants.”

A senior administration official also argued that the executive order is different from the Trump administration’s immigration policies because the order will “only apply during times of high encounters.”

Biden, who campaigned in 2020 on protecting asylum law, is relying on the same presidential authority — Section 212(f) of the Immigration Nationality Act — that the Trump administration used to justify several immigration-related restrictions, such as the travel ban from predominantly Muslim countries.

The Biden order would also allow border officials to return certain individuals who cross the border without authorization back to Mexico – nationals from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela.

There will be exemptions for lawful permanent residents, unaccompanied minors, people with an “acute medical emergency” or an extreme threat to life or safety, and for victims of human trafficking, a senior administration official said.

A senior administration official said this temporary order would go away when there are seven consecutive days when daily encounters are less than 1,500 migrants between ports of entry. Once that is established, the order expires in 14 calendar days.

Blocked bill

The Biden administration began to consider the executive order after an immigration deal the White House and Senate brokered earlier this year fell apart after Trump came out against it and Republicans quickly fell in line to oppose it.

Among other things, that deal would have given Biden the authority to shut down any asylum requests once encounters reached 5,000 people in a week or 8,500 in a day.

A senior administration official said the 2,500 threshold was chosen to be similar to the deal stuck in the Senate.

“To Joe Biden, the safety of American families should always come first,” senior deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said in a memo.

“That’s why today, the President is announcing new historic executive actions to bar migrants who cross our Southern border unlawfully from receiving asylum. Because of President Biden’s leadership, law enforcement will gain new capabilities that congressional Republicans cannot block.”

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, tried in late May to bring up the bipartisan border bill in the Senate but it failed for a second time during a procedural vote.

The lead Democratic negotiator on that bipartisan deal, Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, expressed skepticism Tuesday that the Biden administration could move forward with its executive order.

“I am sympathetic to the position the administration is in, but I am skeptical the executive branch has the legal authority to shut down asylum processing between ports of entry on its own,” Murphy said. “Meaningful asylum reform requires a bipartisan solution in Congress.”

‘Immediate litigation’

Section 212(f) of the Immigration Nationality Act allows the president “to suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens,” if the president “finds that the entry of any aliens or of any class of aliens into the United States would be detrimental to the interests of the United States.”

Since the 1980s, administrations, including Biden’s, have evoked this code in certain circumstances, such as in 2022 for any individuals connected with Russia amid its war with Ukraine.

In general, the 212(f) code has been narrowly applied, said Amy Grenier, policy and practice counsel for the American Immigration Lawyers Association. She added that she expects Tuesday’s executive order to be legally challenged.

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"There will be pretty much immediate litigation around whether or not that conflicts with the part of the statute that guarantees the ability to apply for asylum," Grenier said.

A senior administration official said the White House expects those legal challenges.

"We are prepared for any litigation on this rule," a senior administration official said.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which was at the forefront of many legal cases against the Trump administration's immigration policies that restricted asylum, has already stated it plans to sue the Biden administration over its executive order.

"We intend to challenge this order in court. It was illegal when Trump did it, and it is no less illegal now," Lee Gelernt, the deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, said in a statement.

The executive order is a stark reversal of the president's campaign promise to "restore our moral standing in the world and our historic role as a safe haven for refugees and asylum-seekers," as Biden said in his 2020 acceptance speech at the virtual Democratic National Convention.

"This new executive order that we're expecting, (is) unfortunately part of the trend of the Biden administration adopting many of the policies that were enacted under the Trump administration that are rooted in xenophobia, and a disregard for our international obligations to provide asylum," Kate Mahoney, a senior staff attorney at Immigrant Legal Resource Center, said.

Mahoney said applying a numbers-based cap on asylum will only harm the most vulnerable of asylum seekers and will do little to deter people from coming to the southern border.

"This kind of blunt instrument will just turn away everyone," she said. "It's not doing anything to better identify people who have strong claims who will truly suffer harm in their home country."

A growing share of migrants at the southern border are families, according to Pew Research Center, where as of December families make up 41% and unaccompanied children make up 5%. The rest, 54%, are single adults.

Progressives disappointed

Democrats expressed their disappointment in the new executive order.

Pramila Jayapal, a Washington Democrat who chairs the Congressional Progressive Caucus and is the top Democrat on a House Judiciary Committee panel on immigration policy, said in a statement that Tuesday's announcement was "extremely disappointing."

"This attempt to shut down the border to asylum seekers uses the same section of U.S. immigration laws that convicted felon Donald Trump used to implement the Muslim Ban and in attempts to cut off all access to asylum," she said. "While there are some differences from Trump's actions, the reality is that this utilizes the same failed enforcement-only approach, penalizes asylum seekers, and furthers a false narrative that these actions will 'fix' the border."

Biden addressed those criticisms and said "be patient."

"Doing nothing is not an option," Biden said.

However, some Democrats in border states, including Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, welcomed the executive order. Kelly said in a statement that more needs to be done in Congress to address immigration.

"In Arizona, where Border Patrol agents and nonprofits are often overwhelmed by daily migrant crossings, this new effort will support their crucial work and help relieve border communities from the burden of our broken immigration system," he said.

Several Senate Republicans held a Tuesday press conference where Texas Sen. John Cornyn accused the president of "not being serious" about the southern border for only issuing the order three years into his first term.

South Carolina's Lindsey Graham said that the only way to curb migration at the southern border is to remove hundreds of thousands of noncitizens from the U.S. – something that Trump has promised to do should he win a second term.

"The only policy changes that will work is to have mass deportations," Graham said.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Bird flu's spread from poultry to cattle to humans provokes worry among feds, states

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND JARED STRONG - JUNE 4, 2024 11:39 AM

Dairy farmers throughout the country are on guard and the federal government is mobilizing after an outbreak among cattle herds of highly pathogenic avian influenza — once thought to be confined to poultry flocks.

What's more, the virus, also known as H5N1 or bird flu, was diagnosed in a third dairy farmworker last week, marking the first U.S. case with respiratory symptoms, said to be mild. The other two cases, also both mild, were diagnosed as pink eye.

The notable leap from cows and chickens to humans is not yet ringing alarm bells for public health officials or veterinarians, who believe the risk to the public remains low. However, they are closely monitoring poultry and dairy farms for any changes, despite a reluctance among some dairy farmers to test their herds.

"Avian influenza is something that public health scientists are worried about," said Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. "It's probably the potential infection or outbreak that causes the greatest amount of anxiety just because, if this did get into a place where it was easily transmissible among humans, everybody fears that could be a really, really bad scenario."

The ongoing response has brought together a veritable alphabet soup of government agencies and agricultural organizations, highlighting the complicated nature of fighting bird flu. The mobilization is intended to stem the significant economic toll that farmers could face and curb the virus' spread.

At the federal level, the Agriculture Department is responsible for the farm animals, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for human health, the Food and Drug Administration has jurisdiction over the eggs and milk sold in grocery stores, and the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response oversees its piece of the pie.

Then come the state agencies, interest groups, agribusiness and family farms.

As of last week, more than 40 people had been tested for H5N1 with more than 350 people enrolled in monitoring, about 220 of whom are in Michigan. Two of the human cases have been in Michigan while the other was diagnosed in Texas.

Michigan also has several dairy cattle herds diagnosed with H5N1.

The USDA has performed more than 17,000 PCR tests on cattle, with a total of 67 herds affected throughout nine states, including Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota and Texas.

This strain of bird flu has also cropped up in a wide variety of mammals, including domestic cats. That's led experts to recommend that people limit their pets' interactions with wild birds, which hold a reservoir of the virus, as well as all farm animals.

USDA begins expanded testing

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced last week that it's launching a voluntary pilot program to expand testing for dairy farms to gain better insight into the virus and make it easier for farmers to ship dairy cows across state lines.

The department is also transferring \$824 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for the ongoing response.

"It's important to note that as these additional testing measures take place, USDA anticipates that we may see an increase in the number of herds that are testing positive," said Eric Deeble, acting senior adviser for highly pathogenic avian influenza and deputy assistant secretary for congressional relations.

The pilot program will test milk samples from bulk tanks for H5N1. Farms that consistently test negative will "be able to ship their cows at the time they prefer and without testing individual animals, knowing that their entire herd is free of the disease," Deeble said.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, on a press call with reporters Monday, declined to say whether USDA has a full grasp of the extent of the virus' spread in dairy cattle, but he said, "We have a pretty good

understanding of the nature of this virus and essentially what's causing its spread."

"We're trying to essentially corner this virus, so that over time it dissipates," Vilsack said. Dairy farmers can begin enrolling in the pilot program this week in participating states.

Dairy farms reluctant to test

Infected cows have tremendous amounts of the virus in their milk, so those that are lactating must test negative for the virus before they can be transported across state lines, the USDA has ordered.

In states such as Iowa, which has no detections of the virus in cattle, dairy farmers have been reluctant to test more than is required.

"There has not been a lot of testing to date," said Rodger Main, director of the Iowa State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, which first discovered bird flu was infecting cattle. "What's being tested is the dairy cattle that are moving interstate."

Scientists are sequencing the genetic code of an avian flu that was found in a flock of 4.2 million egg-laying hens last week in northwest Iowa to determine if it is the same variant that has been infecting cattle, said Don McDowell, a spokesperson for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. If so, it might indicate that there are infected cattle in Iowa.

A similar detection happened more than a month ago at a turkey flock in Minnesota, another state with no known dairy cattle infections.

However, no coordinated testing was done of dairy farms near the infected turkey flock to determine whether they had infected cattle and might have been the source of the transmission, said Michael Crusan, a spokesperson for the Minnesota Board of Animal Health.

"The Board of Animal Health didn't collect any samples from dairy farms surrounding HPAI positive poultry premises," Crusan said. "We do not have authority to test those dairy farms without suspected or confirmed illness reported to us."

There is reluctance among some dairy farmers to voluntarily test their cattle for fear of what might happen if those tests reveal their herds are infected, said Dr. Barb Petersen, a Texas veterinarian who helped discover that bird flu was infecting cattle.

They might be afraid that they'll be barred from selling their cattle for an unknown amount of time or that animal movements to and from their farms will be otherwise restricted.

Petersen suspects that nearly all the dairies in her area near Amarillo were infected but that many were not tested.

Infected cows typically recover in 10 to 14 days. Infected herds suffer a drop in milk production that can last about a month.

The virus is much more severe for chicken and turkey flocks, where it often causes fatal illness. Entire flocks are destroyed to prevent the spread of the virus.

More testing and better biosecurity measures are important to help prevent the virus from spreading from infected cattle to the poultry flocks, said Phillip Jardon, the dairy extension veterinarian for Iowa State University.

He is aware of several dairy farms that installed noise-making systems to keep away wild birds, which are believed to be an initial source of the infections. It's unclear how many other state-recommended precautions are being adopted.

"The risk to dairies is not as large as it is to poultry, but dairies should keep in mind that they have neighbors who are poultry producers where it can be devastating, and they don't want to have a local source of the virus," he said.

Vilsack said USDA needs to better educate dairy farmers about the risks to their neighboring farmers to get more voluntary help in tracking and containing the virus.

It spread from Texas to faraway states through the transportation of infected cattle, but it has likely spread locally via farmworkers, veterinarians and equipment moving farm to farm, Vilsack said.

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PPE for farmworkers

Plescia from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials said during an interview with States Newsroom that while the risk to the public remains low, health officials are paying close attention to agricultural workers.

Ensuring farmworkers have access to personal protective equipment is essential, though it could be challenging to get all workers to use it during the hotter summer months, Plescia said.

The most recent case in a farmworker in Michigan, announced May 30, is more concerning to experts. "We're much, much more worried about respiratory infections because it's respiratory infections, where in the past with earlier versions of H5N1, we've seen that those infections can be very, very severe and the mortality can be very high," Plescia said.

Public health officials need to work with farm owners and farmworkers to make sure that even people with mild symptoms get tested for avian flu to ensure that it isn't circulating more widely than the documented cases, he said.

They need to ensure that undocumented workers or those on agricultural work visas who are concerned about interaction with the government are comfortable enough to get tested.

"When the state government starts showing up to do testing as far as they're concerned, people are fearful of that and so they'll stop coming to work," Plescia said.

Plescia also cautioned that people shouldn't drink raw milk for the foreseeable future.

Dr. Nirav Shah, principal deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an interview with States Newsroom the agency is focusing its attention on farmworker safety through personal protective equipment, testing and additional resources.

The CDC is also working to build trust so that workers who might be in the U.S. on visas or who are undocumented feel comfortable getting tested for H5N1 or reporting an illness to public health officials.

"When H5 became a phenomenon in poultry farms, it took some time for poultry farm owners and poultry farmworkers to gain trust with the public health system," Shah said. "The same thing, the same dynamic, is at play here."

Shah, speaking during a separate press briefing on H5N1, said that even with the new respiratory case, there have been no signs, either genetically or epidemiologically, that this strain of avian influenza is adapting in a way that would lead to greater transmission.

"We are on the lookout for those changes, but the mere fact that this individual displayed some respiratory symptoms — again, we should be alert — but, in and of itself, is not a cause to change or suggest that we're at an inflection point," Shah said. "It is a cause and a reason to remain alert."

Amira Roess, professor of global health and epidemiology at George Mason University, said in a written statement that public health officials must "provide incentives for individuals to report illness and to get tested, or at least we have to remove barriers."

"Because we don't have meaningful, high quality and accessible health care for the majority of our population, particularly those in rural areas where the virus has first spilled over, it will be challenging to get ahead of this," Roess wrote in response to questions from States Newsroom about H5N1. "Many farmworkers are hourly workers and cannot afford to take time off for what they perceive as mild illness."

Keep pets away from wild birds

Meghan Davis, associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said in an interview with States Newsroom this particular strain of avian flu has been spreading between mammals, including domestic pets, and will likely continue to do so.

"The fact that this particular clade has been able to infect so many different mammalian species, and has now caused at least two documented cases in people — although, thankfully, with relatively mild symptoms — is a concern," she said, before the third case was announced.

Davis cautioned that because there have been cases among cats living on dairy farms that drank raw

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cow's milk, people shouldn't give raw milk to their pets.

Pet owners should also be cautious about letting their animals interact with wild birds, which are known to spread the virus.

Milk purchased in grocery stores is safe to drink since it's been pasteurized and has been repeatedly tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration during the past few months to ensure there's no active virus in the country's food supply.

Other mammals diagnosed with avian flu this year include a mountain lion in Montana, red foxes in Michigan and Missouri, and a raccoon in Colorado. Domestic cats have been diagnosed in Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota and Texas, according to data from the CDC.

Davis said the surveillance system for H5N1 should be broadened to include "more systematic testing, which would require us to have somewhat better access to workers, to animals on farms, etc." as well as antibody testing to determine if more people have contracted avian flu and recovered.

The additional information could help if the virus were to shift in the coming months or years.

"We don't know exactly what this virus is going to do," Davis said, noting the mild nature of the virus detected so far could mean that more people have contracted it and simply didn't realize it.

Davis explained that public health officials and researchers need to closely monitor viruses like H5N1 since they can change in a way similar to how the flu changes, leading to the need for a different flu shot each year.

Roess, the epidemiology professor from George Mason University, noted that an uptick in human cases of avian influenza, could "be an indication of other types of transmission than what is currently believed."

"Right now, the cases reported are a result of direct contact with infected food animals," Roess said. "It is critical to ramp up surveillance of people working closely with possibly infected animals, other animals in the vicinity and other people who are not directly in contact with possibly infected animals in the community."

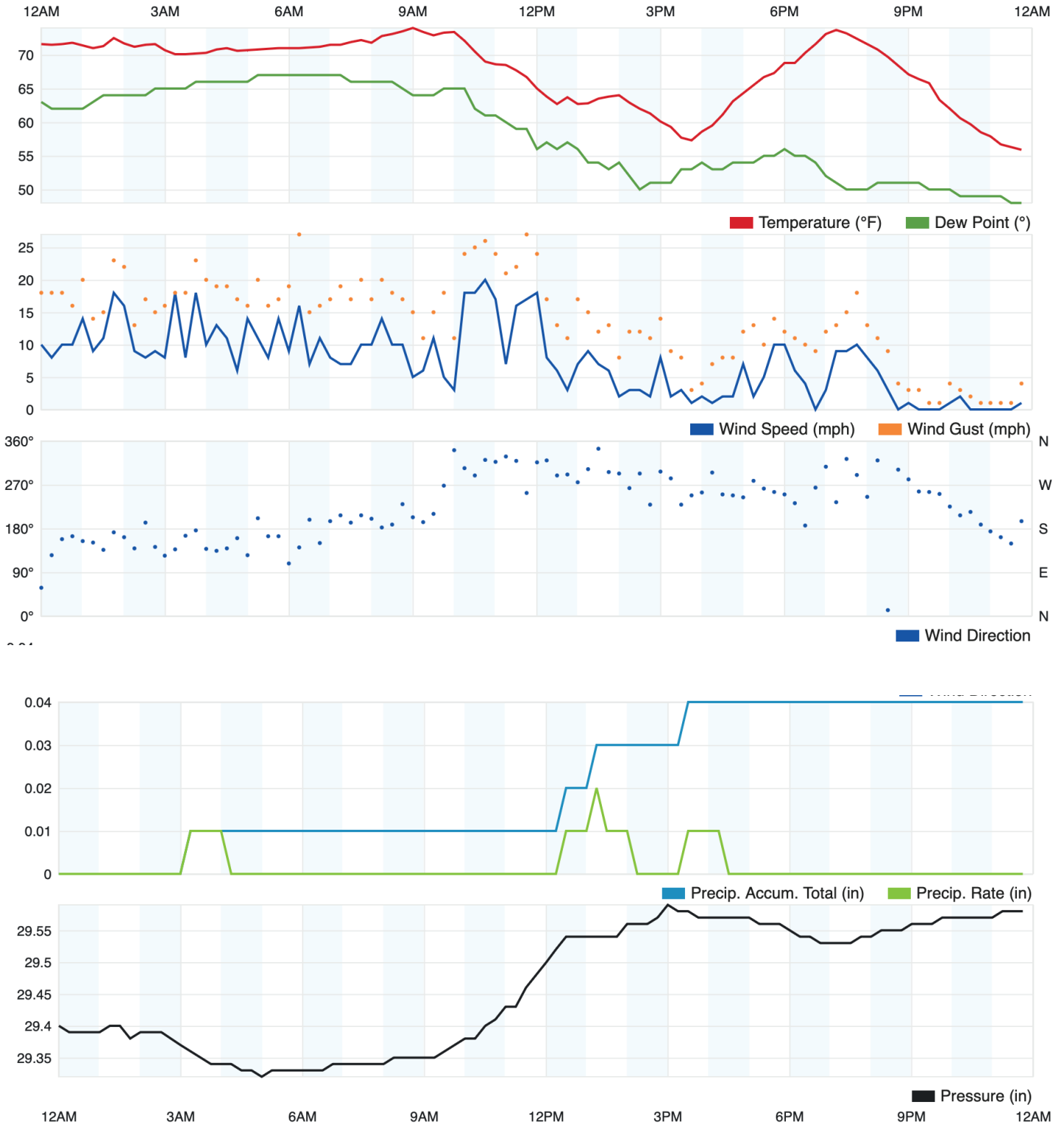
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wind Advisory					
Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	
High: 76 °F	Low: 51 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 80 °F	
Becoming Sunny and Windy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Sunny and Breezy	Clear	Sunny	

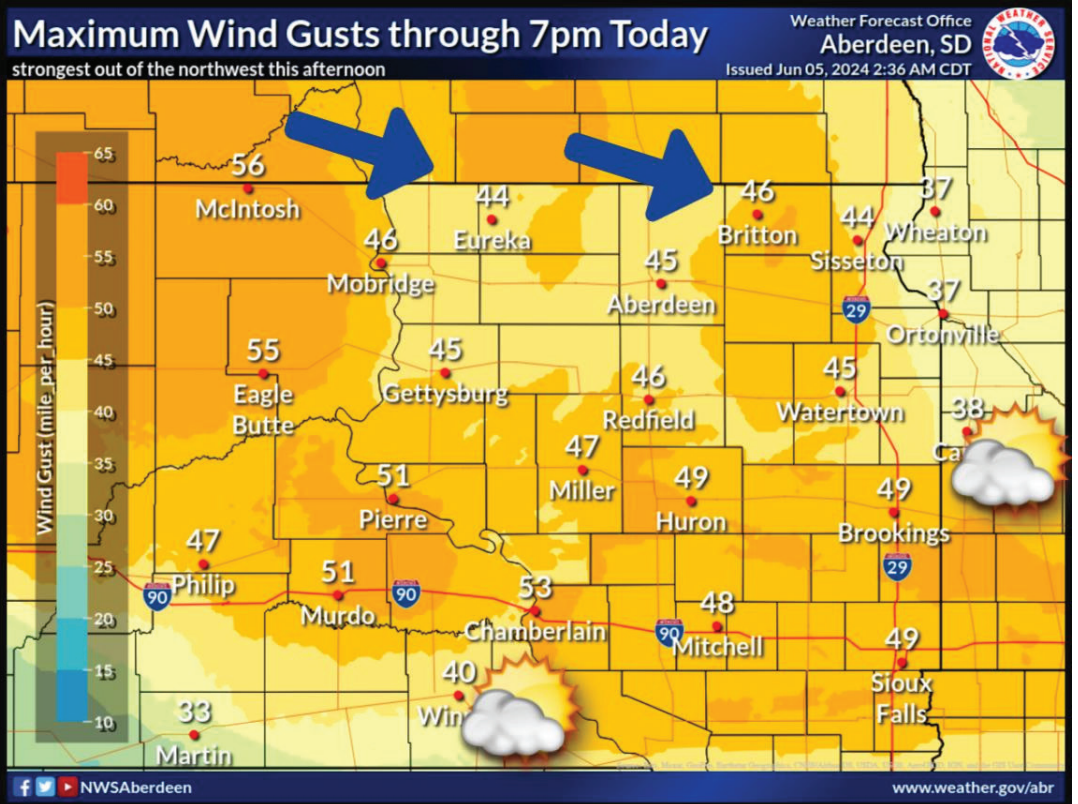


Windy Wednesday!

Winds out of the west to northwest gusting near 40 to 55 mph this afternoon.



Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abern



There is a Wind Advisory in effect for much of the area from late morning through the afternoon hours today. The strongest winds will be out of the west to northwest gusting near 40 to 55 mph this afternoon. The weakest winds will be over west central Minnesota today.

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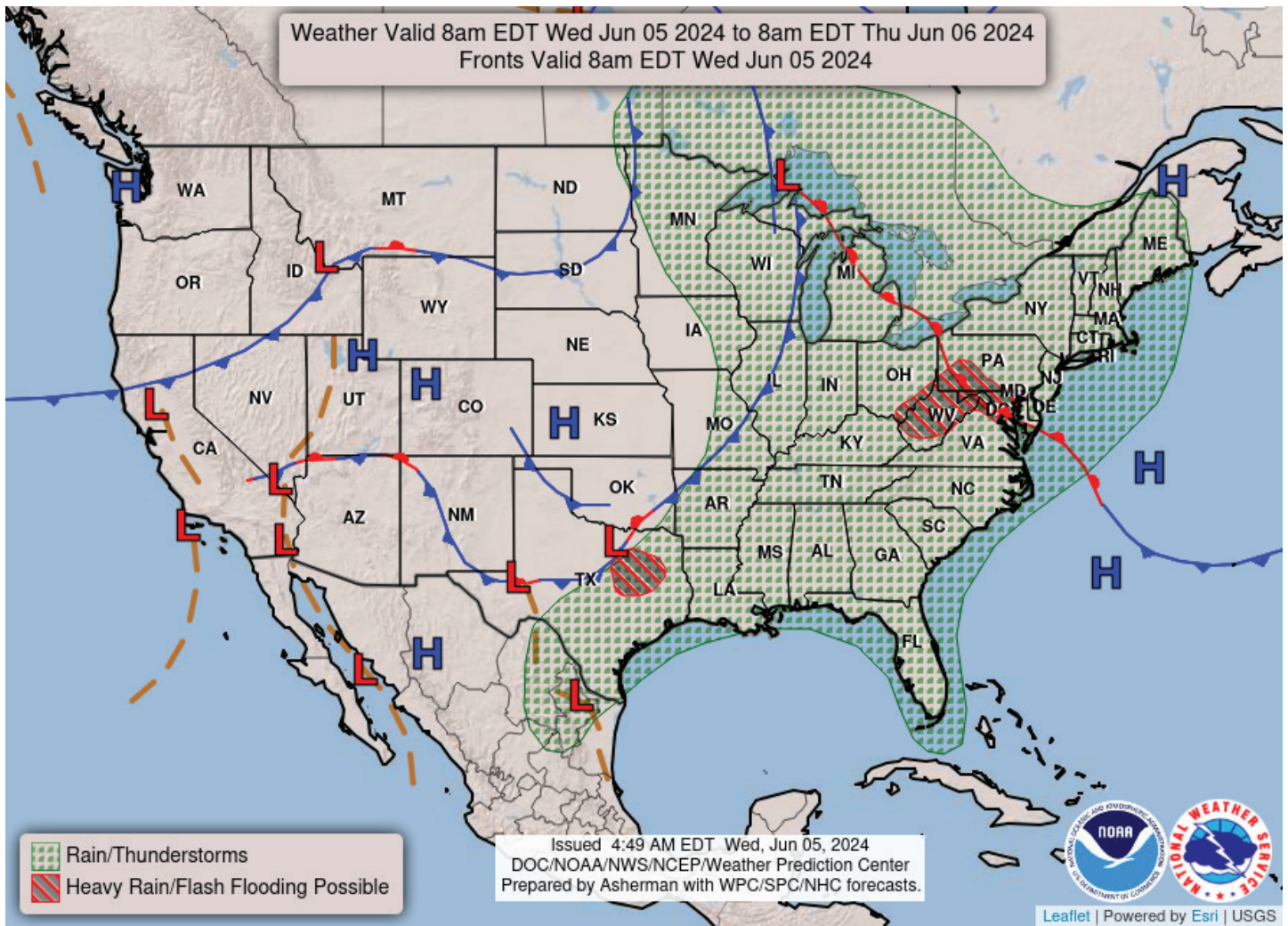
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 74 °F at 8:52 AM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 11:29 PM
Wind: 30 mph at 10:48 AM
Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 15 hours, 35 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 2021
Record Low: 37 in 1907
Average High: 77
Average Low: 52
Average Precip in June.: .55
Precip to date in June: 0.07
Average Precip to date: 7.80
Precip Year to Date: 7.14
Sunset Tonight: 9:18:56 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:49 am



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Today in Weather History

June 5, 1925: A severe thunderstorm that probably produced multiple numbers of small tornadoes moved northwest from Presho, in Jones County. There were large gaps of about 15 miles at times between tornadoes. One of these tornadoes passed 10 miles north of Ree Heights and ended north of Miller. Half dozen barns were destroyed west and north of Ree Heights. The strongest of the tornadoes was estimated as having F2 strength. Also on this date, a tornado moved from the southern edge of Fargo, North Dakota and on into Moorhead Minnesota. There were no injuries reported from this storm.

June 5, 1996: Hail, between a golf ball and tennis ball size, broke many windshields and dented vehicles in Watertown. Some houses in Watertown had their windows broken out because of the large hail. Golf ball sized hail also covered most of the ground at the Watertown Airport.

June 5, 1999: Winds gusting to 74 mph knocked down several trees throughout Groton. One tree took out a major transmission line and ripped the electrical service line off of a house. Power was out for parts of Groton for several hours. The high winds shattered the windows at a store on Main Street and tore a standing board on a sign loose which damaged five new vehicles at a dealership in Groton. The high winds also destroyed a small service building and the surrounding fence at the main juncture of natural gas pipelines at Groton. Winds to 70 mph brought several trees and many large tree branches down in Henry. Winds gusting to 80 mph snapped off several trees, blew a garage down, and brought power lines down in Hazel. In Watertown winds gusted to over 70 mph, blowing a portion of a roof off a house and destroyed the attached garage on another house. Near Watertown, a pole barn was destroyed, a hay bale was blown into a basement window of a house, and part of their deck was torn away. Near Florence, winds up to 80 mph tipped over and damaged a small shed, destroyed another storage shed, and also completely demolished a three stall garage.

June 5, 2008: Very heavy rains of 3 to 7 inches caused extensive flooding throughout Dewey County. Many roads, bridges, dams, culverts, along with some buildings were damaged or destroyed by the flooding. One man, west of Promise, used a boat to get back and forth from his ranch. A federal disaster declaration was issued for Dewey County and the Cheyenne River Reservation.

1859 - Frost was reported from Iowa to New England. The temperature dipped to 25 degrees in New York State, and up to two inches of snow blanketed Ohio. The cold and snow damaged the wheat crop. (David Ludlum)

1908 - Helena MT was deluged with 3.67 inches of rain to establish their all-time 24 hour rainfall record. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1916 - A tornado struck the town of Warren AR killing 83 persons. There were 125 deaths that day in a tornado outbreak across Missouri and Arkansas. (David Ludlum)

1917 - Residents near Topeka KS reported disk-shaped hailstones six to ten inches in diameter, and two to three inches thick. The hailstorm was accompanied by a tornado. (The Weather Channel)

1976: When water began leaking from Idaho's new Teton Dam, there seemed to be no cause for alarm. On this date, warnings were frantic that the dam was about to break. As workers tried to shore up the crumbling dam, it crumbled shortly after 11 AM, sending 180 billion gallons of water pouring through Teton Canyon. 11 people lost their lives, but the toll would have been much higher if the dam had failed at night and residents had been asleep.

1987 - International Falls, MN, dipped to a record low reading of 34 degrees during the morning. Williston, ND, and Glasgow, MT, reported record warm afternoon highs of 94 degrees. Major flooding was reported along the Guadalupe River in South Texas, with the water level at Cuero reaching 18 feet above flood stage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville NC with a reading of 40 degrees. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 108 degrees at Glasgow MT was a record for June. (The National Weather Summary)

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

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

A salesman was calling on one of his favorite customers - an elderly gentleman who owned a country store. He found "Old Sam" sitting on the porch of his store gently rocking back and forth with an old Labrador retriever laying quietly beside him. As he walked up the steps he said, "That's a beautiful dog. Does your dog bite?"

"Nope," said "Old Sam," as he continued to rock.

The salesman reached down to pet the dog. Just as he touched the dog's head, it growled and snapped viciously at him. He jumped back and shouted, "I thought you said that your dog didn't bite!"

"My dog doesn't. But that's not my dog," responded "Old Sam."

All of us collect information. It is an ongoing process in all of our lives. But the value of the information we collect depends on the questions we ask.

Thomas once asked, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The most important question everyone must answer is implied in the response of Jesus: "Do you know the way to God?" Jesus left no doubt about the route: We can only get to God through Him.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You that Your Son clearly and consistently explained the only way to come to You is through Him. May we in faith accept Your "way." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6



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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.04.24

19 37 40 63 69 17

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 21
Mins 10 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: 16 Hrs 36 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.04.24

8 13 39 42 48 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 51 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.01.24

1 4 17 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$132,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 51 Mins 11
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.24

25 39 46 47 51 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 20 Mins 11
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: 17 Hrs 20 Mins 10
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Biden and Trump win Democratic, Republican elections in some of 2024's last primary contests

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump won Democratic and Republican primaries in a handful of states Tuesday, among some of the last contests on the 2024 primary calendar.

Trump, appearing on the ballot for the first time since his historic conviction for felony crimes, won primaries in New Mexico, where voters could opt for his rivals who have since dropped out, and Montana and New Jersey, where he was unopposed.

Biden won Democratic primaries in New Mexico, South Dakota, New Jersey, Montana and Washington, D.C.

Trump and Biden were both expected to easily prevail in all of Tuesday's contests as the last major candidates still running. But with many Americans saying in polls that they don't want a rematch of the 2020 election, Tuesday's results were watched for voter concerns about their choices as November's election barrels closer.

Trump's domination during the GOP primary season has also been shadowed by support from a minority of GOP voters for former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who dropped out in March. Tuesday's contests were the first since Haley said two weeks ago that she would vote for Trump in November.

In New Mexico, where she was still on the ballot, several thousand voters cast ballots for Haley, but she was running below 10% of the vote late Tuesday.

Biden has faced his own protest vote in recent contests as Democratic voters unhappy with his handling of Israel's war with Hamas seek to register their disapproval. There are organized campaigns in several states Tuesday to vote for "uncommitted" in the Democratic contests. In New Jersey's primary, "uncommitted" was on the ballot in many counties above the phrase, "Justice For Palestine, Permanent Ceasefire Now!"

More than 35,000 people voted "uncommitted" in New Jersey as of late Tuesday.

After Tuesday, Democrats have two additional caucuses on June 8, for Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to close out their 2024 primary calendar.

Republicans in D.C. held a party-run primary in March. South Dakota canceled its GOP presidential primary because Trump was uncontested.

Meanwhile, voters on Tuesday also cast ballots in primary races for federal, state and local offices in those states.

Retired Navy SEAL Tim Sheehy won the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate in Montana. Sheehy, who had the backing of Trump and national Republican leaders, will challenge Democratic Sen. Jon Tester in what's expected to be one of the most competitive races that could decide control of the chamber.

In New Jersey, Rep. Andy Kim won the Democratic nomination for the seat held by scandal-plagued Democrat Sen. Bob Menendez, who is on trial in New York on federal corruption charges. Menendez decided not to run in the primary. He filed paperwork Monday to run in the general election as an independent candidate.

On the Republican side, businessman Curtis Bashaw won, defeating Trump's pick, Mendham Borough Mayor Christine Serrano Glassner.

Herb Conaway defeated four Democrats as they competed in a primary for the state's 3rd District, which Kim holds and which is expected to stay in Democratic hands in November.

Menendez's son, first-term Rep. Rob Menendez, overcame a tough primary challenge in New Jersey's 8th District from Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla.

In New Mexico, where Democrats hold all three of the state's U.S. House seats, only one primary was being held in the 1st District. Republicans Louie Sanchez and Steve Jones were competing to take on incumbent Melanie Stansbury in a Democratic-leaning district based in Albuquerque.

In D.C., voters were deciding a primary for the city's nonvoting delegate to the U.S. House. In Iowa, which kicked off the presidential contests in January with its first-in-the-nation caucuses, voters were choosing nominees in primary elections for local races and U.S. House seats, including one that could play a key role in determining control of the House.

Democrats in the Des Moines-area 3rd Congressional District chose Lanon Baccam as their nominee to take on a first-term Republican U.S. Rep. Zach Nunn, who edged out an incumbent Democrat in 2022.

The Latest | Israeli troops launch attacks in central Gaza, possibly widening their offensive

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said it has started "operational activity" in two areas of central Gaza in a possible broadening of its monthslong ground offensive against Hamas.

The military said Wednesday its forces were operating "both above and below ground" in eastern parts of Deir al-Balah and Bureij, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It said the operation began with airstrikes on militant infrastructure, after which troops began a "targeted daylight operation" in both areas.

The eight-month offensive has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians who are facing widespread hunger. International mediators wait for Israel and Hamas to respond to a new cease-fire and hostage release proposal, according to Qatar, which has played a key role in negotiations alongside Egypt and the United States.

Announcing the proposal last week, U.S. President Joe Biden said the three-phase plan was Israeli. However, Israeli leaders have since appeared to distance themselves from the proposal and vowed to keep fighting Hamas until the group is destroyed.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

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. Around 80 hostages captured on Oct. 7 are believed to still be alive in Gaza, alongside the remains of 43 others.

Currently:

- Gunman captured after shootout outside US Embassy in Lebanon.
- Rights group claims Israel has hit residential buildings with white phosphorous in Lebanon.
- In a West Bank refugee camp, Israel's raids fuel the militancy it tries to stamp out.
- Famine is possibly underway in northern Gaza despite recent aid efforts, a new report warns.
- As Gaza hostage crisis drags on for Israel, here's what we know.

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

Here's the latest:

ISRAEL'S COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY WILL TRY TO EXTEND AL JAZEERA SHUTDOWN

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's Communications Ministry says it will try to extend its order to shut down the local offices of Qatar's Al Jazeera news network.

The announcement on Wednesday came after a court upheld the existing order but said it would expire on Sunday, 10 days earlier than expected.

Israel ordered the closure of Al Jazeera's local offices on May 6, escalating a long-running feud between the broadcaster and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line government, which accuses it of inciting violence and being a "Hamas mouthpiece," allegations the network denies.

The extraordinary order, which includes confiscating broadcast equipment, preventing the broadcast of the channel's reports and blocking its websites, is believed to be the first time Israel has ever shuttered a foreign news outlet operating in the country.

Last month, Israeli officials seized equipment belonging to The Associated Press, accusing the news organization of violating the law by providing images to Al Jazeera. The Qatari satellite channel is among

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thousands of clients that receive live video feeds from the AP and other news organizations. The equipment was returned hours later, and the AP resumed broadcasting live from southern Israel.

Al Jazeera has reported on the Israeli-Hamas war nonstop since the militants' initial cross-border attack Oct. 7 and has maintained 24-hour coverage in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's grinding offensive, which has killed and wounded members of its staff.

The network has provided on-the-ground reporting on the war's casualties while also airing, in their entirety, videos released by Hamas and other armed groups showing Israeli hostages and attacks on Israeli troops.

NETANYAHU SAYS ISRAEL WILL RESTORE SECURITY ALONG THE LEBANESE BORDER

TEL AVIV, Israel — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel will restore security in the north "one way or another" during a tour of the border with Lebanon.

His visit on Wednesday came a day after large brush fires ignited by Hezbollah rocket attacks burned in a number of locations. At a meeting with soldiers and firefighters, Netanyahu said Israel is "prepared for very strong action in the north."

"Yesterday the land was burning here, and I'm glad you put it out, but the ground was also on fire in Lebanon," he said.

Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group 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 a wider war.

Israel's national parks authority says 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 rockets and other projectiles fired from Lebanon. It says it could take years to rehabilitate the area.

GUNMAN CAPTURED AFTER SHOOTOUT OUTSIDE U.S. EMBASSY IN BEIRUT

BEIRUT — A gunman was shot and captured by Lebanese soldiers after a shootout outside the U.S. Embassy outside Beirut on Wednesday morning, the military said.

The attack took place as tensions continued to simmer in the tiny Mediterranean country, where months of fighting between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops has displaced thousands along the border, following years of political deadlock and economic hardship.

The Lebanese military in a statement said that soldiers shot an assailant, who they only described as a Syrian national. The gunman was wounded and taken to a hospital.

The shooter's motives were not clear. However, Lebanese media have published photos that appear to show a bloodied attacker wearing a black vest with the words "Islamic State" written in Arabic and the English initials "I" and "S."

Local media reported that there was a gunfight involving at least one attacker lasting almost half an hour. A video that surfaced on social media showed a gunman in a parking lot across the embassy's entrance shooting with what appears to be an assault rifle.

ISRAEL SAYS IT HAS STARTED 'OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY' IN 2 AREAS OF CENTRAL GAZA

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military says it has "started operational activity" in two areas of central Gaza in a possible broadening of its monthslong ground offensive against Hamas.

The military said Wednesday that forces were operating "both above and below ground" in eastern parts of Deir al-Balah and Bureij, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It said the operation began with airstrikes on militant infrastructure, after which troops began a "targeted daylight operation" in both areas.

Israel has routinely launched airstrikes in all parts of Gaza since the start of the war and has carried out massive ground operations in the territory's two largest cities, Gaza City and Khan Younis, that left much of them in ruins.

The military waged an offensive earlier this year for several weeks in Bureij and several other nearby refugee camps in central Gaza.

Troops pulled out of the Jabaliya camp in northern Gaza last Friday after weeks of fighting caused

widespread destruction. First responders have recovered the bodies of 360 people, mostly women and children, killed during the battles.

Israel sent troops into Rafah last month in what it said was a limited incursion, but those forces are now operating in central parts of Gaza's southernmost city. More than 1 million people have fled Rafah since the start of the operation, with many heading toward central Gaza.

ISRAEL OVERHAULS SHADOWY MILITARY PRISON SYSTEM

JERUSALEM -- Israel says it is overhauling the operations of a shadowy military prison used to hold Palestinian detainees after outcry over conditions over the facility.

The Sde Teiman facility has served as the main holding place for the thousands of detainees Israel has rounded up in Gaza during an eight-month offensive. The facility has raised concerns of human rights abuses.

State attorneys said during a Supreme Court hearing Wednesday that over the next week the government will transfer 500 of 700 detainees currently held there to the Ofer military prison in the occupied West Bank. They pledged to move the remaining 200 at a later date and use the prison only as a short-term holding facility.

The state lawyers also said the facility's medical center would be improved and eventually replaced by a new hospital.

Rights groups had asked the Supreme Court to close the facility, alleging poor conditions and a lack of oversight.

Detainees can be held there pre-trial and without access to an attorney for over a month, under a war-time revision to Israeli law.

Based on interviews with Palestinian detainees held there and soldier whistleblowers, rights groups have said the detainees are shackled and blindfolded in pens inside warehouse-like structures under harsh floodlights.

Doctors working at the medical facility there have raised concerns to The Associated Press that patients are treated while cuffed and blindfolded and surgeries are conducted without adequate painkillers.

Israel says it has detained about 4,000 Palestinians during its Gaza offensive, saying the detentions are necessary to gather intelligence. It has released 1,500 after deeming them unaffiliated with Palestinian militant groups.

Amanda Knox asks Italian court to clear her of a slander charge, saying police forced the confession

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

FLORENCE, Italy (AP) — In a soft and sometimes breaking voice, Amanda Knox asked eight Italian judges and jury members Wednesday to clear her of a slander charge that stuck even after she was exonerated in the brutal 2007 murder of her British roommate while the two were exchange students in Italy.

Knox told the court that she wrongly accused an innocent man, the Congolese owner of the bar where she worked part time, of the killing under intense police pressure in overnight questioning without the benefit of a lawyer or competent translator.

"I am very sorry that I was not strong enough to resist the pressure of police," Knox told the panel in a 9-minute prepared statement, sitting alongside them on the jury bench. She told them: "I didn't know who the murderer was. I had no way to know."

The panel recessed to deliberate, and a decision is not expected before midday Wednesday.

The slaying of 21-year-old Meredith Kercher in the idyllic hilltop town of Perugia fueled global headlines as suspicion fell on Knox, a 20-year-old exchange student from Seattle, and her new Italian boyfriend of just a week, Raffaele Sollecito.

Flip-flop verdicts over nearly eight years of legal proceedings polarized trial watchers on both sides of the Atlantic as the case was vociferously argued on social media, still in its infancy.

The case continues to draw intense media attention, with photographers massing around Knox, her hus-

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band Christopher Robinson and their legal team as they entered the courtroom about an hour before the hearing. A camera knocked her on the left temple, her lawyer Luca Luparia Donati said. Knox's husband examined a small bump on her head as they sat in the front row of the court.

Despite Knox's exoneration and the conviction of an Ivorian man whose footprints and DNA were found at the scene, doubts about her role persist, particularly in Italy. That is largely due to the accusation she made against Patrick Lumumba, an accusation that led to the slander conviction.

Knox, now a 36-year-old mother of two small children, returned to Italy for only the second time since she was freed in October 2011, after four years in jail, by a Perugia appeals court that overturned the initial guilty verdict in the murder case against both Knox and Sollecito.

She remained in the United States through two more flip-flop verdicts before Italy's highest court definitively exonerated the pair of the murder in March 2015, stating flatly that they had not committed the crime.

"I will walk into the very same courtroom where I was reconvicted of a crime I didn't commit, this time to defend myself yet again," Knox wrote on social media. "I hope to clear my name once and for all of the false charges against me. Wish me luck."

Knox's day in court was set by a European court ruling that Italy violated her human rights during a long night of questioning days after Kercher's murder, deprived of both a lawyer and a competent translator. In the fall, Italy's highest Cassation Court threw out the slander conviction that had withstood five trials, ordering a new trial, thanks to a 2022 Italian judicial reform allowing cases that have reached a definitive verdict to be reopened if human rights violations are found.

This time, the court has been ordered to disregard two damaging statements typed by police and signed by Knox at 1:45 a.m. and 5:45 a.m. as she was held for questioning overnight into the small hours of Nov. 6, 2007. In the statements, Knox said she remembered hearing Kercher scream, and pointed to Lumumba for the killing.

Hours later, still in custody at about 1 p.m., she asked for pen and paper and wrote her own statement in English, questioning the version that she had signed.

"In regards to this 'confession' that I made last night, I want to make clear that I'm very doubtful of the verity of my statements because they were made under the pressure of stress, shock and extreme exhaustion," she wrote.

Whatever the outcome, Knox risks no more jail time. The four years she served before the first acquittal covers the three-year slander sentence.

Gunman captured after shootout outside US Embassy in Lebanon

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A gunman was shot and captured by Lebanese soldiers after a shootout outside the U.S. Embassy outside Beirut on Wednesday morning, the military said.

The attack took place as tensions continued to simmer in the tiny Mediterranean country, where months of fighting between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops has displaced thousands along the border, following years of political deadlock and economic hardship.

The Lebanese military in a statement said that soldiers shot an assailant, who they only described as a Syrian national. The gunman was wounded and taken to a hospital.

The shooter's motives were not clear. However, Lebanese media have published photos that appear to show a bloodied attacker wearing a black vest with the words "Islamic State" written in Arabic and the English initials "I" and "S."

Local media reported that there was a gunfight involving at least one attacker lasting almost half an hour. A video that surfaced on social media showed a gunman in a parking lot across the embassy's entrance shooting with what appears to be an assault rifle.

The U.S. Embassy said the attack by the embassy's entrance did not cause any casualties among their staff, and that Lebanese troops and embassy security mobilized quickly.

A statement from Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati's office said that he was informed fol-

lowing meetings with the defense minister and army commander that the situation was now stable and that serious investigations are underway.

The Lebanese military said it deployed troops around the embassy and surrounding areas.

In 1983, a deadly bombing attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut killed 63 people.. U.S. officials blame the attack on the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

Following that attack, the embassy was moved from central Beirut to the Christian suburb of Aukar, north of the capital. Another bomb attack struck the new location on Sept. 20, 1984.

In September 2023, Lebanese security forces detained a Lebanese man who opened fire by the U.S. Embassy. There were no casualties in that attack.

In October 2023, hundreds of protesters clashed with Lebanese security forces in demonstrations near the U.S. Embassy in support of Gaza's people and the militant group Hamas in its war with Israel.

Biden will mark D-Day anniversary in France as Western alliances face threats at home and abroad

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — United States President Joe Biden will mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in France this week as he tries to demonstrate steadfast support for European security at a time when some allies fear Donald Trump threatens to upend American commitments if he wins another term in the White House.

The trip comes as the deadliest fighting on the continent since World War II continues in Ukraine and allied countries struggle to find ways to turn the tide against Russia, which has recently gained ground on the battlefield. It is also set against deepening cracks between the U.S. and many European allies over how to manage the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Biden arrived in Paris on Wednesday morning, and he was welcomed by French officials and an honor guard. On Thursday, he'll visit hallowed ground near the beaches of Normandy, where rows of bone-white headstones mark the graves of U.S. soldiers who died to bring an end to World War II. He'll also speak on Friday at Pointe du Hoc, a spot on the French coast where Army Rangers scaled seaside cliffs to overcome Nazi defenses.

White House National Security adviser Jake Sullivan said aboard Air Force One on the way to France that Biden will stress how the men on those cliffs "put the country ahead of themselves" and detail "the dangers of isolationism, and how, if we back dictators and fail to stand up to them, they keep going and ultimately America and the world pays a greater price."

"Eighty years later, we see dictators once again attempting to challenge the order, attempting to march in Europe," Sullivan said, "and that freedom-loving nations need to rally to stand against that, as we have."

He also said Biden would be meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in France to discuss "how we can continue and deepen our support for Ukraine."

On Saturday, Biden, along with his wife Jill, will be honored by French President Emmanuel Macron with a state visit, including a military parade in Paris and a banquet at the Élysée Palace, as well as business sessions where the leaders are to discuss strengthening their alliance, trade, and security cooperation for the upcoming Olympic games.

The two leaders also are expected to discuss the Middle East. Biden has invested geopolitical capital in brokering a ceasefire to the Israel-Hamas war that would see the release of hostages, even as he has maintained his staunch support for Israel and resisted European efforts to recognize a Palestinian state or investigate Israel over its handling of the war.

Biden, a Democrat, is scheduled to return to the United States on Sunday, but before he leaves France he's expected to stop at a cemetery where American soldiers who died in World War I are buried. Trump, a Republican, skipped plans to visit the same site during a 2018 trip to France, a decision that the White House blamed on weather at the time.

However, subsequent reporting found that Trump told aides he didn't want to go because he viewed the

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dead soldiers as “suckers” and “losers.” He has denied the comments, which Biden referenced during a fundraiser in Greenwich, Conn., on Monday.

“This guy does not deserve to be president,” Biden said.

Although foreign trips are ostensibly nonpartisan, Biden left no doubt that he sees a political connection between the D-Day anniversary and the election. The president described the invasion as “one of the most important moments in the history of defense of freedom and democracy.”

“I want to say as clearly as I can,” he added. “Democracy is literally on the ballot this year.”

Biden’s trip to France will be followed by another to Italy later this month for the annual Group of Seven summit, a rare doubleheader of international diplomacy in the middle of the presidential election season. Biden will skip a subsequent gathering in Switzerland, where leaders will be focused on the war in Ukraine, to attend a campaign fundraiser in Los Angeles with Hollywood stars. Vice President Kamala Harris will represent the United States instead.

Biden’s travels, plus the North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit in Washington next month, aim to embody a vision of global American leadership that’s central to his political identity but faces renewed threat from Trump.

Although the two presidents are from the same generation — Biden, 81, was born one and a half years before D-Day; Trump, 77, was born two years after the invasion — they developed divergent views on Europe and American alliances over the years.

For Biden, U.S. ties to Europe are a cornerstone of stability and a source of strength. For Trump, they’re a drain on precious resources, and he’s expressed more affinity for autocratic leaders like Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine has upended the continent.

Even before voters decide which vision they prefer, cracks in Biden’s foreign policy foundation have emerged. It took months to secure additional military assistance for Ukraine due to GOP resistance, and the delay led to depleted ammunition reserves and Russian advances on the battlefield.

“All that happened with a die-hard Atlanticist and die-hard alliance supporter in the White House,” said Charles Kupchan, a Georgetown University professor who previously served as Europe director on President Barack Obama’s National Security Council. “Europeans have no option but to ask how reliable the United States can be.”

Kupchan noted that “the bipartisan compact behind a steady and robust American internationalism has collapsed.”

Given the political complications at home, Kupchan said, Biden should be careful about drawing historical parallels between D-Day and Ukraine while he’s in France.

“I’m not sure that he wants to say that this is a moment like 1940 or 1941,” he said, especially since Biden has ruled out sending American troops to fight against the Russian invasion.

Like all of his international engagements, Biden’s trip will be shadowed by Trump’s potential return to the White House. The presumptive Republican candidate, who last week became the first U.S. president to be convicted of a crime, has pledged to unravel American commitments to allies in Europe.

“It’s every conversation. Every conversation is, what will happen?” said Max Bergmann, who leads Europe research at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Bergmann, who was in the middle of a trip around the continent in the days before Biden arrived, said some European officials hope that a second Trump term would be no more damaging than his first, when he failed to follow through on some of his more extreme ideas. But he doubts Trump will be held in check without moderate members of his administration — such as former Defense Secretary James Mattis — who are unlikely to return.

“I’m not reassuring to them,” Bergmann said.

Rachel Rizzo, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, said there’s a “palpable sense of uncertainty” as the United States and Europe wrestle with populist movements that have proven durably popular.

“This is not an aberration, this is not an accident,” she said. “There are real grievances that citizens of both continents have, and they’re playing out in support of right-wing parties.”

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In another complication for Biden, his trip is taking place at the same time that his son, Hunter, is standing trial in Delaware. The younger Biden is accused of lying while purchasing a gun by claiming that he was not a drug addict. He has pleaded not guilty.

The prosecution began presenting its case Tuesday, just days after Trump became the first U.S. president to be convicted of a felony. Trump was found guilty in New York of making illegal hush money payments to an adult film actress who said they had sex. Trump denies the affair.

Paul Begala, a longtime Democratic strategist, said Biden is probably better off ignoring Trump while he's in France.

"When you're 81 years old, and three-fourths of the country thinks you're too old, one of the things you have to do is to show strength," he said. "That's what he's got to do over there. He's got to show strength."

European Union braces for foreign disinformation as voters head to polls

By LORNE COOK and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Voters in the European Union are set to elect lawmakers starting Thursday for the bloc's parliament, in a major democratic exercise that's also likely to be overshadowed by online disinformation.

Experts have warned that artificial intelligence could supercharge the spread of fake news that could disrupt the election in the EU and many other countries this year. But the stakes are especially high in Europe, which has been confronting Russian propaganda efforts as Moscow's war with Ukraine drags on.

Here's a closer look:

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Some 360 million people in 27 nations — from Portugal to Finland, Ireland to Cyprus — will choose 720 European Parliament lawmakers in an election that runs Thursday to Sunday. In the months leading up to the vote, experts have observed a surge in the quantity and quality of fake news and anti-EU disinformation being peddled in member countries.

A big fear is that deceiving voters will be easier than ever, enabled by new AI tools that make it easy to create misleading or false content. Some of the malicious activity is domestic, some international. Russia is most widely blamed, and sometimes China, even though hard evidence directly attributing such attacks is difficult to pin down.

"Russian state-sponsored campaigns to flood the EU information space with deceptive content is a threat to the way we have been used to conducting our democratic debates, especially in election times," Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, warned on Monday.

He said Russia's "information manipulation" efforts are taking advantage of increasing use of social media penetration "and cheap AI-assisted operations." Bots are being used to push smear campaigns against European political leaders who are critical of Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said.

HAS ANY DISINFO HAPPENED YET?

There have been plenty of examples of election-related disinformation.

Two days before national elections in Spain last July, a fake website was registered that mirrored one run by authorities in the capital Madrid. It posted an article falsely warning of a possible attack on polling stations by the disbanded Basque militant separatist group ETA.

In Poland, two days before the October parliamentary election, police descended on a polling station in response to a bogus bomb threat. Social media accounts linked to what authorities call the Russian interference "infosphere" claimed a device had exploded.

Just days before Slovakia's parliamentary election in November, AI-generated audio recordings impersonated a candidate discussing plans to rig the election, leaving fact-checkers scrambling to debunk them as false as they spread across social media.

Just last week, Poland's national news agency carried a fake report saying that Prime Minister Donald Tusk was mobilizing 200,000 men starting on July 1, in an apparent hack that authorities blamed on Russia. The Polish News Agency "killed," or removed, the report minutes later and issued a statement saying

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that it wasn't the source.

It's "really worrying, and a bit different than other efforts to create disinformation from alternative sources," said Alexandre Alaphilippe, executive director of EU DisinfoLab, a nonprofit group that researches disinformation. "It raises notably the question of cybersecurity of the news production, which should be considered as critical infrastructure."

WHAT'S THE GOAL OF DISINFORMATION?

Experts and authorities said Russian disinformation is aimed at disrupting democracy, by deterring voters across the EU from heading to the ballot boxes.

"Our democracy cannot be taken for granted, and the Kremlin will continue using disinformation, malign interference, corruption and any other dirty tricks from the authoritarian playbook to divide Europe," European Commission Vice-President Vera Jourova warned the parliament in April.

Tusk, meanwhile, called out Russia's "destabilization strategy on the eve of the European elections."

On a broader level, the goal of "disinformation campaigns is often not to disrupt elections," said Sophie Murphy Byrne, senior government affairs manager at Logically, an AI intelligence company. "It tends to be ongoing activity designed to appeal to conspiracy mindsets and erode societal trust," she told an online briefing last week.

Narratives are also fabricated to fuel public discontent with Europe's political elites, attempt to divide communities over issues like family values, gender or sexuality, sow doubts about climate change and chip away at Western support for Ukraine, EU experts and analysts say.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Five years ago, when the last European Union election was held, most online disinformation was laboriously churned out by "troll farms" employing people working in shifts writing manipulative posts in sometimes clumsy English or repurposing old video footage. Fakes were easier to spot.

Now, experts have been sounding that alarm about the rise of generative AI that they say threatens to supercharge the spread of election disinformation worldwide. Malicious actors can use the same technology that underpins easy-to-use platforms, like OpenAI's ChatGPT, to create authentic-looking deepfake images, videos and audio. Anyone with a smartphone and a devious mind can potentially create false, but convincing, content aimed at fooling voters.

"What is changing now is the scale that you can achieve as a propaganda actor," said Salvatore Romano, head of research at AI Forensics, a nonprofit research group. Generative AI systems can now be used to automatically pump out realistic images and videos and push them out to social media users, he said.

AI Forensics recently uncovered a network of pro-Russian pages that it said took advantage of Meta's failure to moderate political advertising in the European Union.

Fabricated content is now "indistinguishable" from the real thing, and takes disinformation watchers experts a lot longer to debunk, said Romano.

WHAT ARE AUTHORITIES DOING ABOUT IT?

The EU is using a new law, the Digital Services Act, to fight back. The sweeping law requires platforms to curb the risk of spreading disinformation and can be used to hold them accountable under the threat of hefty fines.

The bloc is using the law to demand information from Microsoft about risks posed by its Bing Copilot AI chatbot, including concerns about "automated manipulation of services that can mislead voters."

The DSA has also been used to investigate Facebook and Instagram owner Meta Platforms for not doing enough to protect users from disinformation campaigns.

The EU has passed a wide-ranging artificial intelligence law, which includes a requirement for deepfakes to be labelled, but it won't arrive in time for the vote and will take effect over the next two years.

HOW ARE SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES RESPONDING?

Most tech companies have touted the measures they're taking to protect the European Union's "election integrity."

Meta Platforms — owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp — has said it will set up an election

operations center to identify potential online threats. It also has thousands of content reviewers working in the EU's 24 official languages and is tightening up policies on AI-generated content, including labeling and "downranking" AI-generated content that violates its standards.

Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, has said there's no sign that generative AI tools are being used on a systemic basis to disrupt elections.

TikTok said it will set up fact-checking hubs in the video-sharing platform's app. YouTube owner Google said it's working with fact-checking groups and will use AI to "fight abuse at scale."

Elon Musk went the opposite way with his social media platform X, previously known as Twitter. "Oh you mean the 'Election Integrity' Team that was undermining election integrity? Yeah, they're gone," he said in a post in September.

In Burkina Faso, a growing number of children are traumatized by war

By JESSICA DONATI Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — When armed men entered Safi's village in northern Burkina Faso and began firing, she hid in her home with her four children. The gunmen found them and let them live — to suffer the guilt of survival — after killing her husband and other relatives.

Safi, whose last name has been withheld for security reasons, is among 2 million people displaced in the West African country by growing violence between Islamic extremists and security forces.

About 60% of the displaced are children. Many are traumatized, but mental health services are limited and children are often overlooked for treatment.

"People often think that the children have seen nothing, nothing has happened to them, it's fine," said Rudy Lukamba, the health coordinator for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Burkina Faso.

He works on a program to help identify and treat traumatized children. It often relies on mothers to spot signs in children as young as 3 or 4. The chances of a successful outcome after treatment is greater when the children have a parental figure in their lives, he said.

Mass killings of villagers have become common in northern Burkina Faso as fighters linked to the Islamic State group and al-Qaida attack the army and volunteer forces. Those forces can turn on villages accused of cooperating with the enemy. More than 20,000 people have been killed since the fighting began a decade ago, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a U.S.-based nonprofit group.

Mental health services in Burkina Faso are often reserved for only the most severe cases. A U.N. survey published in 2023 showed 103 mental health professionals in the country of more than 20 million people, including 11 psychiatrists.

Community-based mental health services by social workers are expanding, now numbering in the hundreds and supported by a small team of U.N. psychologists. In addition, traditional medicine practitioners in Burkina Faso say families are increasingly turning to them for help with traumatized children.

But the need is immense. The U.N. said surveys by it and partners show that 10 out of 11 people affected by the conflict show signs of trauma.

With no money and fearing another attack, Safi set off on foot with seven children, including her own, across the arid plains in search of safety. They settled in a community in Ouahigouya, the capital of Yatenga province, and sought help.

It was there that Safi learned how post-traumatic stress can affect children. They had nightmares and couldn't sleep. During the day, they didn't play with other children. Through the ICRC, Safi was connected with a health worker who helped through home visits and art, encouraging the children to draw their fears and talk about them.

Traditional medicine practitioners are also helping traumatized children. One, Rasmane Rouamba, said he treats about five children a month, adapting the approach depending on the trauma suffered.

Children in Burkina Faso also have lost access to education and basic healthcare in fighting-affected areas.

The closure of schools is depriving almost 850,000 children of access to education, the U.N. children's agency has said. The closure of hundreds of health facilities has left 3.6 million people without access to care, it said.

Burkina Faso's government has struggled to improve security.

The country's military leader, Capt. Ibrahim Traoré, seized power in 2022 amid frustrations with the government over the deadly attacks. He is expected to remain in office for another five years, delaying the junta's promises of a democratic transition.

Around half of Burkina Faso's territory remains outside government control. Civic freedoms have been rolled back and journalists expelled.

And the country has distanced itself from regional and Western nations that don't agree with its approach, severing military ties with former colonial ruler France and turning to Russia instead for security support.

Safi, adrift with her children, said she plans to stay in her new community for now. She has no money or other place to go.

"There's a perfect harmony in the community, and they have become like family," she said.

Phoenix using ice immersion to treat heat stroke victims as Southwest bakes in triple digits

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The season's first heat wave is already baking the Southwest with triple-digit temperatures as firefighters in Phoenix — America's hottest big city — employ new tactics in hopes of saving more lives in a county that saw 645 heat-related deaths last year.

Starting this season, the Phoenix Fire Department is immersing heatstroke victims in ice on the way to area hospitals. The medical technique, known as cold water immersion, is familiar to marathon runners and military service members and has also recently been adopted by Phoenix hospitals as a go-to protocol, said Fire Capt. John Prato.

Prato demonstrated the method earlier this week outside the emergency department of Valleywise Health Medical Center in Phoenix, packing ice cubes inside an impermeable blue bag around a medical dummy representing a patient. He said the technique could dramatically lower body temperature in minutes.

"Just last week we had a critical patient that we were able to bring back before we walked through the emergency room doors," Prato said. "That's our goal — to improve patient survivability."

The heatstroke treatment has made ice and human-sized immersion bags standard equipment on all Phoenix fire department emergency vehicles. It is among measures the city adopted this year as temperatures and their human toll soar ever higher. Phoenix for the first time is also keeping two cooling stations open overnight this season.

Emergency responders in much of an area stretching from southeast California to central Arizona are preparing for what the National Weather Service said would be "easily their hottest" weather since last September.

Excessive heat warnings were issued for Wednesday morning through Friday evening for parts of southern Nevada and Arizona, with highs expected to top 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) in Las Vegas and Phoenix. The unseasonably hot weather was expected to spread northward and make its way into parts of the Pacific Northwest by the weekend.

Officials in Maricopa County were stunned earlier this year when final numbers showed 645 heat-related deaths in Arizona's largest county, a majority of them in Phoenix. The most brutal period was a heat wave with 31 subsequent days of temperatures of 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.4 Celsius) or higher, which claimed more than 400 lives.

"We've been seeing a severe uptick in the past three years in cases of severe heat illness," said Dr. Paul Pugsley, medical director of emergency medicine with Valleywise Health. Of those, about 40% do not survive.

Cooling down patients long before they get to the emergency department could change the equation, he said.

The technique "is not very widely spread in non-military hospitals in the U.S., nor in the prehospital set-

ting among fire departments or first responders," Pugsley said. He said part of that may be a longstanding perception that the technique's use for all cases of heatstroke by first responders or even hospitals was impractical or impossible.

Pugsley said he was aware of limited use of the technique in some places in California, including Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto and Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno, and by the San Antonio Fire Department in Texas.

Banner University Medical Center in Phoenix embraced the protocol last summer, said Dr. Aneesh Narang, assistant medical director of emergency medicine there.

"This cold water immersion therapy is really the standard of care to treat heatstroke patients," he said.

Hard right is set to surge in this week's European Union elections. Center set to tilt to right, too

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — It seemed like a throwaway line by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, yet it encapsulated what is at stake for many in this week's European Union parliamentary elections — What to do with the hard right? And should it be trusted?

The top EU leader basically had said that far-right Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, whose party is steeped in post-fascism, could be ready for prime time as a potential coalition partner once the four-day elections across the 27-nation EU end Sunday.

During an election debate, von der Leyen declared that Meloni checked all the necessary boxes, the last of which was "pro-rule of law." She immediately added, however, "if this holds."

That provisional question of whether to extend basic trust to extremist and populist parties is on many minds as the EU appears poised to veer rightward unlike it has ever done in its history, which has its seeds in the World War II defeat of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

Since the last European elections five years ago, populist, far-right and extremist parties are already leading three governments, are part of governing coalitions in several others and are surging in polls across the bloc like never before.

As a result, the whole political pendulum of the giant bloc is likely to swing toward the right after the elections, a plethora of surveys indicate and political observers agree.

"There will be a shift to the right. So the question is, how big?" said Maria Demertzis of the Brussels-based independent Bruegel think tank. "The numbers will matter because it could very well be that one of the possible outcomes is that the extreme right actually becomes the second (largest) party. If that is the case, then it's interesting to see how and who will govern."

In the second-biggest exercise in democracy behind India's recent elections, almost 400 million voters will elect 720 members of the European Parliament from beyond the Arctic circle to the edges of Africa and Asia, impacting anything from global climate policies and defense to migration issues and geopolitical relations with China and the United States.

For the longest time, the European Parliament elections had little importance, as core members France and Germany set much of the policy for the ever-increasing group and the legislature looked like a retirement home for elderly national politicians and an incubator for young talent.

But as the powers of the legislature grew on issues like banking rules, agriculture and the EU budget, so did voting interest and the quality of legislators. While breaking a 50% voter turnout threshold was considered a major step forward in 2019, an EU Parliament survey says 71% could vote in the upcoming elections, another massive step forward.

Von der Leyen's European People's Party, a largely Christian Democrat group, is the legislature's biggest and bound to be the coalition kingmaker after the elections. For anyone to the right of the EPP, breaking up its coalition with the socialists, pro-business liberals and the greens should be the main issue at stake.

While bold, brazen and boisterous at best, the outer bounds on the right can be bellicose, bitter and biting at worst — bashing buddies to boot.

So even if the math adds up for a brilliant victory by the right on Sunday, the total will most likely be less than the sum of its parts.

For all the hard-right's unity in wanting to keep migrants out, ridicule climate measures as woke fiction and uphold conservative family values, there also are fundamental divergences. When it comes to the war in Ukraine, for example, someone like Meloni stands with the West, unlike Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Others remain in a grey zone.

It doesn't help that populist and hard-right parties are now split up in two groups in Parliament — the Identity and Democracy group to which the French National Rally of Marine Le Pen belongs, and the European Conservatives and Reformists, to which Meloni belongs.

Some are courting the center, others are courting controversy. The I&D group last month expelled its Alternative for Germany, or AfD, party after a growing list of scandals was capped when its lead candidate said that not all members of the Nazis' elite SS unit, which was involved in major atrocities during World War II, were war criminals.

"The AfD has become the plague that no one wants to touch," said Roberto D'Alimonte, a political analyst at Rome's LUISS university.

It is still unclear how far-right and populist parties will form new groups after the elections.

Nowadays, some want first and foremost to be "salonfähig," that quality of being accepted in the finest circles despite an extremist background. Le Pen is vying to become French president in 2027, and of course, Meloni has already reached that stage as Italian prime minister.

In almost two years as Italy's leader, she has overcome initial worries and proven reliable at EU summits and willing to work for hard-fought compromises, to the extent of even keeping the combustible Orbán in line during key debates. Leaders, including von der Leyen, have glossed over national complaints about her treatment of groups that do not meet her conservative family values or accusations of placing limits on press freedom.

And with the pro-business liberals and greens set for losses, the EPP's von der Leyen wants to keep her options open for coalition building, including Meloni, over the vociferous objections of her outgoing allies.

Even if coalitions in Parliament are brittle since legislators are sometimes beholden to national, not EU, agendas, von der Leyen is still eager to find a coalition that will give her the necessary 361 out of 720 votes to win a second five-year term as EU commission president, perhaps the most powerful position in the EU.

And this is where Meloni also comes in as a pivotal player who might have in her hands both the fate of von der Leyen and of a massive geopolitical bloc on the point of tilting ever further to the right.

"She's one of these people — not quite the extreme right, but on the right of the right, as it were," said Demertzis of the Bruegel think tank. "She's been talking to EPP, but she's also talking to more extreme right groups, Mrs. Le Pen and others. And, of course, depending on how the votes turn out, she might have a big card up her sleeve."

Amid election-year push on reproductive rights, Senate to hold test vote on access to contraception

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an election-year effort to put Republicans on record on reproductive rights issues, Senate Democrats are holding a vote Wednesday to move forward with legislation designed to protect women's access to contraception.

The test vote comes as the Senate has abandoned hopes for doing serious bipartisan legislation before the election and as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Democrats are trying to instead spotlight issues that they believe can help them win the presidency and keep the Senate in November. A similar vote on ensuring nationwide access to in vitro fertilization could come as soon as next week.

Neither bill is likely to pass the Senate, where Democrats would need 60 votes, much less the Republican-led House. But Schumer said Tuesday that Democrats will "put reproductive freedoms front and center

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before this chamber, so that the American people can see for themselves who will stand up to defend their fundamental liberties.”

The effort comes as Democrats worry that reproductive rights will be further threatened after the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to an abortion two years ago and as they continue to see that access as one of their most potent election-year issues. President Joe Biden’s campaign sees reproductive rights as a key path to winning undecided voters, especially women.

Minority Republicans scoffed, saying the political messaging votes were unserious distractions from legislation they would like to vote on. “I expect we will see a lot more show votes this summer,” said South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican, on Tuesday.

Still, Wednesday’s vote on whether to move forward with the legislation could put some GOP senators in a tough spot. While most Republicans would oppose any restrictions on contraception, they are unlikely to back Democrats’ political push.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, one of the few Republican senators who supports abortion rights, said Monday that she is likely to vote to move forward on the legislation but that she would want the bill to be amended to include more religious liberty protections. “It is clearly a messaging attempt and not a serious attempt in itself,” she said.

The Senate push on reproductive access this year differs from bipartisan legislation passed in 2022 that would protect same-sex marriage amid concerns that the court could go after the Obergefell v. Hodges decision that legalized gay marriage nationwide. A vote on that bill was delayed until after that year’s midterm elections to try and avoid political complications, and 12 Republicans eventually supported it, sending it to Biden’s desk.

Since Republicans took the House majority last year, though, Congress has moved on few legislative items that were not immediately urgent or that did not face deadlines for expiration. Schumer has said repeatedly that he would like to move on bills to improve rail safety, lower the cost of prescription drugs and improve online safety for children, among other bipartisan legislation. But most of those bills have stalled in the divided Congress as some Republicans and Democrats have been less willing to work together in an election year.

Instead, Schumer has focused the Senate on judicial nominations and political messaging bills, including a repeat vote last month on a border security bill that Republicans had already rejected in February after months of bipartisan negotiations. Democrats who have faced intense criticism over the border issue have hoped that they can blunt that issue somewhat by highlighting that legislation. But Republicans have said it did not go far enough.

Democrats seized on the contraception issue after former President Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee, said in an interview last month that he was open to supporting restrictions on birth control. He quickly reversed course and said that he “has never and never will” advocate to restrict that access.

Contraception has been increasingly entangled in the abortion debate in some conservative states, however. In Missouri, a women’s health care bill was stalled for months over concerns about expanding insurance coverage for birth control after some lawmakers falsely conflated birth control with medication abortion. In Arizona, Republicans unanimously blocked a Democratic effort to protect the right to contraception access. Tennessee Republicans blocked a bill that would have clarified that the state’s abortion ban would not affect contraceptive care or fertility treatments.

And in Virginia, Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed bills from the Democratic-controlled Legislature that would have protected the right to contraception earlier this year. He said he supports the right to birth control but that “we cannot trample on the religious freedoms of Virginians.”

The Senate bill would make it federal law that an individual has the right to obtain contraceptives and to “engage in contraception,” and that health providers can provide them.

The legislation designed to protect in vitro fertilization comes after Alabama’s Supreme Court ruled frozen embryos can be considered children under state law earlier this year, causing several clinics to suspend IVF treatments. The state later enacted a law providing legal protections for IVF clinics, but Democrats

have argued that Congress should act to guarantee nationwide access to reproductive care to try and prevent courts from making those decisions.

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the Democratic chairwoman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said that she believes Americans "will be watching closely" as Democrats force Republicans to vote on contraception Wednesday.

"Senate Democrats believe every woman has a right to contraception — whether it's the pill, Plan-B, or an IUD — what could be more common sense and more uncomplicated?" Murray said on Tuesday. "So tomorrow, every single Senate Republican will be put on the record about where they stand."

Life as a teen without social media isn't easy. These families are navigating adolescence offline

By JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writer

WESTPORT, Conn. (AP) — Kate Bulkeley's pledge to stay off social media in high school worked at first. She watched the benefits pile up: She was getting excellent grades. She read lots of books. The family had lively conversations around the dinner table and gathered for movie nights on weekends.

Then, as sophomore year got underway, the unexpected problems surfaced. She missed a student government meeting arranged on Snapchat. Her Model U.N. team communicates on social media, too, causing her scheduling problems. Even the Bible Study club at her Connecticut high school uses Instagram to communicate with members.

Gabriela Durham, a high school senior in Brooklyn, says navigating high school without social media has made her who she is today. She is a focused, organized, straight-A student with a string of college acceptances — and an accomplished dancer who recently made her Broadway debut. Not having social media has made her an "outsider," in some ways. That used to hurt; now, she says, it feels like a badge of honor.

With the damaging consequences of social media increasingly well documented, some parents are trying to raise their children with restrictions or blanket bans. Teenagers themselves are aware that too much social media is bad for them, and some are initiating social media "cleanses" because of the toll it takes on mental health and grades.

But it is hard to be a teenager today without social media. For those trying to stay off social platforms while most of their peers are immersed, the path can be challenging, isolating and at times liberating. It can also be life-changing.

This is a tale of two families, social media and the ever-present challenge of navigating high school. It's about what kids do when they can't extend their Snapstreaks or shut their bedroom doors and scroll through TikTok past midnight. It's about what families discuss when they're not having screen-time battles. It's also about persistent social ramifications.

The journeys of both families show the rewards and pitfalls of trying to avoid social media in a world that is saturated by it.

A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

Concerns about children and phone use are not new. But there is a growing realization among experts that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed adolescence. As youth coped with isolation and spent excessive time online, the pandemic effectively carved out a much larger space for social media in the lives of American kids.

No longer just a distraction or a way to connect with friends, social media has matured into a physical space and a community that almost all U.S. teenagers belong to. Up to 95% of teenagers say they use social media, with more than one-third saying they are on it "almost constantly," according to the Pew Research Center.

More than ever, teenagers live in a seamless digital and non-digital world in ways that most adults don't recognize or understand, says Michael Rich, a pediatrics professor at Harvard Medical School and head of the nonprofit Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital.

"Social media is now the air kids breathe," says Rich, who runs the hospital's Clinic for Interactive Media

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and Internet Disorders.

For better or worse, social media has become a home-base for socializing. It's where many kids turn to forge their emerging identities, to seek advice, to unwind and relieve stress. It impacts how kids dress and talk. In this era of parental control apps and location tracking, social media is where this generation is finding freedom.

It is also increasingly clear that the more time youth spend online, the higher the risk of mental health problems.

Kids who use social media for more than three hours a day face double the risk of depression and anxiety, according to studies cited by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who issued an extraordinary public warning last spring about the risks of social media to young people.

Those were the concerns of the Bulkeleyes and Gabriela's mother, Elena Romero. Both set strict rules starting when their kids were young and still in elementary school. They delayed giving phones until middle school and made social media off limits until 18. They educated the girls, and their younger siblings, on the impact of social media on young brains, on online privacy concerns, on the dangers of posting photos or comments that can come back to haunt you.

In the absence of social media, at least in these two homes, there is a noticeable absence of screen time battles. But the kids and parents agree: It's not always easy.

WHEN IT'S EVERYWHERE, IT'S HARD TO AVOID

At school, on the subway and at dance classes around New York City, Gabriela is surrounded by reminders that social media is everywhere — except on her phone.

Growing up without it has meant missing out on things. Everyone but you gets the same jokes, practices the same TikTok dances, is up on the latest viral trends. When Gabriela was younger, that felt isolating; at times, it still does. But now, she sees not having social media as freeing.

"From my perspective, as an outsider," she says, "it seems like a lot of kids use social media to promote a facade. And it's really sad. Because social media is telling them how they should be and how they should look. It's gotten to a point where everyone wants to look the same instead of being themselves."

There is also friend drama on social media and a lack of honesty, humility and kindness that she feels lucky to be removed from.

Gabriela is a dance major at the Brooklyn High School of the Arts and dances outside of school seven days a week. Senior year got especially intense, with college and scholarship applications capped by an unexpected highlight of getting to perform at Broadway's Shubert Theatre in March as part of a city showcase of high school musicals.

After a recent Saturday afternoon dance class in a Bronx church basement, the diverging paths between Gabriela and her peers is on full display. The other dancers, aged 11 to 16, sit cross-legged on the linoleum floor talking about social media.

"I am addicted," says 15-year-old Arielle Williams, who stays up late scrolling through TikTok. "When I feel like I'm getting tired I say, 'One more video.' And then I keep saying, 'One more video.' And I stay up sometimes until 5 a.m."

The other dancers gasp. One suggests they all check their phones' weekly screen time.

"OH. MY," says Arielle, staring at her screen. "My total was 68 hours last week." That included 21 hours on TikTok.

Gabriela sits on the sidelines of the conversation, listening silently. But on the No. 2 subway home to Brooklyn, she shares her thoughts. "Those screen-time hours, it's insane."

As the train rumbles from the elevated tracks in the Bronx into the underground subway tunnels in Manhattan, Gabriela is on her phone. She texts with friends, listens to music and consults a subway app to count down the stops to her station in Brooklyn. The phone for her is a distraction limited to idle time, which has been strategically limited by Romero.

"My kids' schedules will make your head spin," Romero says as the family reconvenes Saturday night in their three-bedroom walkup in Bushwick. On school days, they're up at 5:30 a.m. and out the door by 7. Romero drives the girls to their three schools scattered around Brooklyn, then takes the subway into

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Manhattan, where she teaches mass communications at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Grace, 11, is a sixth grade cheerleader active in Girl Scouts, along with Gionna, 13, who sings, does debate team and has daily rehearsals for her middle school theater production.

"I'm so booked my free time is to sleep," says Gabriela, who tries to be in bed by 10:30 p.m.

In New York City, it's common for kids to get phones early in elementary school, but Romero waited until each daughter reached middle school and started taking public transportation home alone. Years ago, she sat them down to watch "The Social Dilemma," a documentary that Gabriela says made her realize how tech companies manipulate their users.

Her mom's rules are simple: No social media on phones until 18. The girls are allowed to use YouTube on their computers but not post videos. Romero doesn't set screen-time limits or restrict phone use in bedrooms.

"It's a struggle, don't get me wrong," Romero says. Last year, the two younger girls "slipped." They secretly downloaded TikTok for a few weeks before getting caught and sternly lectured.

Romero is considering whether to bend her rule for Gionna, an avid reader interested in becoming a Young Adult "Bookstagrammer" — a book reviewer on Instagram. Gionna wants to be a writer when she grows up and loves the idea that reviewers get books for free.

Her mother is torn. Romero's main concern was social media during middle school, a critical age where kids are forming their identity. She supports the idea of using social media responsibly as a tool to pursue passions.

"When you're a little older," she tells her girls, "you'll realize Mom was not as crazy as you thought."

STRUGGLING NOT TO MISS OUT

In the upscale suburb of Westport, Connecticut, the Bulkeleyes have faced similar questions about bending their rules. But not for the reason they had anticipated.

Kate was perfectly content to not have social media. Her parents had figured at some point she might resist their ban because of peer pressure or fear of missing out. But the 15-year-old sees it as a waste of time. She describes herself as academic, introverted and focused on building up extracurricular activities.

That's why she needed Instagram.

"I needed it to be co-president of my Bible Study Club," Kate explains, seated with her family in the living room of their two-story home.

As Kate's sophomore year started, she told her parents that she was excited to be leading a variety of clubs but needed social media to do her job. They agreed to let her have Instagram for her afterschool activities, which they found ironic and frustrating. "It was the school that really drove the fact that we had to reconsider our rule about no social media," says Steph Bulkeley, Kate's mother.

Schools talk the talk about limiting screen time and the dangers of social media, says Kate's dad, Russ Bulkeley. But technology is rapidly becoming part of the school day. Kate's high school and their 13-year-old daughter Sutton's middle school have cell phone bans that aren't enforced. Teachers will ask students to take out their phones to photograph material during class time.

The Bulkeleyes aren't on board with that, but feel powerless to change it. When their girls were still in elementary school, the Bulkeleyes were inspired by the "Wait Until 8th" pledge, which encourages parents to wait to give children smartphones, and access to social media, until at least 8th grade or about age 13. Some experts say waiting until 16 is better. Others feel banning social media isn't the answer, and that kids need to learn to live with the technology because it's not going anywhere.

Ultimately they gave in to Kate's plea because they trust her, and because she's too busy to devote much time to social media.

Both Kate and Sutton wrap up afterschool activities that include theater and dance classes at 8:30 p.m. most weeknights. They get home, finish homework and try to be in bed by 11.

Kate spends an average of two hours a week on her phone. That is significantly less than most, according to a 2023 Gallup poll that found over half of U.S. teens spend an average of five hours each day on social media. She uses her phone mainly to make calls, text friends, check grades and take photos. She doesn't

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post or share pictures, one of her parents' rules. Others: No phones allowed in bedrooms. All devices stay on a ledge between the kitchen and living room. TV isn't allowed on school nights.

Kate has rejected her parents' offer to pay her for waiting to use social media. But she is embarking slowly on the apps. She has set a six-minute daily time limit as a reminder not to dawdle on Instagram.

Having the app came in handy earlier this year at a Model UN conference where students from around the world exchanged contact details: "Nobody asked for phone numbers. You gave your Instagram," Kate says. She is resisting Snapchat, for fear she will find it addictive. She has asked a friend on student government to text her any important student government messages sent on Snapchat.

Sutton feels the weight of not having social media more than her older sister. The eighth grader describes herself as social but not popular.

"There's a lot of popular girls that do a bunch of TikTok dances. That's really what determines your popularity: TikTok," Sutton says.

Kids in her grade are "obsessed with TikTok" and posting videos of themselves that look to her like carbon copies. The girls look the same in short crop tops and jeans and sound the same, speaking with a TikTok dialect that includes a lot of "Hey, guys!" and uptalk, their voices rising in tone at the end of a thought.

She feels left out at times but doesn't feel the need to have social media, since one of her friends sends her the latest viral videos. She has seen firsthand the problems social media can cause in friend groups. "Two of my friends were having a fight. One thought the other one blocked her on Snapchat."

There's a long way to go before these larger questions are resolved, with these two families and across the nation. Schools are trying. Some are banning phones entirely to hold students' focus and ensure that socializing happens face-to-face. It might, educators say, also help cut back on teen depression and anxiety.

That's something Sutton can understand at age 13 as she works to navigate the years ahead. From what she has seen, social media has changed in the past few years. It used to be a way for people to connect, to message and to get to know each other.

"It's kind of just about bragging now," she says. "People post pictures of their trips to amazing places. Or looking beautiful. And it makes other people feel bad about themselves."

Will Biden's new border measures be enough to change voters' minds?

By JILL COLVIN, STEPHEN GROVES and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden tried to address a major liability for his reelection campaign by taking executive action to significantly restrict asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

But it's unclear whether his efforts will be enough to change the minds of voters who have increasingly voiced alarm over the record influx of migrants on his watch. Polls have found immigration and border security to be a top issue this election year and one that has been seized on by former President Donald Trump and his campaign.

Biden has shifted far to the right on immigration since his winning campaign four years ago, when he criticized Trump's immigration priorities and promised he would restore asylum protections. Many Democrats acknowledge Biden now faces a wholly different political reality, even as key parts of his base push him to repudiate border restrictions and compare his move to Trump's policies as president.

Sue-Ann DiVito, a 61-year-old realtor from the Philadelphia suburb of Jenkintown who became an immigration advocate during the Trump administration, says Republicans have been successful at spreading anti-immigrant messages in communities like hers, making some of her friends who are Democrat worry about the high number of people arriving in the U.S.

"I think that's why we see people who would normally support immigrants are now more quiet," DiVito said.

A challenge for Biden among Democrats and Latinos

The border has been a top issue for voters throughout the presidential campaign so far.

According to Gallup's monthly data, Americans named immigration as the top issue facing the country in February, March, and April, surpassing even the share who cited the economy despite persistently higher prices. Immigration came up less frequently as a top issue in Gallup's May poll as attention turned

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to Trump's criminal trial and as the number of illegal crossings ebbed. The issue was still tied with the government and the economy as what voters saw as the nation's most important problem.

Most Americans, 56%, say Biden's presidency has hurt the country on the issue of immigration and border security, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in April. That's far higher than the number — 37% — who said the same about Trump's time in office.

Even among Democrats, only about 3 in 10 say that Biden's presidency has done more to help the country on immigration and border security, while about the same share say it has hurt. Nearly 9 in 10 Republicans say Trump's presidency helped on this issue.

Hispanic adults are also more likely to think Trump's presidency helped the country with immigration and border security, compared to Biden's. About half of Hispanic adults in March said that Biden's presidency had done more to hurt the country on immigration and border security — a potentially alarming number as Trump's campaign works to chip away at Democrats' advantage with Hispanic voters.

"President Biden had no choice. He saw what was going on at the border. The numbers were higher than ever in terms of people trying to come here to seek asylum, and he knew he had to do something," said Maria Cardona, a Democratic strategist.

Frank Luntz, a longtime pollster who has previously worked for Republicans, said immigration seemed to be especially resonating earlier this spring across the political spectrum in a way it never had before.

He said he believes Biden is especially vulnerable with African American men under 40 who are worried about newcomers competing for jobs and Latinos who may resent those entering illegally.

"The reason why immigration matters so much to so many is that it is a living, breathing illustration of the failure of Washington to solve what everyone else in America sees as a crisis," he said Tuesday. "Biden's decision seems too little and too late. The public doesn't think he cares, and therefore thinks he doesn't get it."

Trump's record includes family separation

Trump has been campaigning on the border and immigration since he launched his 2016 bid with a speech in which he cast migrants from Mexico as criminals and rapists and vowed to build a southern border wall.

While in office, his administration separated immigrant parents and children to try to deter families from illegally crossing the border, a measure that drew widespread condemnation.

Border crossings hit record highs — albeit far below the marks they've reached under Biden — until falling sharply as the COVID-19 pandemic began.

As he runs to return to the White House again this year, Trump has escalated his already alarmist rhetoric, accusing Biden of orchestrating a "border bloodbath" and highlighting cases of women and children killed by people who entered the U.S. illegally. He's vowed to carry out the largest deportation operation in U.S. history if elected again.

His campaign quickly tried to cast Biden's effort as ineffective and one that would permit thousands of migrant crossings each week.

"This executive order from Biden can only be understood as a pro-invasion, pro-illegal migration executive order," said former Trump senior adviser Stephen Miller, who orchestrated some of Trump's most hard-line immigration policies, during a call with reporters organized by the campaign ahead of Biden's announcement.

Trump pollster John McLaughlin said the campaign believes the issue resonates especially among a group he calls "safety moms" — suburban, college-educated women who are worried about crime and the safety of their families.

"There's a sense of insecurity," he said. "It's not just the border communities, it's all over the country."

Trump has always turned to alarmist rhetoric on the border in election years. The difference now, according to Trump campaign aides and pollsters, is the reality voters are seeing day to day.

Crime overall is down and immigrants — even those who entered the country illegally — commit fewer crimes than those born in the U.S., according to studies of available data. But in Democratic-led cities like New York, local news reports were flooded earlier this year with images of migrants clashing with police and alarm over strained city budgets and resources to care for an influx of people coming from the border.

Conservative media and Trump's campaign also seized on high-profile incidents like the killing of nursing student Laken Riley. A Venezuelan man in the U.S. illegally has pleaded not guilty to charges in her death.

Splits in the Democratic base

Biden's announcement laid bare lasting divisions among Democrats, with some left-leaning lawmakers and immigration advocates that form a key part of his coalition criticizing Biden's actions as a return to the measures that marked Trump's tenure.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said she was "profoundly disappointed." During a news conference with immigration advocates outside the Capitol, Jayapal pushed the administration to take action that would provide relief for immigrants already in the U.S.

Jayapal, D-Wash., said Tuesday's order "means that we have people, desperate people seeking asylum who should be able to apply, and yet they will not be able to."

Sen. Alex Padilla, a California Democrat who has been involved in the Biden campaign's outreach to Latino communities, cast the order as a revival of "Trump's asylum ban" in a release Tuesday.

"You can build a wall as high as you want. You can make it as hard to seek asylum as you want. It's not going to sustainably reduce the number of people wanting to come to the United States," Padilla told reporters.

Still, other Democrats praised Biden's move as a necessary measure to respond to voters' concerns and gain control of a southern border that has at times been chaotic in recent years.

"The president is saying that, 'I hear you, I know this is an issue, and I'm taking action,'" said Rep. Tom Suozzi, who has helped form a group of House Democrats focused on border security.

Suozzi, who won a special election in New York this year with a campaign that called for tougher immigration enforcement measures, also called for action to help immigrants who are already in the country.

DiVito, the immigrant advocate in swing-state Pennsylvania, tried to square the difference from a Democratic perspective.

"There is a choice this November and whatever negative policy that Biden is implementing, Trump is going to be a million things worse," she said. "And we all know this."

Hunter Biden's ex-wife, other family members expected to take the stand in his federal gun trial

By CLAUDIA LAUER, RANDALL CHASE, COLLEEN LONG and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Federal prosecutors in Hunter Biden's gun trial have spent hours showing jurors evidence of his drug problem, seeking to reveal through his own words and writing the depth of his addiction in order to show it was still going on when he bought a firearm and, they say, lied on a form to purchase it.

Testimony was expected to continue Wednesday. Hunter Biden's ex-wife Kathleen Buhle is expected to be among the witnesses; she was married to President Joe Biden's son for roughly 20 years. They have three children, divorcing in 2016 after his infidelity and drug abuse became too much to overcome, according to her memoir entitled, "If We Break" about the dissolution of their marriage.

She's one of several Biden family and friends expected to testify in a trial that has quickly become a highly personal and detailed tour of Hunter Biden's mistakes and drug usage as the 2024 presidential election looms and allies worry about the toll it will take on the president, who is deeply concerned about the health and sustained sobriety of his only living son. Prosecutors argue the testimony is necessary to show Hunter Biden's state of mind when he bought the gun.

He has been charged with three felonies stemming from the purchase of a gun in October 2018, 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.

"No one is allowed to lie on a federal form like that, even Hunter Biden," prosecutor Derek Hines told jurors on Tuesday. "He crossed the line when he chose to buy a gun and lied about a federal background

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check ... the defendant's choice to buy a gun is why we are here."

"When the defendant filled out that form, he knew he was a drug addict," and prosecutors don't have to prove he was using the day he purchased the firearm, Hines said.

First lady Jill Biden and her daughter Ashley sat in the courtroom for much of Tuesday. Hunter Biden's attorney argued that his client did not believe he was in the throes of addiction when he stated in the paperwork that he did not have a drug problem. In the short time that he had the gun, he did nothing with it, and the weapon was never even loaded, attorney Abbe Lowell said in his opening statement.

"You will see that he is not guilty," Lowell said.

Lowell said the form asks whether you "are" a drug user. "It does not say 'have you ever been,'" and he suggested the president's son did not think of himself as someone with a drug problem when he purchased the gun.

His state of mind should be considered at the time of the purchase, not later on, when, after he got sober, he wrote a memoir "Beautiful Things," about some of his darkest moments. The jury heard lengthy audio excerpts from the book that traces his descent following the death of his brother in 2015 from cancer.

The trial comes after a plea deal with prosecutors fell apart that would have resolved the gun case and a separate tax case and avoided the spectacle of a trial. Hunter Biden has since pleaded not guilty and has said he's being unfairly targeted by the Justice Department, after Republicans slammed the now-defunct plea deal as a sweetheart deal for the Democratic president's son.

The 12-person panel heard opening statements Tuesday, and testimony from an FBI agent who read aloud some of his personal messages including some that came from a laptop he left at a Delaware repair shop and never retrieved. In 2020, the contents made their way to Republicans and were publicly leaked, revealing some highly personal messages about his work and his life. He has since sued over the leaked information.

In one exchange with Beau's widow Hallie on the day after he bought the gun, she wrote: "I called you 500 times in past 24 hours." Hunter replied less than a minute later, informing her that he was "sleeping on a car smoking crack on 4th street and Rodney."

"There's my truth," he added in a follow-up text.

But during cross-examination, the FBI agent testified that Hunter Biden sent fewer messages about seeking drugs in October 2018, around the time when he purchased the gun, than in February 2019, a later period in which Lowell described his client as struggling significantly with addiction.

Lowell also called into question the receipts for the rehab facility, asking whether the agent knew whether he had been treated for drugs or alcohol. She said she could not.

His sister Ashley Biden, watching from the courtroom, dabbed at her eyes with a tissue and eventually left.

Attorneys said jurors would hear testimony from the president's brother James Biden, who is close with Hunter and helped his nephew through rehab stints in the past. They will also hear how Hallie Biden became addicted to crack during a brief relationship with Hunter.

Hallie took the gun from Hunter and tossed it into the garbage at a nearby market, afraid of what he might do with it. The weapon was later found by someone collecting cans and eventually turned over to police.

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.

The trial is unfolding shortly 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.

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

In France, D-Day evokes both the joys of liberation and the pain of Normandy's 20,000 civilian dead

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

CARENTAN-LES-MARAIS, France (AP) — Shortly after D-Day in 1944, the American soldiers heading out to more fighting against Adolf Hitler's forces couldn't help but notice the hungry French boy by the side of the road, hoping for handouts.

One by one, the men fished fragrant, brightly-colored spheres from their pockets and deposited them in Yves Marchais' hands. The 6-year-old boy had never seen the strange fruits before, growing up in Nazi-occupied France, where food was rationed and terror was everywhere.

Thrilled with his bounty, the young Marchais counted them all — 35 — and dashed home for his first taste of oranges.

But also seared into survivors' memories in Normandy are massive Allied bombing raids that pulverized towns, villages and the cities of Caen, Rouen and Le Havre, burying victims and turning skies fire-red.

The 80th anniversary this week of the June 6, 1944, Allied invasion on D-Day that punched through Hitler's western defenses and helped precipitate Nazi Germany's surrender 11 months later brings mixed emotions for French survivors of the Battle of Normandy. They remain eternally grateful for their liberation but cannot forget its steep cost in French lives.

Marchais remembers his family's house in Carentan, Normandy, shaking during bombardments that sounded "like thunder" and how his mother stunned him by gulping down a bottle of strong Normandy cider when they were sheltering in their basement, declaring as she finished it: "That's another one that the Germans won't drink!"

"The Americans, for us, were gods," Marchais, now 86, recalled. "Whatever they do in the world, they will always be gods to me."

RUINED NORMANDY TOWNS COUNT THEIR DEAD

Some 20,000 Normandy civilians were killed in the invasion and as Allied forces fought their way inland, sometimes field-by-field through the leafy Normandy countryside that helped conceal German defenders. Only in late August of 1944 did they reach Paris.

Allied casualties in the Normandy campaign were also appalling, with 73,000 troops killed and 153,000 wounded.

Allied bombing was aimed at stopping Hitler from sending reinforcements and at prying his troops out of the "Atlantic Wall" of coastal defenses and other strongpoints that German occupation forces had built with forced labor.

The list of Normandy towns left ruined and counting their dead grew with the Allied advances: Argentan, Aunay-sur-Odon, Condé-sur-Noireau, Coutances, Falaise, Flers, Lisieux, Vimoutiers, Vire and others. Leaflets scattered by Allied planes urged civilians to "LEAVE IMMEDIATELY! YOU DON'T HAVE A MINUTE TO LOSE!" but often missed their targets.

Some Normans were furious. Writing before being liberated, a woman in the bombarded port city of Cherbourg described Allied pilots as "bandits and assassins" in a June 4, 1944, letter to her husband who was being held prisoner in Germany.

"My dear Henri, it's shameful to massacre the civilian population as the supposed Allies are doing," reads the letter, which historians Michel Boivin and Bernard Garnier published in their 1994 study of civilian victims in Normandy's Manche region.

"We are in danger everywhere."

NORMAN LOSSES 'SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET'

French President Emmanuel Macron will pay homage to civilian victims in commemorations Wednesday in Saint-Lo, a Normandy town that became emblematic of losses from Allied bombing when it was razed on June 6 and 7, 1944. The death toll was 352, according to Boivin and Garnier's study. Playwright Samuel Beckett dubbed Saint-Lo "The Capital of the Ruins" after working there with the Irish Red Cross.

Those killed in Saint-Lo included Marguerite Lecarpentier's older brother, Henri. She was 6 at the time.

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Henri was 19 and he'd been helping another man pull a teenage girl out from under debris when the town was bombarded again. All three were killed. Marguerite's father later identified her brother's body "because of his shoes, which were new," she said.

When her family subsequently fled Saint-Lo, they crossed through what was left of the town.

"It was terrible because there was rubble everywhere," Lecarpentier recalled. Her mother waved a white handkerchief as they walked, "because the planes were constantly flying overhead" and "so we'd be recognized as civilians."

Still, Lecarpentier speaks without rancor of Allied bombing. "It was the price to pay," she said.

"It can't have been easy," she added. "When one thinks that they landed on June 6 and that Saint-Lo was only liberated on July 18 and they lost enormous numbers of soldiers."

University of Caen historian Françoise Passera, co-author of "The Normans in the War: The Time of Trials, 1939-1945," says Normandy's civilian casualties were overshadowed for decades by the exploits of Allied soldiers in combat and their sacrifices.

Although towns held remembrances locally, she noted that it wasn't until 2014 that a French president — Macron's predecessor, François Hollande — paid national homage to Normandy's civilian dead.

Until then, because France had been bombed by its liberators, "this was not a subject that could be raised very easily by French authorities," Passera said.

"Civilian victims were swept under the carpet somewhat to not offend the Americans," she said. "And to not offend the British."

But for Normans, D-Day and its aftermath were "a bit of a confusion of feelings," she said. "We cried with joy because we were freed, but we also cried because the dead were all around us."

A year of elections in democracies around the world is revealing deep dissatisfaction among voters

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI, ISABEL DeBRE and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

In a community center in East London, about 20 men gathered for their regular lunch meeting, sipping coffee and tea from mismatched mugs and engaging in an increasingly popular pastime in the world's democracies: Complaining about their government.

They feel estranged from the country's leadership — its wealthy prime minister and their members of parliament.

"It feels like you are second-class people. Our MPs don't represent us people. Political leaders don't understand what we go through," said Barrie Stradling, 65. "Do they listen to people? I don't think they do."

In a coffee shop in Jakarta, Ni Wayan Suryatini, 46, bemoaned the results of the recent election, in which the son of Indonesia's former president ascended to the country's vice presidency and the opposition parties seemed to do little to stop him.

"It is difficult to trust them since they only want to reach their goals. As long as they achieve their goals, they will forget everything else," Suryatini said of politicians.

And inside her cheerfully cluttered craft shop in Greeley, Colorado, Sally Otto, 58, contemplated with dread the upcoming U.S. presidential election between President Joe Biden and the man he defeated in 2020, former President Donald Trump: "I feel like we're back where we were, with the same two poor choices," Otto said.

As half the world's population votes in elections this year, voters are in a foul mood. From South Korea to Argentina, incumbents have been ousted in election after election. In Latin America alone, leaders and their parties had lost 20 elections in a row until this past weekend's presidential election in Mexico, according to a tally by Steven Levitsky, a Harvard professor of government.

The dynamic is likely to repeat itself as the European Union launches its legislative elections this week, where conservative populist parties are expected to register gains. EU parliamentary elections are usually an opportunity for voters in individual countries to vent their frustrations because the candidates they elect will have power in Brussels rather than their own national capitals.

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"In many ways we've never had it so good, objectively speaking, and yet people are so unsatisfied," said Matthias Matthijs, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C.

The reasons for the dissatisfaction are many, from social media's ability to magnify problems to the painful recovery from the coronavirus pandemic to the backlash toward economic and cultural changes sparked by globalization.

Though in places like Europe the populist right has notched several gains, there is little ideological consistency globally to the unhappiness. In a recent Pew poll across 24 democracies, a median of 74% of respondents said they didn't think politicians cared what people like them think, and 42% said no political party represented their viewpoint.

"It's about economics and culture, but it's also about the functioning of politics itself," said Richard Wike, managing director of Pew's Global Attitudes Research. "It can lead to a situation where politics is seen as a zero-sum game. People see more of an existential threat from the other side, and that makes people unhappy about democracy."

Experts say there is one notable exception to the trend of global anger with elected leaders — places where the leaders are anti-establishment, populist strongmen.

"Antisystem outsider, populist figures are winning more than in the past," Levitsky said. "Whether they constitute any movement is unclear to me."

In Mexico, leftist President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is termed out but broke the streak of losses for Latin American leaders' parties as his hand-picked successor, Claudia Sheinbaum, won Sunday's presidential election. In Argentina, newly elected president Javier Milei, a self-described "anarcho-capitalist" dubbed "the madman" by admirers, remains popular despite the country's crippling economic problems that have persisted following his austerity and deregulation reforms.

"I was never interested in politics because nothing ever changed," said Sebastian Sproviero, a 37-year-old engineer at a Buenos Aires concert that featured Milei belting out rock anthems. "Now it has."

In India, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticized for eroding the world's most populous democracy, the Pew poll found the country had the highest support among all surveyed countries for a more authoritarian form of government, with two-thirds of respondents there backing a strong leader system.

Still, even some of the more authoritarian governments such as Modi's have had to deal with dissatisfaction with the status quo. Modi appears to have won his third term as India's prime minister in national elections that wrapped up Tuesday, but his conservative Hindu nationalist party had an underwhelming showing and will likely need to join a coalition to form a government.

The global anti-incumbent mood, coupled with the success of anti-establishment populists, comes amid warning signs for democracy. Pew found democracy's appeal slipping even as it remained the preferred system of government around the world. Freedom House, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that promotes democracy, said its "Freedom Index" measuring democratic health globally has declined for 18 straight years.

Adrian Shahbaz, a vice president at Freedom House, attributed the erosion of support to a series of crises since the turn of the century, including the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks in the U.S., the 2008-09 global recession and the coronavirus pandemic. Adding to the stress, he said, is the increasing focus on identity issues such as transgender policies and immigration in democratic politics, especially in Europe and the U.S.

"The key cleavages in democracies tend to be around identity issues rather than economic ones," Shahbaz said. "That in itself can be very risky because democracy depends on a civil identity that goes beyond tribal identifications."

In a West Bank refugee camp, Israel's raids fuel the militancy it tries to stamp out

By JACK JEFFERY and JALAL BWAITEL Associated Press

NUR SHAMS REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — An Israeli army raid in April set off a near three-day gunbattle with Palestinian militants. By the time it was over, homes had been blasted to rubble and many residents had fled.

The raid wasn't in Gaza, where Israel is at war with Hamas, but more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) away in the Nur Shams refugee camp in the West Bank — a territory that has been under Israeli military rule for over a half-century.

The persistence of Palestinian militancy in the West Bank, and its surge since the war in Gaza began, shows the limits of Israel's military might as the decades-old conflict grinds on with little prospect of a political settlement.

Israeli leaders portray the southern Gaza city of Rafah as Hamas' last bastion, suggesting that a long-elusive victory in the war ignited by the militants' Oct. 7 attack may be at hand. They have vowed to maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.

In the West Bank, that approach has been met with waves of armed struggle over the years. The battered streets of Nur Shams are testament to a low-level but stubborn insurgency and offer a vivid illustration of what Gaza might be like after the war.

A THREE-DAY RAID

Nur Shams, in the northern West Bank, is one of several urban refugee camps that date back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes in what became the new state.

The impoverished camps, scattered across the Middle East, have long been bastions for Palestinian militants. Residents of Nur Shams are used to army raids but say the Apr. 18 operation was unlike anything they had ever seen.

Gunfire and airstrikes rang out late that evening. Over the following three days, Israeli troops advanced deep into the camp, raiding homes, demolishing buildings and digging up roads and sewage pipes with armored bulldozers.

"You feel that these forces come here to train in the camp before they go to Gaza the next day," said Qasim Nimr, a prisoner rights advocate who sheltered in his home during the raid. His nephew and his neighbor were among 14 Palestinians killed in the raid, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Nehayah al-Jundi, a community activist who runs a center for disabled children, said over 60 homes in the camp have been destroyed by Israeli forces since Oct. 7, as well as one of the few recreational centers in the deprived area. She said 72 families have had to relocate.

The Israeli army said in a statement the raid targeted militants. Armed groups active in the camp said 10 of the slain Palestinian men were militants.

A military official, who was not authorized to brief media and so spoke on condition of anonymity, said the demolition of homes and roads was to root out land mines and underground weapons caches.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says over 500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the start of the latest Israel-Hamas war. Most have been killed during Israeli raids and violent protests, though the dead also include innocent bystanders and Palestinians killed in attacks by Jewish settlers.

The military official said the army has stepped up operations because of a rise in attacks on Israelis, adding that it can operate with a freer hand now that it no longer has to worry as much about retaliatory strikes from Hamas in Gaza.

A HOMETOWN HERO

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a militant group operating in Nur Shams, initially announced that its leader in the camp, known as Abu Shujaa, had been killed.

But then the wiry-framed commander made a surprise appearance at the funeral for the other militants.

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In a video published on social media, he is seen being hoisted into the air by a cheering crowd as nearby militants offload rounds of celebratory gunfire.

Leading militants are reticent to appear in public, but signs of their presence are everywhere.

A large black Islamic Jihad flag billows at the entrance to the camp, and the streets are lined with posters depicting slain fighters seen as martyrs to the Palestinian struggle. Young men and also children carrying walkie-talkies patrol the alleys beneath black plastic canopies hung to conceal their movements from Israeli aircraft.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with Gaza and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three territories for a future state. The last serious peace talks broke down more than 15 years ago, and Israel's government is opposed to a Palestinian state, partly because it fears that Hamas would end up ruling it.

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority administers parts of the occupied West Bank, including the camps. It cooperates with Israel on security matters but rarely confronts the militants directly, which would be seen by many Palestinians as collaborating with the occupation. Al-Jundi said Palestinian security forces have not operated in the camp since the war in Gaza began in October.

Israel has ruled out any role for the Palestinian Authority in postwar Gaza, accusing it of supporting militancy, even as the authority has become deeply unpopular among Palestinians for the security assistance it has provided to Israel.

Any local Palestinians whom Israel tries to recruit to govern Gaza are likely to face a similar dilemma.

'THE CHILDREN ARE OBSESSED'

The refugee camps have always been among the poorest Palestinian communities, and in the West Bank their plight has worsened since the start of the war.

Israel has stopped transferring tax revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and suspended permits that had allowed tens of thousands of Palestinians to work in Israel. The World Bank estimates some 292,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have lost their jobs since the war began.

That has potentially created an army of recruits for militant groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are funded by Iran and other patrons, and pay their fighters.

Palestinians say the appeal goes beyond financial gain and is rooted in longstanding grievances: the generational dispossession of the refugees, decades of seemingly open-ended military rule, the growth of Jewish settlements and diminishing hopes for an independent state.

Samer Jaber, the father of Abu Shujaa, the Islamic Jihad commander, says his son has become a local celebrity, with children gathering around him whenever he makes a rare public appearance.

"The children are obsessed," he said.

One of those killed in the raid was Jihad Jaber, Abu Shujaa's 15-year-old cousin. Jihad's father, Niyaz, said he tried to steer his son away from the militants, building him an apartment in the nearby city of Tulkarem and even buying him a BMW.

It was no use, said Niyaz, who had made money years earlier working in construction in Israel. "He rejected everything."

He said Jihad Jaber was close to his cousin and incensed by repeated violent raids on the camp. Soon after the April raid began, Jihad handed his father a will and said he was going to join a group of young men fighting Israeli troops, Niyaz said.

Hours later, he was shot dead in an alley near his uncle's home.

"He was exactly 15 years old," Niyaz said. "It was his birthday."

Famine is possibly underway in northern Gaza despite recent aid efforts, a new report warns

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

JERUSALEM, Israel (AP) — An independent group of experts warned Tuesday that it's possible that famine is underway in northern Gaza but that the war between Israel and Hamas and restrictions on humanitarian access have impeded the data collection to prove it.

"It is possible, if not likely," the group known as the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, said about famine in Gaza.

Concerns about deadly hunger have been high in recent months and spiked after the head of the World Food Program last month said northern Gaza had entered "full-blown famine" after nearly seven months of war. Experts at the U.N. agency later said Cindy McCain was expressing a personal opinion.

An area is considered to be in famine when three things occur: 20% of households have an extreme lack of food, or are essentially starving; at least 30% of the children suffer from acute malnutrition or wasting, meaning they're too thin for their height; and two adults or four children per every 10,000 people are dying daily of hunger and its complications.

That's according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a collection of U.N. agencies, governments and other bodies that in March warned famine was imminent in northern Gaza.

Tuesday's report by FEWS NET is the first technical assessment by an international organization saying that famine is possibly occurring in northern Gaza.

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development, FEWS NET is an internationally recognized authority on famine that provides evidence-based and timely early warning information for food insecurity. It also helps inform decisions on humanitarian responses in some of the world's most food insecure countries.

But for a formal declaration of famine, the data must be there.

Such a declaration could be used as evidence at the International Criminal Court as well as at the International Court of Justice, where Israel faces allegations of genocide.

The report cautioned that data collection would likely be impeded as long as the war goes on. It said people — including children — are dying of hunger-related causes across the territory and that those conditions will likely persist until at least July, if there isn't a fundamental change in how food aid is distributed.

The report also cautioned that efforts to increase aid into Gaza are insufficient, and urged Israel's government to act urgently.

The U.N. and international aid agencies for months have said not enough food or other humanitarian supplies are entering Gaza, and Israel faces mounting pressure from top ally the U.S. and others to let in more aid.

Israel has repeatedly denied there is famine underway in Gaza and rejected allegations it has used hunger as a weapon in its war against the militant Hamas group. It has opened a number of new crossings into Gaza in recent months, saying they helped increase the flow of aid.

But Israel has also been expanding its offensive in Gaza's southern city of Rafah, once the main hub of humanitarian aid operations. That invasion has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians facing hunger.

The Israeli military, which is responsible for the crossings into Gaza, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the FEWS NET report.

Record highs expected to fall as Southwest US bakes in first heat wave of season earlier than usual

By SCOTT SONNER and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The first heat wave of the season has arrived earlier than usual across much of the U.S. Southwest, with dangerously hot conditions that produced triple-digit temperatures on Tuesday.

Forecasters say temperatures are likely to top 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) in some areas by Thursday.

By Wednesday afternoon, much of an area stretching from southeast California to central Arizona will see “easily their hottest” weather since last September, and record daily highs will be in jeopardy from Las Vegas to Phoenix, the National Weather Service said.

Excessive heat warnings were issued for Wednesday morning through Friday evening for parts of southeast California, southern Nevada and Arizona.

“Temperatures well above average for the time of year — some spots as much as 10 to 20 degrees above average,” said Marc Chenard, a weather service meteorologist in College Park, Maryland. He said unseasonably hot weather was expected to spread northward and make its way into parts of the Pacific Northwest by the end of the week.

Tuesday’s highs reached 106 F (41.1 C) in Bullhead City, Arizona, 104 F (40 C) in Phoenix and 103 F (39.4 C) in Las Vegas. Highs in California included 112 F (44.4) at Furnace Creek in Death Valley, 108 F (42.2 C) in Needles and 104 F (40 C) in Palm Springs

In Las Vegas, the mercury was forecast to hit at least 108 F (42.2 C) on Wednesday and could then go even higher, according to the weather service.

“A new record high looks almost certain for Las Vegas on Thursday with an 80% chance of reaching 112 degrees (44.4 C). This would tie the earliest date for reaching 110 degrees (43.3 C) which previously occurred June 6, 2010,” the weather service said Tuesday.

Forecast highs for Thursday included 120 F (48.8 C) at Furnace Creek in Death Valley and 113 F (45 C) in Phoenix, the latter of which would break a record high for the date of 111 F (43.8 C), set in 2016.

The heat prompted the U.S. Border Patrol to issue a warning on Monday after it confirmed that four migrants died last weekend from heat-related causes while attempting to cross into the country in south-east New Mexico, near El Paso, Texas.

Anthony Good, the agency’s El Paso sector chief, urged migrants not to risk the extreme heat.

“The desert environment is extremely unforgiving, especially during the summer months,” Good said. “We urge anyone considering crossing illegally to understand the severe risks involved.”

Fire crews were on high alert especially in Arizona, where fire restrictions went into effect before Memorial Day in some areas and will be ordered by Thursday across much of the western and south-central parts of the state, authorities said.

Fire forecasters at the Southwest Coordination Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, said typically it does not get this hot until mid- or late June.

“It does seem like Mother Nature is turning up the heat on us a little sooner than usual,” said Tiffany Davila, a spokesperson for the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management.

“We can’t back down from a fire just because it’s pushing 113 degrees outside. But we do keep a close eye on everybody in the field. Make sure they are keeping hydrated and taking more breaks than they normally would,” she said.

Last summer, Phoenix saw a record 31 straight days of at least 110 degrees F (43.3 C), stretching from the last day of June through the entire month of July. At least 400 of the year’s 645 heat-related deaths were during that period.

Phoenix, Maricopa County and Arizona state officials are striving to better protect people from ever higher temperatures. Those most in danger from the heat are people outdoors, especially homeless people in downtown areas who often lack sufficient access to things like water, shade and air conditioning.

This year, governments are setting aside more money to keep cooling stations open longer and on

weekends, including two that will stay open overnight.

Mayor John Giles of the city of Mesa, just east of Phoenix, said officials are “committed to ensuring that those most vulnerable to heat exposure have access to essential life-saving services, including hydration and cooling stations and daytime respite centers.”

House passes proposal sanctioning top war-crimes court after it sought Netanyahu arrest warrant

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House passed legislation Tuesday that would sanction the International Criminal Court for requesting arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials.

The 247-155 vote amounts to Congress’ first legislative rebuke of the war crimes court since its stunning decision last month to seek arrest warrants for the leaders of Israel and Hamas. The move was widely denounced in Washington, creating a rare moment of unity on Israel even as partisan divisions over the war with Hamas intensified.

While the House bill was expected to pass Tuesday, it managed to attract only modest Democratic support, despite an outpouring of outrage at the court’s decision, dulling its chances in the Senate. The White House opposes the legislation, calling it overreach.

Both the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee acknowledged the bill in question is unlikely to become law and left the door open to further negotiation with the White House. They said it would be better for Congress to be united against the Hague-based court.

“We’re always strongest, particularly on this committee, when we speak with one voice as one nation, in this case to the ICC and to the judges,” GOP Rep. Mike McCaul, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said during House debate. “A partisan messaging bill was not my intention here but that is where we are.”

State Department spokesperson Matt Miller reiterated the administration’s opposition to the sanctions bill.

“We have made clear that while we oppose the decision taken by the prosecutor of the ICC, we don’t think it is appropriate, especially while there are ongoing investigations inside Israel looking at somebody’s very same questions, and we were willing to work with Congress on what a response might look like but we don’t support sanctions,” Miller said.

The House bill would apply sweeping economic sanctions and visa restrictions to individuals and judges associated with the ICC, including their family members. Democrats labeled the approach as “overly broad,” warning it could ensnare Americans and U.S. companies that do important work with the court.

“This bill would have a chilling effect on the ICC as an institution which could hamper the court’s efforts to prosecute the numerous atrocities that have been perpetrated in many places around the world, from Ukraine to Uganda,” said Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The legislation reprimanding the ICC was just the latest show of support from House Republicans for Israel since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that ignited the war. Republicans have held several votes related to Israel in recent months, highlighting divisions among Democrats over support for the U.S. ally.

Congressional leaders have invited Netanyahu to address a joint meeting of Congress this summer, which is likely to further inflame tensions over Israel’s handling of the war. Many Democrats are expected to boycott the speech.

Both the ICC and the United Nations’ highest court, the International Court of Justice, have begun to investigate allegations that both Israel and Hamas have committed genocide during the seven-month war.

Last month, ICC’s prosecutor, Karim Khan, accused Netanyahu, his defense minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders — Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders condemned the ICC’s move as disgraceful and antisemitic. President Joe Biden and members of Congress also lambasted the prosecutor and supported Israel’s right to defend itself.

Israel is not a member of the court, so even if the arrest warrants are issued, Netanyahu and Gallant do not face any immediate risk of prosecution. But the threat of arrest could make it difficult for Israeli leaders to travel abroad.

"Failing to act here in the Congress would make us complicit with the ICC's illegitimate actions and we must not stay silent," McCaul said. "We must stand with our allies."

Ippei Mizuhara spoke for baseball star Shohei Ohtani. He also stole nearly \$17M from him

By STEFANIE DAZIO and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — As an interpreter, Ippei Mizuhara was supposed to bridge the gap between baseball star Shohei Ohtani and his English-speaking teammates and fans as the duo traveled from Southern California to ballparks across the U.S.

Instead, Mizuhara exploited the Japanese-English language barrier to isolate Ohtani and profit, in the truest sense, from his proximity to the two-way player's power. On Tuesday, the ex-interpreter pleaded guilty in federal court in Santa Ana, California, to bank and tax fraud for stealing nearly \$17 million from the unsuspecting athlete's Arizona bank account.

He spent the money to cover his growing gambling bets and debts with an illegal bookmaker, plus \$325,000 worth of baseball cards and, to the shock of prosecutors, his own medical bills.

"In fact, after we announced the charges, we only discovered more fraud in this case," said Martin Estrada, U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California. "We discovered Mr. Mizuhara had victimized Mr. Ohtani to the extent that he wouldn't even pay for dental. He stole money from Mr. Ohtani to pay for his own dental expenses."

The case involved arguably the world's most famous baseball player and the sport's most valuable voice. Despite the international media frenzy, Tuesday's 45-minute proceeding was fairly mundane: Ohtani was known as "Victim A" inside the courtroom and the ex-interpreter only spoke to acknowledge his guilt.

"I worked for Victim A and had access to his bank account and had fallen into major gambling debt," Mizuhara told the judge. "I went ahead and wired money ... with his bank account."

He and his attorney declined to comment after the hearing.

Inside baseball, Mizuhara stood by Ohtani's side for many of the Japanese sensation's career highlights, from serving as his catcher during the Home Run Derby at the 2021 All-Star Game, to being there for his two American League MVP wins and his record-shattering \$700 million, 10-year deal with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Off the field, Mizuhara became Ohtani's friend and confidant. He famously resigned from the Los Angeles Angels during the 2021 MLB lockout so he could keep speaking to Ohtani — he was rehired after a deal was struck — and their wives reportedly socialized.

But Mizuhara gambled it all away, betting tens of millions of dollars that weren't his to wager on international soccer, the NBA, the NFL and college football — though prosecutors said he never bet on baseball.

Estrada, the U.S. attorney, said Ohtani was particularly vulnerable, despite his fame.

"Mr. Ohtani is an immigrant who came to this country, is not familiar with the ways of this country and therefore was easily prey to someone who was more familiar with our financial systems," Estrada said during a news conference in downtown Los Angeles after the hearing.

Federal prosecutors said Mizuhara's scheme began in 2021 when he switched the bank account's contact information from Ohtani's to his own, meaning any communication from the financial institution would be sent directly to him without Ohtani knowing.

Mizuhara capitalized on the language barrier to keep Ohtani's financial advisers from understanding their client, and at times, Mizuhara even impersonated the player to the bank to prolong the fraud.

The ploy allowed Mizuhara to plunder just under \$17 million from the account — which he'd helped Ohtani set up in Phoenix in 2018 to deposit his paychecks — from 2021 until earlier this year.

Mizuhara's winning wagers totaled over \$142 million, which he deposited in his own bank account and

not Ohtani's. But his losing bets were around \$183 million, a net loss of nearly \$41 million.

Tuesday's guilty plea was anticipated after Mizuhara agreed to a deal with the U.S. Attorney's Office last month. He pleaded guilty to one count of bank fraud, which carries up to 30 years in federal prison, and one count of subscribing to a false tax return, which could add a maximum of three years of incarceration.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for October. Mizuhara also could be on the hook for restitution to Ohtani that could total nearly \$17 million, as well as more than \$1 million to the IRS. And as a legal permanent resident who has a green card, he might be deported to Japan.

The investigation into Mizuhara stemmed from a broader probe of illegal sports bookmaking organizations in Southern California and the laundering of proceeds through casinos in Las Vegas. Overall, authorities have netted a dozen defendants.

There was no evidence Ohtani was involved in or aware of Mizuhara's gambling, and the player cooperated with investigators. He expressed relief after Tuesday's hearing and, in a statement, thanked his team, family and the Dodgers organization "who showed endless support throughout this process."

"It's time to close this chapter, move on and continue to focus on playing and winning ballgames," he said.

The Los Angeles Times and ESPN broke the news of the prosecution in late March, prompting the Dodgers to fire the interpreter and MLB to open its own investigation.

While prosecutors said Mizuhara never bet on baseball, MLB rules prohibit players and team employees from wagering with illegal or offshore bookmakers.

MLB also bans betting on baseball, even legally. On Tuesday — hours before Mizuhara's hearing — the organization banned San Diego Padres infielder Tucupita Marcano from baseball for life in the wake of another gambling scandal.

MLB said Marcano placed 387 baseball bets totaling more than \$150,000 in October 2022 and from last July through November with a legal sportsbook. He became the first active player in a century banned for life because of gambling. Four others were suspended Tuesday.

New study finds Earth warming at record rate, but no evidence of climate change accelerating

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The rate Earth is warming hit an all-time high in 2023 with 92% of last year's surprising record-shattering heat caused by humans, top scientists calculated.

The group of 57 scientists from around the world used United Nations-approved methods to examine what's behind last year's deadly burst of heat. They said even with a faster warming rate they don't see evidence of significant acceleration in human-caused climate change beyond increased fossil fuel burning.

Last year's record temperatures were so unusual that scientists have been debating what's behind the big jump and whether climate change is accelerating or if other factors are in play.

"If you look at this world accelerating or going through a big tipping point, things aren't doing that," study lead author Piers Forster, a Leeds University climate scientist, said. "Things are increasing in temperature and getting worse in sort of exactly the way we predicted."

It's pretty much explained by the buildup of carbon dioxide from rising fossil fuel use, he and a co-author said.

Last year the rate of warming hit 0.26 degrees Celsius (0.47 degrees Fahrenheit) per decade — up from 0.25 degrees Celsius (0.45 degrees Fahrenheit) the year before. That's not a significant difference, though it does make this year's rate the highest ever, Forster said.

Still, outside scientists said this report highlights an ever more alarming situation.

"Choosing to act on climate has become a political talking point but this report should be a reminder to people that in fact it is fundamentally a choice to save human lives," said University of Wisconsin climate scientist Andrea Dutton, who wasn't part of the international study team. "To me, that is something worth fighting for."

The team of authors — formed to provide annual scientific updates between the every seven- to eight-

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year major U.N. scientific assessments — determined last year was 1.43 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1850 to 1900 average with 1.31 degrees of that coming from human activity. The other 8% of the warming is due mostly to El Nino, the natural and temporary warming of the central Pacific that changes weather worldwide and also a freak warming along the Atlantic and just other weather randomness.

On a larger 10-year time frame, which scientists prefer to single years, the world has warmed about 1.19 degrees Celsius (2.14 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, the report in the journal Earth System Science Data found.

The report also said that as the world keeps using coal, oil and natural gas, Earth is likely to reach the point in 4.5 years that it can no longer avoid crossing the internationally accepted threshold for warming: 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

That fits with earlier studies projecting Earth being committed or stuck to at least 1.5 degrees by early 2029 if emission trajectories don't change. The actual hitting of 1.5 degrees could be years later, but it would be inevitable if all that carbon is used, Forster said.

It's not the end of the world or humanity if temperatures blow past the 1.5 limit, but it will be quite bad, scientists said. Past U.N. studies show massive changes to Earth's ecosystem are more likely to kick in between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius of warming, including eventual loss of the planet's coral reefs, Arctic sea ice, species of plants and animals — along with nastier extreme weather events that kill people.

Last year's temperature rise was more than just a little jump. It was especially unusual in September, said study co-author Sonia Seneviratne, head of land-climate dynamics at ETH Zurich, a Swiss university.

The year was within the range of what was predicted, albeit it was at the upper edge of the range, Seneviratne said.

"Acceleration if it were to happen would be even worse, like hitting a global tipping point, it would be probably the worst scenario," Seneviratne said. "But what is happening is already extremely bad and it is having major impacts already now. We are in the middle of a crisis."

University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck and Berkeley Earth climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, neither of whom were part of the study, said they still see acceleration. Hausfather pointed out the rate of warming is considerably higher than 0.18 degrees Celsius (0.32 Fahrenheit) per decade of warming that it was between 1970 and 2010.

Scientists had theorized a few explanations for the massive jump in September, which Hausfather called "gobsmacking." Wednesday's report didn't find enough warming from other potential causes. The report said the reduction of sulfur pollution from shipping — which had been providing some cooling to the atmosphere — was overwhelmed last year by carbon particles put in the air from Canadian wildfires.

The report also said an undersea volcano that injected massive amounts of heat-trapping water vapor into the atmosphere also spewed cooling particles with both forces pretty much canceling each other out.

Texas Tech climate scientist and chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy Katharine Hayhoe said "the future is in our hands. It's us — not physics, but humans — who will determine how quickly the world warms and by how much."

After publishing an article critical of Israel, Columbia Law Review's website is shut down by board

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Student editors at the Columbia Law Review say they were pressured by the journal's board of directors to halt publication of an academic article written by a Palestinian human rights lawyer that accuses Israel of committing genocide in Gaza and upholding an apartheid regime.

When the editors refused the request and published the piece Monday morning, the board — made up of faculty and alumni from Columbia University's law school — shut down the law review's website entirely. It remained offline Tuesday evening, a static homepage informing visitors the domain "is under maintenance."

The episode at one of the country's oldest and most prestigious legal journals marks the latest flash-

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point in an ongoing debate about academic speech that has deeply divided students, staff and college administrators since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Several editors at the Columbia Law Review described the board's intervention as an unprecedented breach of editorial independence at the periodical, which is run by students at Columbia Law School. The board of directors oversees the nonprofit's finances but has historically played no role in selecting pieces.

In a letter sent to student editors Tuesday and shared with The Associated Press, the board of directors said it was concerned that the article, titled "Nakba as a Legal Concept," had not gone through the "usual processes of review or selection for articles at the Law Review, and in particular that a number of student editors had been unaware of its existence."

"In order to preserve the status quo and provide student editors some window of opportunity to review the piece, as well as provide time for the Law Review to determine how to proceed, we temporarily suspended the website," the letter continued.

Those involved in soliciting and editing the piece said they had followed a rigorous review process, even as they acknowledged taking steps to forestall expected blowback by limiting the number of students aware of the article.

In the piece, Rabea Eghbariah, a Harvard doctoral candidate, accuses Israel of a litany of "crimes against humanity," arguing for a new legal framework to "encapsulate the ongoing structure of subjugation in Palestine and derive a legal formulation of the Palestinian condition."

Eghbariah said in a text message that the suspension of the law journal's website should be seen as "a microcosm of a broader authoritarian repression taking place across U.S. campuses."

Editors said they voted overwhelmingly in December to commission a piece on Palestinian legal issues, then formed a smaller committee — open to all of the publication's editorial leadership — that ultimately accepted Eghbariah's article. He had submitted an earlier version of the article to the Harvard Law Review, which the publication later elected not to publish amid internal backlash, according to a report in The Intercept.

Anticipating similar controversy and worried about a leak of the draft, the committee of editors working on the article did not upload it to a server that is visible to the broader membership of the law journal and to some administrators. The piece was not shared until Sunday with the full staff of the Columbia Law Review — something that editorial staffers said was not uncommon.

"We've never circulated a particular article in advance," said Sohum Pal, an articles editor at the publication. "So the idea that this is all over a process concern is a total lie. It's very transparently content based."

In their letter to students, the board of directors said student editors who didn't work on the piece should have been given an opportunity to read it and raise concerns.

"Whatever your views of this piece, it will clearly be controversial and potentially have an impact on all associated with the Review," they wrote.

Those involved in the publishing of the article said they heard from a small group of students over the weekend who expressed concerns about threats to their careers and safety if it were to be published.

Some alluded to trucks that circled Columbia and other campuses following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel, labeling students as antisemites for their past or current affiliation with groups seen as hostile to Israel.

The letter from the board also suggested that a statement be appended to the piece stating the article had not been subject to a standard review process or made available for all student editors to read ahead of time.

Erika Lopez, an editor who worked on the piece, said many students were adamantly opposed to the idea, calling it "completely false to imply that we didn't follow the standard process."

She said student editors had spoken regularly since they began receiving pushback from the board on Sunday and remained firmly in support of the piece.

When they learned the website had been shuttered Monday morning, they quickly uploaded Eghbariah's article to a publicly accessible website. It has since spread widely across social media.

"It's really ironic that this piece probably got more attention than anything we normally published," Lopez added, "even after they nuked the website."

How Biden's new order to halt asylum at the US border is supposed to work

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday unveiled a halt to asylum processing at the U.S. border with Mexico when illegal entries reach a threshold that he deems excessive.

The measure takes effect immediately because the new policy is triggered when arrests for illegal entry reach 2,500. About 4,000 people already are entering the U.S. each day. It was a major policy shift on a critical election-year issue that's exposed Biden to Republican criticism over an unprecedented surge in new arrivals in an election year.

THE MEASURE

Advocates say it will put migrants in danger and violate international obligations to provide safe haven to people whose lives are threatened. The Biden administration denies that.

Legal challenges are imminent.

There are also serious questions of whether the new measure can stop large-scale migrant entries. Mexico has agreed to take back migrants who are not Mexican, but only in limited numbers. And the Biden administration doesn't have the money and diplomatic support it needs to deport migrants long distances, to China and countries in Africa, for example.

Those who claim asylum today are generally free to live and work in the United States while their claims slowly wind through overwhelmed immigration courts.

Some questions and answers about Biden's presidential proclamation:

HOW WILL THIS PLAY OUT ON THE GROUND?

The threshold triggers a halt on asylum until average daily arrests for illegal crossings fall below 1,500 for a week straight. The last time crossings were that low was in July 2020, during the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic-related asylum restrictions known as Title 42 carried no legal consequences and encouraged repeat attempts. Now, migrants will be issued deportation orders even if they are denied a chance to seek asylum. That will expose them to criminal prosecution if they try again and ban them for several years from legally entering the country. It's a key difference.

"We are ready to repatriate a record number of people in the coming days," Blas Nuñez-Neto, assistant homeland security secretary for border and immigration policy, said in a conference call for Spanish-language reporters.

Migrants who express fear for their safety if they're deported will be screened by U.S. asylum officers but under a higher standard than what's currently in place. If they pass, they can remain to pursue other forms of humanitarian protection, including those laid out in the U.N. Convention Against Torture.

Unaccompanied children are exempt, raising the possibility that some parents may send their sons and daughters across the border without them.

WHAT ROLE DOES MEXICO PLAY?

A critical one.

The U.S. has limited funding to fly people home to more than 100 countries, including many in Africa and Asia. It also lacks diplomatic sway and logistical arrangements to deport large numbers to many countries, including China, Russia and Venezuela.

A 1997 court order generally limits detention of families with a child under 18 to 20 days, a highly ambitious and perhaps unrealistic turnaround time to screen people who express fear of deportation and then put them on a flight.

Even for single adults, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has enough funds to only detain about 34,000 people at a time.

Mexico has agreed to take back up to 30,000 people a month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, in addition to Mexicans. Its commitment does not extend to other nationalities.

This year, Mexico has also made it far more difficult for migrants to reach the U.S. border, largely by

preventing them from riding freight trains and stopping them on buses to turn them around to southern Mexico. While Mexican authorities are blocking migrants' advance, relatively few are deported, causing many to be stuck in Mexican cities far from the U.S. border.

Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's foreign relations secretary, told reporters last month that Mexico won't allow more than 4,000 illegal entries a day. President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, who takes office Oct. 1, is expected to continue policies of her mentor and Mexico's current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

HAS THIS BEEN TRIED BEFORE?

This is the latest in a series of measures under the Biden and Trump administrations to deter asylum-seekers, none of which have had lasting impact.

In May 2023, Biden imposed similar obstacles to asylum for anyone who crossed the border illegally after passing through another country, such as Mexico. A federal appeals court allowed those restrictions to stay in place while advocates challenge it, but it appears to have little impact.

Illegal crossings fell after last year's restrictions took effect, but the lull was short-lived as the number of screening officers was inadequate for the enormous task. The rule's application in only a small percentage of arrests showed how budgets can fail to match ambitions.

Biden invoked a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allows the president to ban entry for groups of people if their presence "would be detrimental to the interests of the United States." President Donald Trump used these powers to ban entry of people from some predominantly Muslim countries, though advocacy groups are expected to argue that Biden failed to meet that "detrimental" criterion.

Prosecutors spend first day of testimony in Hunter Biden's gun trial detailing his drug problems

By RANDALL CHASE, CLAUDIA LAUER, COLLEEN LONG and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Federal prosecutors on Tuesday painted President Joe Biden's son Hunter as deceptive and driven by addiction, a man whose dark habits ensnared loved ones and who knew what he was doing when he lied on a federal form to purchase a gun in 2018.

Jurors also got their first look at the document at the center of the case, and Hunter Biden's attorney argued that his client did not believe he was in the throes of addiction when he stated in the paperwork that he did not have a drug problem. In the short time that he had the gun, he did nothing with it, and the weapon was never even loaded, attorney Abbe Lowell said in his opening statement.

"You will see that he is not guilty," Lowell said.

Hunter Biden has been charged with three felonies stemming from the purchase of the Colt revolver when he was, according to his memoir, addicted to crack. 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 first day of testimony in the case dredged up painful memories for the president and his family, and revealed new and highly personal details about some of their struggles with addiction as the 2024 election looms. For part of the day, the first lady watched from the front row of the courtroom.

Attorneys said jurors would hear testimony from the president's brother James Biden, who is close with Hunter and helped his nephew through rehab stints in the past. They will also hear how Hallie Biden, the widow of the president's late son Beau, also became addicted to crack during a brief relationship with Hunter.

Hallie took the gun from Hunter and tossed it into the garbage at a nearby market, afraid of what he might do with it. The weapon was later found by someone collecting cans and eventually turned over to police.

The president was in Washington on Tuesday, announcing an immigration order and hosting a picnic for congressional leaders before a scheduled departure for France later in the day. He will be gone the rest of the week. Jill Biden planned to meet him in Europe.

The president's allies are worried about the toll the trial may take on the elder Biden, who's long been protective and deeply concerned about his only living son and his sobriety and who must now watch as

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those past mistakes are publicly scrutinized.

Prosecutors on Tuesday spent hours on Hunter Biden's drug problem, using his own words and missives to show the depth of the addiction and to suggest it was still ongoing when he bought the gun. They showed jurors his old laptop computer, the same one he left at a Delaware repair shop and never retrieved. In 2020, the contents made their way to Republicans and were publicly leaked, revealing highly personal messages about his work and his life. He has since sued over the leaked information.

An FBI agent read aloud messages stored on his devices that chronicled a desperate effort to buy drugs. The data also included receipts for a detox facility he attended before relapsing and showed large cash withdrawals.

In one exchange with Hallie, the day after he bought the gun, she wrote: "I called you 500 times in past 24 hours." Hunter replied less than a minute later, informing her that he was "sleeping on a car smoking crack on 4th street and Rodney."

"There's my truth," he added in a follow-up text.

But during cross-examination, the FBI agent testified that Hunter Biden sent fewer messages about seeking drugs in October 2018, around the time when he purchased the gun, than in February 2019, a later period in which Lowell described his client as struggling significantly with addiction.

Lowell also called into question the receipts for the rehab facility, asking whether the agent knew whether he had been treated for drugs or alcohol. She said she could not.

The jury also heard lengthy audio excerpts of Hunter Biden's memoir, "Beautiful Things," in which he narrates his return to Delaware around the time of the gun purchase and his descent into drugs following the death of his brother in 2015 from cancer.

His sister Ashley Biden, watching from the courtroom, dabbed at her eyes with a tissue and eventually left. Jill Biden, who was expected in Washington with her husband, left after lunch.

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 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.

"No one is allowed to lie on a federal form like that, even Hunter Biden," prosecutor Derek Hines said. "He crossed the line when he chose to buy a gun and lied about a federal background check ... the defendant's choice to buy a gun is why we are here."

"When the defendant filled out that form, he knew he was a drug addict," and prosecutors don't have to prove he was using the day he purchased the firearm, Hines said.

Lowell said the form asks whether you "are" a drug user. "It does not say 'have you ever been,'" and he suggested the president's son did not think of himself as someone with a drug problem when he purchased the gun.

His state of mind should be considered at the time of the purchase, not "what he wrote in a book in 2021," Lowell said.

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.

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.

On Tuesday, a former Trump aide and vocal Biden critic, Garrett Ziegler, attended court, prompting Hunter Biden's wife, Melissa, to approach him and say "You have no right to be here" and yelling an expletive. Ziegler has been sued by Hunter Biden, who claimed he violated computer privacy laws by accessing and then manipulating the laptop data.

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

Garland on Tuesday faced 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 Latest | Slovenia recognizes a Palestinian state, and new fighting flares in central Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Slovenia is the latest European country to recognize a Palestinian state. The country's parliament voted Tuesday in support of the move, following in the recent steps of Spain, Ireland and Norway.

Slovenia's prime minister has said he sped up efforts to recognize a State of Palestine in reaction to Israel's expanding invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. The monthlong offensive has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians who are facing widespread hunger.

In central Gaza, the Israeli military said Tuesday that its troops backed by airstrikes have launched a ground operation into the Bureij refugee camp. Local hospital officials say a strike in the urban camp killed 11 Palestinians, including three children and a woman.

The Israeli airstrikes and ground offensives across the Gaza Strip come as international mediators wait for Israel and Hamas to respond to a new cease-fire and hostage release proposal, according to Qatar, which has played a key role in negotiations alongside Egypt and the United States.

Announcing the proposal last week, U.S. President Joe Biden said the three-phase plan was Israeli, however Israeli leaders have since appeared to distance themselves from the proposal and vowed to keep fighting Hamas until the group is destroyed.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

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. 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:

U.N. HUMANITARIAN CHIEF WARNS OF GROWING DESPERATION AND HUNGER IN GAZA

UNITED NATIONS – The U.N. humanitarian chief says fuel and truckloads of food are desperately needed in Gaza, pointing to the massive looting of a U.N. convoy carrying aid and the theft of 27 of the 61 trucks last weekend as examples of lawlessness and the dire situation of hungry Palestinians.

Martin Griffiths told a U.N. press conference Tuesday that the United Nations doesn't have the capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance at scale in southern Rafah, where Israel is carrying out a ground and air operation, or in central Gaza where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled the latest attacks.

Because of insecurity caused by the fighting, he said, there are also fewer aid workers to manage aid distribution to more than a million people in need, so "only a trickle" of food and other items are getting through to the neediest.

He called Saturday's looting of 52 trucks carrying food and nutritional supplements for children, partial

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looting of nine others, and the recovery of only 34 of the 61 trucks in the World Food Program convoy a "terrible event" and "a seminal event."

While the U.N. is remaining in Gaza, Griffiths said, it's unable to deliver nearly enough aid.

The U.N. and its humanitarian partners need all border crossings to reopen, the damaged U.S. pier to finish repairs repaired, and assurances of security and safety for convoys and aid workers, he said.

Griffiths said that for months, the U.N. has been calling for a humanitarian cease-fire, for safety and security on all convoy routes, and for embedding U.N. planners and humanitarian staff with the Israeli military "so that we can make sure that our movements are safe." But this has not happened, he said.

Meanwhile, the U.N. children's agency UNICEF warned that if nutrition supplies can't be distributed, more than 3,000 children suffering from acute malnutrition will be have their nutrition supplies interrupted, U.N. associate spokesperson Florencia Soto-Nino said.

And in Rafah city, she said, the World Health Organization reported that the United Arab Emirates field hospital is the only facility providing health services, but ongoing hostilities are making it increasingly difficult to reach.

SLOVENIA RECOGNIZES A PALESTINIAN STATE, FOLLOWING 3 OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia — Slovenia recognized a Palestinian state on Tuesday after its parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the move, following in the recent steps of three other European countries.

Slovenia's government endorsed a motion last week to recognize a Palestinian state, and had sent the proposal to parliament for final approval, which was needed for the decision to take effect.

Parliament on Tuesday voted 52 for with no one against recognition in the 90-seat parliament. The remaining lawmakers were not present for the vote.

Slovenia's decision came days after Spain, Norway and Ireland recognized a state of Palestinian, which was condemned by Israel. Previously only seven members of the 27-nation EU officially recognized a Palestinian state. Five of them are former East bloc countries that announced recognition in 1988, as did Cyprus, before joining the EU. Sweden's recognition came in 2014.

WASHINGTON LAUNCHES BIG DIPLOMATIC PUSH FOR GAZA CEASE-FIRE

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration has launched an intense drive to convince not only Hamas and Israel to accept a new cease-fire proposal in the nearly eight-month-old war in Gaza but is also pressing Arab nations to get the militant group to go along with the terms.

It comes as President Joe Biden suggested in a Time magazine interview published Tuesday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may be prolonging the war against Hamas to ensure his political survival. Biden, who gave that interview a week ago, seemed to dial back his criticism in a brief exchange with reporters following an immigration speech at the White House.

In response to a question about whether Netanyahu is playing politics with the war, Biden said "I don't think so. He's trying to work out the serious problem he has."

Netanyahu faces a far-right coalition that has threatened to break up his government if the prime minister agrees to a new cease-fire proposal, which Biden announced Friday as an Israeli plan. Since then, Biden and his top aides have not only pressed for Israel and Hamas to approve the deal but also have been working the phones to get Arab and Muslim nations to urge the militant group to agree to it.

Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan have all made calls, and Brett McGurk, the White House coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, will be heading to region this week to further make the case for the deal.

ISRAEL LAUNCHES GROUND OPERATION INTO CENTRAL GAZA REFUGEE CAMP

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — The Israeli military said Tuesday that ground troops backed by airstrikes have launched an operation in central Gaza's Bureij refugee camp.

Local hospital officials say a strike on a home in the camp killed 11 Palestinians, including three children and one woman. A strike on another house in the neighboring Maghazi refugee camp killed two men, according to officials at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah, where the casualties were taken.

The extent of the Israeli incursion into Bureij camp was not immediately clear as of Tuesday evening.

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The military said in a statement that it was conducting "a precision operation" in the camp targeting Hamas positions.

Israeli forces have been battling militants in parts of Gaza that the army said it wrested control of months ago — potential signs of a simmering insurgency.

The military waged an offensive earlier this year for several weeks in Bureij and several other nearby refugee camps in central Gaza.

Troops pulled out of the Jabaliya camp in northern Gaza last Friday after weeks of fighting caused widespread destruction. First responders have recovered the bodies of 360 people, mostly women and children, killed during the battles.

Israel has also been expanding its nearly month-old ground offensive in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah. More than 1 million Palestinians have fled Rafah, mostly into tent camps that have arisen across central and southern Gaza.

Refugee camps in Gaza originally housed Palestinians who were driven from their homes in what is now Israel in the 1948 war surrounding Israel's founding. Over the decades since, they have been built up into crowded urban districts.

A PERMANENT CEASE-FIRE MUST BE PART OF ANY DEAL WITH ISRAEL, HAMAS OFFICIAL SAYS

BEIRUT — A senior official with the Palestinian militant group Hamas said it will not accept any deal with Israel that does not clearly lay out a permanent cease-fire and a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Osama Hamdan said Hamas has told mediators that it was "waiting for an Israeli response regarding this matter." Speaking Tuesday to reporters in Beirut, he said that Israel is seeking to bring the hostages held by Hamas out of Gaza, then resume the war there.

Hamdan's comments came days after a cease-fire proposal, announced by U.S. President Joe Biden, offers the possibility of ending Israel's war against Hamas, returning scores of hostages held by the militant group and quieting fighting on the northern border with Lebanon.

A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Qatar said Tuesday that Qatar and the other mediators, Egypt and the U.S., were still waiting for a response from both Israel and Hamas to the proposal. Majid al-Ansari said "clear ideas" had been put to the two sides, but "we do not have clear positions on it from both sides."

The Qatari spokesman pointed to disputes within the Israeli government, where ultra-nationalist allies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have threatened to bring down the governing coalition if he signs onto a deal without destroying Hamas. Netanyahu says the deal includes provisions that ensure that goal — although none were publicly stated in Biden's announced outline.

Al-Ansari said the "principles (of the proposal) bring together the demands of all parties."

Hamdan said Hamas described Biden's announcement as "positive."

"We cannot accept an agreement that does not guarantee and confirm a permanent cease-fire and full withdrawal from Gaza followed by an (prisoners) exchange," Hamdan said. "This is what we want as Palestinians, and any Israel ideas that contradict this do not concern us and have no value."

Hamdan said that there are thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails adding that any deal should lead to their release. Around 80 hostages captured by Palestinian militants on Oct. 7 are believed to still be alive in Gaza, alongside the remains of 43 others.

SENIOR BIDEN ADVISER HEADING TO MIDEAST THIS WEEK, U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Joe Biden is dispatching a senior adviser, Brett McGurk, back to Mideast this week for talks on the hostage for truce negotiations between Israel and Hamas as well as to discuss about the situation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, according to a U.S. administration official.

The official requested anonymity to discuss the yet to be publicly announced travels for McGurk, the White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

McGurk has been shuttling between Washington and Mideast capitals throughout the nearly eight-month Israel-Hamas war for talks with key regional stakeholders.

This visit comes after a new cease-fire proposal was transmitted to Hamas last week. The Israeli plan could immediately bring home dozens of Israeli hostages, free Palestinian prisoners and perhaps even lead to an endgame in the war.

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White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday that Hamas has yet to offer its formal response to the proposal.

McGurk is also expected to discuss Israel's ongoing military operations in Rafah with regional leaders. Israel launched its ground assault into the city on May 6, triggering an exodus of around 1 million Palestinians out of the city and throwing U.N. humanitarian operations based in the area into turmoil. Still, in the eyes of the Biden administration, it has yet to amount to a "major operation." The U.N. humanitarian office reported Monday that only about 100,000 Palestinians are still in the city of Rafah.

Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani contributed.

WHITE HOUSE ADVISER JAKE SULLIVAN MEETS WITH FAMILIES OF AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN GAZA, U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS

WASHINGTON — White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan met on Tuesday with families of Americans that are being held hostage in Gaza, according to an administration official.

The meeting comes as Biden is pressing Israel and Hamas officials to accept a three-phase hostage for truce deal and potentially end the eight-month war in Gaza. The official was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Israeli 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.

Sullivan has periodically met and held calls with families of the American hostages throughout the nearly eight month crisis.

President Joe Biden in an interview with Time magazine published Tuesday said that he still believes Americans being held are alive, but acknowledged that U.S. officials "don't have final proof on exactly who's alive."

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 hostage release deal. Smaller protests took place across the country.

Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani contributed.

360 BODIES RECOVERED FROM JABALIYA REFUGEE CAMP IN NORTHERN GAZA AFTER LATEST ISRAELI OFFENSIVE

CAIRO — A spokesman for Gaza's civil defense says first responders recovered the bodies of 360 people, mostly women and children, killed in the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya during a three-week Israeli offensive there.

Satellite photos showed extensive new damage in Jabaliya from the offensive, which ended with Israeli troops pulling out on Friday. The photos — taken by Planet Labs PBC on May 8 before the assault and on June 1 — showed that the camp's main marketplace had been destroyed and in several places entire blocks had been wiped away.

The Israeli military launched the assault on Jabaliya in early May, saying it was targeting Hamas militants who had regrouped there after repeated previous offensives in the densely built district.

The military said the assault saw tough close-quarters fighting with Hamas militants during which it carried out some 200 airstrikes. At the operation's end, the military said it had destroyed 10 kilometers (6 miles) of underground tunnels and other Hamas infrastructure. Troops also found the bodies of seven hostages.

Mahmoud Bassal, spokesman for the Palestinian Civil Defense, said Tuesday that 360 bodies had been found so far buried under rubble or strewn in the streets. Some were retrieved while the offensive was ongoing and others after the Israeli withdrawal on Friday.

He estimated around two-thirds of the bodies were women and children. Among them were 30 people killed from one extended family, the Asaliya, including 22 women and children, he told The Associated Press. He said the search for bodies was still underway.

Jabaliya camp originally housed Palestinians who were driven from their homes in what is now Israel in the 1948 war surrounding Israel's founding. Over the decades since, it has been built up into a crowded

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urban district.

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE COUNTS MORE THAN 500 KILLINGS OF PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK
GENEVA — The U.N. human rights chief says his office has counted the killings of more than 500 Palestinians by the Israel Defense Forces and settlers in the West Bank since Oct. 7.

Volker Türk renewed his call for an end to violence in the West Bank after two Palestinian teenagers were killed near Aqabat Jaber refugee camp in Jericho over the weekend, and four other Palestinians were killed Monday by Israeli security forces.

That took the death toll of Palestinians in the West Bank to 505 since the deadly rampage by Hamas-led militants from Gaza in Israel on Oct. 7, according to his office.

"As if the tragic events in Israel and then Gaza over the past eight months were not enough, the people of the occupied West Bank are also being subjected to day-after-day of unprecedented bloodshed," Türk said in a statement Tuesday. "It is unfathomable that so many lives have been taken in such a wanton fashion."

Since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack, 24 Israelis — including eight security force members — were killed in both the West Bank and Israel in clashes or alleged attacks by Palestinians from the West Bank, the rights office said.

The U.N. office said Israeli forces have often used lethal force "as a first resort" against Palestinian protesters throwing stones, firebombs and firecrackers at Israeli armed vehicles.

Türk lamented "pervasive immunity" for crimes committed by Israel security forces, saying allegations of unlawful activity must be investigated and those responsible held to account.

The Israel diplomatic mission in Geneva, where the U.N. rights office has its headquarters, said "Palestinian terrorist factions" were increasing their activities in the West Bank, with the "complicity and lack of leadership" of the Palestinian Authority.

"This is the reality that the High Commissioner chooses to ignore and dismiss," the mission said. "Israel will not allow the West Bank to be turned into another terrorist stronghold."

The U.N. rights office uses a strict methodology to confirm casualties in conflict zones, and its count could fall short of the actual toll.

PALESTINIANS RETURN TO KHAN YOUNIS TO FIND HOMES DESTROYED AND NO INFRASTRUCTURE
KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Palestinians displaced from the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis are setting up tents atop the ruins of their obliterated homes.

Many residents who fled fighting in the city months ago were once again forced to flee Israel's offensive in the southernmost city of Rafah. The returnees came home to a barely recognizable city, their homes part of a vast landscape of ruin.

"This is my house but I cannot see where its foundations or borders are. I cannot find where it used to begin and end," said Ayad Abu Khries, who returned to Khan Younis after being displaced to Rafah.

In one gutted second-floor apartment, a woman heated a pot on a makeshift stove — the building a shell surrounded by rubble. One family's laundry hung from a rope and dangled above piles of stone, metal rods and other debris.

Israel withdrew troops from Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, in April. Residents quickly returned to find what remained of their homes. The incursion into Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had been sheltering before fleeing again, prompted a new influx of returnees back into Khan Younis. The United Nations says more than 1 million Palestinians have fled Rafah, many of them having already been displaced multiple times.

Those who have returned to Khan Younis have struggled to find services. Some residents who came back said they must walk a mile or more to access food and water.

"The infrastructure is destroyed. There is no electricity or sewage system or water of anything. We live in tents and life is exhausting," said Basima Moammar, who is living in a tent near her destroyed home.

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.

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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.

U.S. President Joe Biden has recently 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 military said it had sent reserve soldiers and equipment to assist Israel's Fire and Rescue services to stamp out the blaze.

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.

ISRAEL KILLS 2 SUSPECTED MILITANTS IN THE WEST BANK

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Tuesday it killed two Palestinian militants who 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 Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, a militant group in the area, claimed the men as its fighters, saying they were killed while carrying out a shooting attack near the Palestinian city of Tulkarem.

The Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed the deaths.

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.

Trump's lawyers ask judge to lift gag order imposed during New York trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's lawyers are asking a New York judge to lift the gag order that barred the former president from commenting about witnesses, jurors and others tied to the criminal case that led to his conviction for falsifying records to cover up a potential sex scandal.

In a letter Tuesday, Trump lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove asked Judge Juan M. Merchan to end the gag order, arguing there is nothing to justify "continued restrictions on the First Amendment rights of President Trump" now that the trial is over.

Among other reasons, the lawyers said Trump is entitled to "unrestrained campaign advocacy" in light of President Joe Biden's public comments about the verdict last Friday, and continued public criticism of him by his ex-lawyer Michael Cohen and porn actor Stormy Daniels, both key prosecution witnesses.

Trump's lawyers also contend the gag order must go away so he's free to fully address the case and his conviction with the first presidential debate scheduled for June 27.

The Manhattan district attorney's office declined to comment.

Merchan issued Trump's gag order on March 26, a few weeks before the start of the trial, after prosecutors raised concerns about the presumptive Republican presidential nominee's propensity to attack people involved in his cases.

Merchan later expanded it to prohibit comments about his own family after Trump made social media posts attacking the judge's daughter, a Democratic political consultant. Comments about Merchan and District Attorney Alvin Bragg are allowed, but the gag order bars statements about court staff and members of Bragg's prosecution team.

Trump was convicted Thursday of 34 counts of falsifying business records arising from what prosecutors said was an attempt to cover up a hush money payment to Daniels just before the 2016 election. She claims she had a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier, which he denies. He is scheduled to be sentenced July 11.

Prosecutors had said they wanted the gag order to "protect the integrity of this criminal proceeding and avoid prejudice to the jury." In the order, Merchan noted prosecutors had sought the restrictions "for the duration of the trial." He did not specify when they would be lifted.

Blanche told the Associated Press last Friday that it was his understanding the gag order would expire when the trial ended and that he would seek clarity from Merchan, which he did on Tuesday.

"It's a little bit of the theater of the absurd at this point, right? Michael Cohen is no longer a witness in this trial," Blanche told the AP. "The trial is over. The same thing with all the other witnesses. So, we'll see. I don't mean that in any way as being disrespectful of the judge and the process. I just want to be careful and understand when it no longer applies."

Trump has continued to operate under the belief that he's still muzzled, telling reporters Friday at Trump Tower: "I'm under a gag order, nasty gag order."

Referring to Cohen, Trump said, "I'm not allowed to use his name because of the gag order" before slamming his former lawyer-turned-courtroom foe as "a sleazebag."

During the trial, Merchan held Trump in contempt of court, fined him \$10,000 for violating the gag order and threatened to put him in jail if he did it again.

Trump's use of the term "sleazebag" to describe Cohen just before the trial rankled prosecutors, but was not considered a gag order violation by the judge. Merchan declined to sanction Trump for an April 10 social media post, which referred to Cohen and Daniels, another key prosecution witness, by that insult.

The judge said at the time that Trump's contention that he was responding to previous posts by Cohen that were critical of him "is sufficient to give" him pause on whether prosecutors met their burden in demonstrating that the post was out of bounds.

Feds seek woman who left bag of \$120,000 as bribe with promise of more at home of food fraud juror

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal authorities in Minnesota have confiscated cellphones and taken all seven defendants into custody as investigators try to determine who attempted to bribe a juror with a bag of cash containing \$120,000 to get her to acquit them on charges of stealing more than \$40 million from a program meant to feed children during the pandemic.

The case went to the jury late Monday afternoon, after the juror, who promptly reported the attempted bribe to police, was dismissed and replaced with an alternate. The incident had further ripple effects before deliberations resumed Tuesday — when another juror was replaced after a family member asked about the the attempted bribe.

According to an FBI agent's affidavit, a woman rang the doorbell at the home of "Juror #52" in the Minneapolis suburb of Spring Lake Park late Sunday, the night before the case went to the jury. The juror wasn't home, but a relative answered the door. The woman handed the relative a gift bag with a curly ribbon and images of flowers and butterflies and said it was a "present" for the juror.

"The woman told the relative to tell Juror #52 to say not guilty tomorrow and there would be more of that present tomorrow," the agent wrote. "After the woman left, the relative looked in the gift bag and saw it contained a substantial amount of cash."

The juror called police right after she got home and gave them the bag of cash. It held \$100, \$50 and \$20 bills totaling around \$120,000. The FBI took the bag from Spring Lake Park police on Monday morning and interviewed the juror.

The woman who left the bag knew the juror's first name, the agent said. Names of the jurors have not been made public, but the list of people who had access to it included prosecutors and defense lawyers — and the seven defendants themselves.

U.S. District Judge Nancy Brasel and attorneys for both sides learned about the attempted bribe Monday morning. The judge ordered all seven defendants to surrender their cellphones at the request of the government so that investigators could look for evidence. She also ordered all seven taken into custody.

"It is highly likely that someone with access to the juror's personal information was conspiring with, at a minimum, the woman who delivered the \$120,000 bribe," the FBI agent wrote, noting that the alleged fraud conspiracy at the heart of the trial involved electronic communications, including text messages and emails.

Before the case went to the jury late Monday afternoon, Brasel ordered them sequestered for deliberations. When one of them called home to say she'd been sequestered, according to KARE-TV and KSTP-TV, a family member asked, "Is it because of the bribe?" The judge replaced that juror with an alternate, too.

Anyone involved in the attempted bribe could face federal charges of bribery of a juror and influencing a juror, with a maximum potential penalty of 15 years in prison.

Minneapolis FBI spokesperson Diana Freedman said Tuesday that she could not provide information about the ongoing investigation.

According to the Star Tribune, Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Thompson told the court Monday: "This is completely beyond the pale. This is outrageous behavior. This is stuff that happens in mob movies." Defense attorney Andrew Birrell called it "a troubling and upsetting accusation," according to the newspaper.

The seven were the first of 70 defendants to go on trial in what federal prosecutors have called one of the largest COVID-19-related fraud cases in the country. They've described it as a massive scheme to exploit lax rules during the pandemic and steal from a program that was meant to provide meals to children in Minnesota.

Prosecutors have said the seven collectively stole over \$40 million in a conspiracy that cost taxpayers \$250 million. At the center of the alleged plot was a group called Feeding Our Future. Prosecutors say just a fraction of the money went to feed low-income kids, and that the rest was spent on luxury cars, jewelry, travel and property. Federal authorities say they have recovered about \$50 million.

Eighteen other defendants have already pleaded guilty, while the rest are awaiting trial. Among them is Aimee Bock, the founder of Feeding our Future. She has maintained her innocence, saying she never stole and saw no evidence of fraud among her subcontractors.

The defendants are: Abdiaziz Shafii Farah, Mohamed Jama Ismail, Abdimajid Mohamed Nur, Said Shafii Farah, Abdiwahab Maalim Aftin, Mukhtar Mohamed Shariff and Hayat Mohamed Nur. The charges against them include wire fraud and money laundering. Shariff was the only defendant to testify and the only one to call witnesses on his behalf.

The food aid came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was administered by the state. Non-profits and other partners under the program were supposed to serve meals to kids. Defendants allegedly produced invoices for meals that were never served, ran shell companies, laundered money, indulged in passport fraud, and accepted kickbacks.

An Associated Press analysis published last June documented how thieves across the country plundered billions in federal COVID-19 relief dollars. Fraudsters potentially stole more than \$280 billion, while another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. Combined, the loss represented 10% of the \$4.3 trillion the government disbursed in COVID relief by last fall. Nearly 3,200 defendants have been charged, according to the U.S. Justice Department. About \$1.4 billion in stolen pandemic aid has been seized.

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 protegee'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 Ricard 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.

Garland slams attacks on the Justice Department, telling lawmakers: 'I will not be intimidated'

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland rebuked Republicans Tuesday for what he described as unprecedented attacks on the Justice Department, telling lawmakers who have sought to hold him in contempt that he will "not be intimidated."

Appearing before a House panel led by allies of Donald Trump, Garland condemned as a "conspiracy theory" the claim that the department was behind the New York state court prosecution that led to the former Republican president's conviction last week on 34 felony charges. And Garland slammed other "baseless and extremely dangerous falsehoods" being spread about law enforcement.

His unusually fiery testimony amounted to a forceful defense of the independence and integrity of the Justice Department at an unprecedented moment in which it is prosecuting both Trump and President Joe Biden's son. Amid an onslaught by Trump and his Republican allies, Garland said his agency will not be deterred in its commitment to uphold the rule of law.

Garland described a Republican effort to hold him in contempt as the latest in "a long line of attacks" on the Justice Department. "Those attacks 'have not, and they will not' influence the department's decision making, Garland told lawmakers.

"I will not be intimidated," Garland said. "And the Justice Department will not be intimidated. We will continue to do our jobs free from political influence. And we will not back down from defending our democracy."

Republicans used the House Judiciary Committee hearing to push the claim that Biden has weaponized the department to go after Trump, even as the Democratic president's son Hunter stands trial on federal

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firearms charges in Delaware. Trump — who is charged in two criminal cases brought by the Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith — has cast himself as the victim of a politically motivated legal system as the presumptive Republican presidential nominee vies to reclaim the White House in November.

Since his conviction in the New York trial last week, Trump and his supporters have escalated their attacks on the criminal justice system, slamming prosecutors, the judge and the jury. Trump and his allies have suggested the case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a state-level prosecutor, was orchestrated by Biden.

Garland described that unsupported assertion as an “attack on the judicial process itself.”

The attorney general also slammed as dangerous Trump’s distorted claim that the FBI agents who searched his Mar-a-Lago estate in August 2022 were “authorized to shoot” him and were “locked & loaded ready” to take him out. The former president was referring to the disclosure in a court document that the FBI, during the search, followed a standard use-of-force policy that is actually meant to limit the use of deadly force.

Garland appeared nearly overcome by emotion at one point when asked about the department’s role in upholding the rule of law, pausing with his hands clasped on the table in front of him.

“I have devoted my entire career to ensuring that the rule of law is the rule that the Justice Department applies and the courts apply — that we follow the precedents, that we treat like cases alike, that we do not have enemies or friends, that we do not pay attention to the political parties or the wealth, or the power, or the influence that we are investigating,” the attorney general said.

His appearance came as Republicans have moved to hold him in contempt for the administration’s refusal to hand over audio of President Biden’s interview with special counsel Robert Hur, which focused on the president’s handling of classified documents.

A transcript of Biden’s interview has been made public, but the president asserted executive privilege over the audio last month to block its release. The White House has said Republican lawmakers only want the audio so they can chop it up and use it for political purposes.

Republicans, meanwhile, have accused Biden of trying to suppress the audio because he doesn’t want the public to hear it before the election. In his report concluding that Biden should not face charges for his handling of classified documents, Hur wrote that the 81-year-old president would likely present himself to a jury “as a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory.”

The Justice Department has argued witnesses might be less likely to cooperate if they know their interviews might be heard by the public. And in recent court filing, it raised concerns that releasing the audio could spur deepfakes and disinformation that trick Americans.

“I view contempt as a serious matter,” Garland told lawmakers. “But I will not jeopardize the ability of our prosecutors and agents to do their jobs effectively in future investigations.”

Shortly after the hearing began, House Speaker Mike Johnson announced a “three-pronged” plan to address what he described as the “weaponization” of the justice system against Trump. The approach, according to the Louisiana Republican, will look to circumvent the authority of the Justice Department and local prosecutors in the Trump case through legislation, funding and oversight.

Rep. Jim Jordan, the committee’s top Republican, criticized Garland in his opening statement for a broad array of what he depicted as politically motivated decisions by federal law enforcement -- including the conclusions by different special counsels that Trump criminally mishandled classified documents while Biden did not.

“Many Americans believe there’s now a double standard in our justice system. They believe that because there is,” Jordan said.

Garland strongly pushed back on Republican questions he said were underpinned by false premises, and Republicans seemed exasperated at some points by his refusal to be drawn into extensive back-and-forth. When at one point, Garland asked for the ability to finish his answer, Rep. Andy Biggs, a conservative Arizona Republican, said no because he was being “nonresponsive.”

But the attorney general also appeared uneasy at some friendly questions from Democrats who tried

to underscore the Justice Department's independence by discussing specific cases. Garland repeatedly refused to respond to questions about specific investigations. For example, when one lawmaker asked Garland whether Trump had been interviewed by federal prosecutors before his indictments, he refused to answer, even though the answer is known to be no.

US launches lobbying blitz to sell Gaza cease-fire plan to Hamas through Arab and Muslim nations

By MATTHEW LEE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has launched an intense drive to persuade Hamas and Israel to accept a new cease-fire proposal in the nearly eight-month-old war in Gaza while it also presses Arab nations to get the militant group to go along with the terms.

It comes as President Joe Biden suggested in a Time magazine interview published Tuesday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may be prolonging the war against Hamas to ensure his political survival. Biden, who gave that interview a week ago, seemed to dial back his criticism in a brief exchange with reporters following an immigration speech at the White House.

In response to a question about whether Netanyahu is playing politics with the war, Biden said: "I don't think so. He's trying to work out the serious problem he has."

Netanyahu faces a far-right coalition that has threatened to break up his government if the prime minister agrees to a new cease-fire proposal, which Biden announced Friday as an Israeli plan. Since then, Biden and his top aides have not only pressed for Israel and Hamas to approve the deal but also have been working the phones with Arab and Muslim nations.

Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan have all made calls, and Brett McGurk, the White House coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, will be heading to region this week to further make the case for the deal. The plan would aim to free remaining Israeli hostages held by Hamas and lead to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza in phases.

Since Friday, Blinken has spoken with the foreign ministers of Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Algeria, according to the State Department. Blinken also spoke over the weekend with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Benny Gantz, another member of Netanyahu's war cabinet.

Biden spoke Monday with the emir of Qatar — whose country, along with Egypt, has played a major role in trying to negotiate a truce and persuade Hamas to accept one.

That was followed quickly by a joint statement from the leaders of the Group of Seven advanced democracies calling "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 includes Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the U.S.

Also Monday, Sullivan spoke with his Turkish counterpart about the "urgent need for Hamas to accept Israel's proposal."

A Biden administration official said Tuesday that McGurk, who has been shuttling between Washington and Middle East capitals throughout the war for talks with key regional stakeholders, would be returning to the region this week. The official requested anonymity to discuss the yet to be publicly announced travels for McGurk.

U.S. officials say Hamas has yet to respond to the proposal that was sent to them Thursday and have bristled at suggestions that Netanyahu is not fully on board. They have stressed repeatedly that the Israelis signed off on sending the proposal to Hamas last week.

But two leading members of Netanyahu's far-right governing 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.

Netanyahu has said there are certain "gaps" in how Biden laid out the proposal and 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."

In the Time interview conducted May 28, three days before he announced the cease-fire proposal, Biden was asked about critics in Israel suggesting that Netanyahu was extending the war for political preservation. Biden initially said he wasn't going to comment then noted that "there is every reason for people to draw that conclusion."

White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters Tuesday that the president's comments in Time were "referencing what many critics have said. For our part, though, he and Prime Minister Netanyahu do not agree on everything."

But Kirby said the U.S. would keep working with its ally to combat Hamas and get the cease-fire plan approved.

Wisconsin attorney general files felony charges against attorneys, aide who worked for Trump in 2020

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Felony forgery charges were filed in Wisconsin on Tuesday against two attorneys and an aide who helped submit paperwork falsely saying that former President Donald Trump had won the battleground state in 2020.

The state charges are the first to come in Wisconsin and follow separate charges brought in Arizona, Michigan, Nevada and Georgia related to the fake electors scheme.

The Wisconsin charges were brought against Trump's attorney in the state, Jim Troupis, 62, attorney Kenneth Chesebro, 62, who was advising the campaign and Mike Roman, 51, who was Trump's director of Election Day operations. Roman allegedly delivered Wisconsin's fake elector paperwork to a Pennsylvania congressman's staffer in order to get them to then-Vice President Mike Pence on Jan. 6, 2021.

All three are due in Dane County Circuit Court on Sept. 19, according to court records. They each face one felony count punishable by up to six years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000.

Troupis and Chesebro did not return voicemail messages left Tuesday. Roman's attorney, Kurt Altman, said he just learned of the charges Tuesday morning and was in the process of reviewing them.

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul, a Democrat, didn't rule out filing more charges, including against the 10 fake electors, saying that the investigation is ongoing.

"Our approach has been focused on following the facts where they lead," he said at a news conference.

Wisconsin Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson called the charges "outrageous."

"Now Democrats are weaponizing Wisconsin's judiciary," Johnson posted on X. "Apparently conservative lawyers advising clients is illegal under Democrat tyranny. Democrats are turning America into a banana republic."

Democratic Gov. Tony Evers offered a one-word response to news of the charges being filed: "Good."

Electors are people appointed to represent voters in presidential elections. The winner of the popular vote in each state determines which party's electors are sent to the Electoral College, which meets in December after the election to certify the outcome.

The fake elector efforts are central to an August federal indictment filed against Trump alleging he tried to overturn results of the 2020 election. Federal prosecutors, investigating his conduct related to the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot, have also said the scheme originated in Wisconsin. Trump also faces charges in Georgia and has denied wrongdoing.

Chesebro and Roman were among the 18 people indicted along with Trump in August in a sprawling racketeering indictment in Georgia. They're accused of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally overturn the 2020 election in that state.

Chesebro in October pleaded guilty to one felony charge of conspiracy to commit filing false documents after reaching a deal with Georgia prosecutors. Roman has pleaded not guilty to racketeering and con-

spiracy charges related to a plan to have Republican electors meet and cast Electoral College votes for Trump even though Biden had won Georgia.

Roman also faces nine felony charges in Arizona related to the fake electors scheme there, including conspiracy, fraud and forgery.

The 10 Wisconsin electors, Chesebro and Troupis, who was Trump's attorney in Wisconsin, all settled a civil lawsuit that was brought against them last year.

Documents released as part of those settlements showed that the strategy in Wisconsin replicated moves in six other swing states.

The complaint goes into detail largely citing those documents, interviews and testimony given to Congress about how the fake elector scheme was hatched.

The complaint details how Chesebro emailed a memo on Nov. 18, 2020, to Troupis and others arguing that electors representing Trump should meet on Dec. 14, 2020, to preserve the Trump-Pence electoral slate in case a court or Legislature would determine them to be the winners.

Chesebro argued in a subsequent memo that the Trump electors could be counted by Congress if court challenges to his loss were still pending. Troupis sent both memos to the Trump White House, according to the complaint.

On Dec. 9, 2020, Chesebro emailed Troupis a memo with instructions for the Dec. 14, 2020, elector meetings. Two days later, Chesebro emailed Trump aide Roman details of the plan, the complaint said.

During or around the time of the Dec. 14, 2020, meeting, Chesebro sent a message to Troupis and Roman that said, "WI meeting of the 'real' electors is a go!!!" the complaint said. Troupis responded with a "thumbs up" emoji, the complaint said.

The complaint also details how the fake elector slate was delivered to Chesebro from Wisconsin to Washington, D.C., on Jan. 5, 2021, by Alesha Guenther, a law student working part-time at the Republican Party of Wisconsin. Roman told Guenther to deliver the paperwork only to Chesebro.

"5 mins until I make the drop," Guenther texted at one point, according to the complaint. "I feel like a drug dealer."

Once Chesebro was given the documents, he emailed Roman to let him know he had them.

Roman then arranged for a congressional staff member to meet Chesebro and take the document. Chesebro sent Roman a message confirming that it had been done, the complaint said.

Trump lost Wisconsin to Biden, a Democrat, by fewer than 21,000 votes. Trump carried Wisconsin by a similar margin in 2016.

Government and outside investigations have uniformly found there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could have swung the 2020 election. But Trump has continued to spread falsehoods about the election, particularly in Wisconsin.

India's popular but polarizing leader Narendra Modi is extending his decade in power. Who is he?

By ASHOK SHARMA, SHEIKH SAALIQ and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who claimed victory for his alliance in an election seen as a referendum on his decade in power, is a popular but polarizing leader who has presided over a fast-growing economy while advancing Hindu nationalism.

Modi, 73, is only the second Indian prime minister to win a third straight term.

His Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party failed to secure a majority on its own — as it did in 2014 and 2019 — after facing a stronger than expected challenge from the opposition. But together with other parties in his National Democratic Alliance, his bloc won enough seats for a slim parliamentary majority and to form his third consecutive government, Election Commission data showed Tuesday.

To supporters, Modi is a larger-than-life figure who has improved India's standing in the world, helped make its economy the world's fifth-largest, and streamlined the country's vast welfare program, which

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serves around 60% of the population. To some, he may even be more than human.

But to critics, he's a cult leader who has eroded India's democracy and advanced divisive politics targeting the Muslims who make up 14% of the country's population. They say he has also increasingly wielded strong-arm tactics to subdue political opponents, squeeze independent media and quash dissent.

Modi's government has rejected such accusations and says democracy is flourishing.

Political analysts say Modi's victory was driven by social welfare programs that provided benefits from food to housing, and the strident Hindu nationalism that has consolidated a majority of Hindu votes for his party. Hindus make up 80% of India's population.

The economy is growing by 7% and more than 500 million Indians have opened bank accounts during Modi's tenure, but that growth hasn't created enough jobs, and inequality has worsened under his rule, according to some economists.

Modi began his election campaign two months ago by promising to turn India into a developed country by 2047 and focused on highlighting his administration's welfare policies and a robust digital infrastructure that have benefited millions of Indians.

But as the campaign progressed, he increasingly resorted to anti-Muslim rhetoric, calling them "infiltrators" and making references to a Hindu nationalist claim that Muslims were overtaking the Hindu population by having more children. Modi also accused the opposition of pandering to the minority community.

Conspicuous piety has long been a centerpiece of Modi's brand, but he's also begun suggesting that he was chosen by God.

In a TV interview during the campaign, he said "When my mother was alive, I used to believe that I was born biologically. After she passed away, upon reflecting on all my experiences, I was convinced that God had sent me."

In January, he delivered on a longstanding Hindu nationalist ambition by leading the opening of a controversial temple on the site of a razed mosque.

After campaigning ended last week, Modi went to a Hindu spiritual site for a televised 45-hour meditation retreat. Most Indian TV channels spent hours showing the event.

Born in 1950 to a lower-caste family in western Gujarat state, as a young boy Modi joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a paramilitary, right-wing group which has long been accused of stoking hatred against Muslims. RSS is the ideological parent of Modi's BJP.

The tea seller's son got his first big political break in 2001, becoming chief minister of his home state of Gujarat. A few months in, anti-Muslim riots ripped through the region, killing at least 1,000 people. There were suspicions that Modi quietly supported the riots, but he has denied the allegations.

In 2005, the U.S. revoked Modi's visa, citing concerns that he did not act to stop the communal violence. An investigation approved by the Indian Supreme Court later absolved Modi, but the stain of the dark moment has lingered.

Thirteen years later, Modi led his Hindu nationalist party to a spectacular victory in the 2014 national elections after promising sweeping reforms to jumpstart India's flagging economy.

But 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.

Months after securing a second term in 2019, his government revoked the special status of disputed Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority state, and split it into two federally governed territories. His government passed a law that grants citizenship to religious minorities from Muslim countries in the region but excludes Muslims.

Decision like these have made Modi hugely popular among his diehard supporters who hail him as the champion of the Hindu majority and see India emerging as a Hindu majoritarian state.

Modi has spent his political life capitalizing on religious tensions for political gain, said Christophe Jaffrelot, a political scientist and expert on Modi and the Hindu right. During his time as a state leader, he pioneered an embrace of Hindu nationalism unlike anything seen before in Indian politics.

"That style has remained. It was invented in Gujarat and today it is a national brand," Jaffrelot said.

Many Americans are still shying away from EVs despite Biden's push, an 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 2017 Chevy Volt, a plug-in hybrid that can go about 50 miles on battery power before the gas engine takes over. "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 car at home but says there are several public chargers near her house if needed. 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.

Rural pharmacies fill a health care gap in the US.

Owners say it's getting harder to stay open

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

Basin Pharmacy fills more than prescriptions in rural northern Wyoming. It's also the key health care access point for the town of about 1,300 people and the surrounding area.

It sells catheters, colostomy supplies and diabetic testing strips. The storage room contains things that people rely on to survive, such as a dozen boxes of food for patients who must eat through tubes. The pharmacy fills prescriptions in bulk for the county jail, state retirement center and youth group homes. Some patients come from Jackson, five hours away by car, for the specialized services.

Pharmacist Craig Jones makes house calls when no one else can, answers his phone at all hours of the night and stops to chat about bowel movements at church. Yet Jones keeps a pile of his own paychecks on a desk in the back of his pharmacy. Four months' worth, uncashed.

"Every year, it's a little worse," Jones said of the financial pressures on his business.

Rural pharmacies, independent or chain, can be a touchstone for their communities. The staff knows everyone's names and drugs, answers questions about residents' mail-order prescriptions or can spot the signs of serious illness.

But rural pharmacies' business models face unrelenting pressures to the point that sometimes they have to close. Several largely rural states have some of the lowest number of pharmacies per ZIP code, according to an AP analysis of data from 49 states and the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs.

The closest pharmacy to Basin Pharmacy is eight miles away in Greybull, and Jones and two other phar-

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macists opened it after the department store chain that ran its predecessor went bankrupt.

EFFECTS OF A CLOSURE

When a pharmacy does close in a rural area, communities feel the absence.

In Herscher, Illinois, news came out of nowhere that the CVS would shut down in early March.

Mayor Shannon Sweeney met with CVS representatives and asked them to delay the closure for his village of 1,500 that's 80 miles south of Chicago, but he said the company told him the front of the store was not making enough money.

Pharmacy access is an important consideration, CVS spokesman Matt Blanchette told The Associated Press, but the company also weighs local market dynamics, population shifts and the number of stores in the area selling similar products. He confirmed the meeting with Sweeney, but did not directly answer a question about what financial issues led to the store closure.

Tammy McLearn came to the CVS twice a month to pick up medications for her blood pressure and cholesterol on her way to and from work near Kankakee.

She moved her prescriptions to the CVS near work because she doesn't want to get them through the mail; her village isn't a top priority for snow removal in the winter — and her late husband's heart medications would often get lost in the mail.

"We're losing convenience, a staple," she said of the pharmacy, which was part of a small statewide chain before CVS bought it in 2017. "I hope another pharmacy goes in here."

Sweeney said that's his goal — preferably an independent one. But in the months since the closure, two promising leads have dried up, leaving the them "dead in the water," he said.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

Four of Wyoming's independent pharmacies closed last year, said Melinda Carroll, legislative director of the state's pharmacy association. Two more, one independent and one chain, closed so far this year.

Jones plans to hold out in Basin. He owns two other businesses there — a café next to the pharmacy and a grocery store, for which he cashed in some of his retirement accounts to keep it from closing.

But some 25% of the prescriptions he fills today are reimbursed for less than what he bought the medications for. Jones said he lost \$30,000 between the beginning of the year and mid-May.

Hence, the uncashed checks.

"I'm working for free a lot," he said. "And I don't mind. I love to serve the community. But I kind of resent having to do that because of large corporations, huge pharmacy benefit managers, that are making millions of dollars a year."

Pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, help employers and insurers decide which drugs are covered for millions of Americans.

And the the lack of transparency around fees and low reimbursements from is one of the biggest financial pressures for rural pharmacies, said Delesha Carpenter of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who leads a research alliance of more than 140 rural pharmacies and seven universities.

But Greg Lopes, a spokesman for the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association that represents PBMs, disputed PBMs' role in closures and noted that some companies work with rural pharmacies to get higher reimbursements for drugs.

Jones came back to the Basin area after pharmacy school. His daughter Camilla would come into the pharmacy with him on Sundays and he'd quiz her on different medications.

She's now the president-elect of the state pharmacy association and helps run the Basin pharmacy.

"We've definitely tried to do everything we can to run lean to find other options to try and make money to keep our doors open so we can continue to serve patients," Camilla Hancock said. "But when you're working so hard and you're trying your darndest to accomplish these things, and you just kind of get kicked in the gut over and over, it's really disheartening."

If it weren't for the "devastating" impact on his daughter's future, Jones admitted, "I'd pack it in."

"I wish I could say I had this healthy, wonderful business I could hand off to my daughter," he said. "But I worry whether it's even going to be worthwhile for her to take it over if we can't make a profit on it or even pay our own wages."

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 such 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 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

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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 ifs' 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 "deadbots" 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.

Why Poland says Russia and Belarus are weaponizing migration to benefit Europe's far-right

By RAFAL NIEDZIELSKI and CZAREK SOKOLOWSKI Associated Press

POLAND-BELARUS BORDER, Poland (AP) — A Somali woman pushes her bandaged hand between two vertical bars of a thick metal barrier separating Belarus from Poland as she and four other women gaze toward the European Union.

They nod gratefully as a Polish humanitarian aid worker calls to them across a stretch of land as wide as a one-lane road and promises to help. Polish soldiers patrol nearby.

The verdant patch of Bialowieza Forest that spans the border is among the flashpoints of a monthslong standoff between Belarus and its main backer and ally Russia, and the 27-member European bloc, which has seen a surge in migrant flows toward the frontier ahead of EU parliamentary elections that start on Thursday.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE BORDER?

The number of attempted illegal border crossings from Belarus into EU-member Poland has shot up in recent months to almost 400 a day — from only a handful a day earlier this year, Polish officials say.

Poland's border guards have also decried increasingly aggressive behavior by some migrants on the Belarus side of the border. They have posted online videos of some throwing rocks, logs and even burning wood at the Polish troops from behind the fence.

There have been cases of soldiers and guards being hospitalized and some have needed stitches after being stabbed or cut by knife-wielding assailants. Last Tuesday near the village of Dubicze Cerkiewne, officials said a migrant reached between the bars of the more than 5-meter (16-foot) -high barrier and stabbed a soldier in the ribs.

For the past few years, EU authorities have accused authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko of weaponizing migration by luring people to his country to find an easier entry point into the bloc than the more dangerous routes across the Mediterranean Sea.

Still, migrants have died, with some buried in Muslim and Christian cemeteries in Poland.

WHAT DOES POLAND SAY?

Poland sees the new push at the border as an orchestrated attempt by Russia and Belarus to fuel anti-migrant sentiment, which could in turn boost far-right parties in the European vote.

Poland and the EU say migrants — who have trekked to former Soviet countries from as far away as the Middle East and Africa — have become pawns in an effort by Russia and Belarus to destabilize Europe, which has backed Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion more than two years ago.

The \$405 million (374 million euro) metal barrier was put up along a 180-kilometer (110-mile) stretch of border under Poland's previous conservative government in 2022, part of efforts to curb large inflows of migrants that many in the EU want to reduce.

The barrier has been a winning point for anti-immigrant parties that often support or are supported by Russia.

Now the government of Polish entrust Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who took over in December pledging a new pro-EU administration following eight years of stormy conservative rule, has vowed to step up security measures and says it must protect the EU border.

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"We are not dealing with (just) any asylum seekers here, we are dealing with a coordinated, very efficient — on many levels — operation to break the Polish border and attempts to destabilize the country," Tusk said last week while visiting border troops.

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL ENDGAME?

According to Poland, Moscow's scenario of purportedly seeking to flood the EU with a surge in migrants would provide political ammunition for anti-migrant, far-right parties in countries such as France, Germany and Italy.

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski alleged at a meeting in Bialystok, eastern Poland, on Monday that many of the migrants who try to break through the Polish border "are people with Russian visas" — meaning they were at some point allowed to enter Russia before heading to Belarus and toward the West.

"They were at least encouraged and maybe even recruited for this operation, so we know who is behind this operation," he said. "This is intended to have a political effect — to strengthen the far right, which promises to destroy the European Union from the inside."

The Interior Ministry in neighboring Germany, the key destination for many migrants, has cited an increasing trend in unauthorized migration related to Russia and Belarus. It attributed the rise in part to intensified action taken by Russian security officials against unauthorized migrants following a deadly terrorist attack on a Moscow concert hall in March.

Critics have accused President Vladimir Putin's Russia of all sorts of malfeasance against the West in recent years, including election meddling, disinformation and fake news campaigns, computer hacking, and alleged poisoning abroad of foes of the Kremlin chief — all allegations that Moscow has denied.

Sviatlana Tsikhnouskaya, Belarusian opposition leader living in exile, told The Associated Press that Lukashenko's government is trying "to blackmail the EU and scare it with waves of uncontrollable migrants."

"In this, the interests of Lukashenko and Putin align," she said.

WHAT ABOUT THE MIGRANTS?

Caught in the middle are the migrants themselves, including many women and children stuck in hostile marshes and forests along the border. In late May on the Polish side of the border, volunteers were seen giving water to an exhausted Algerian man.

Aid activists have criticized Tusk's government for tough border policies. He has acknowledged that many soldiers feel conflicted between the need to protect the border and sympathy for humanitarian workers who want to "help others in distress."

Migrants who do get through can apply for international protection within the EU, which is granted in exceptional cases. Some also get deported to their home countries.

Olga Cielemencka, an activist with Podlaskie Volunteer Humanitarian Emergency Service who promised to help to the Somali woman with the bandaged hand, said her group is trying to offer advice and assistance to the migrants.

"But our abilities to act are very limited," she said. "There isn't much that we can do."

Today in History: June 5, Robert F. Kennedy assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 5, the 157th day of 2024. There are 209 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 5, 1968, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was shot and mortally wounded after claiming victory in California's Democratic presidential primary at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles; assassin Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was arrested at the scene.

On this date:

In 1794, Congress passed the Neutrality Act, which prohibited Americans from taking part in any military action against a country that was at peace with the United States.

In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Henderson v. United States*, struck down racially segregated railroad

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dining cars.

In 1967, war erupted in the Middle East. Israel, anticipating a possible attack by its Arab neighbors, launched a series of airfield strikes that destroyed nearly the entire Egyptian air force; Syria, Jordan and Iraq immediately entered the conflict.

In 1975, Egypt reopened the Suez Canal to international shipping, eight years after it was closed because of the 1967 war with Israel.

In 1976, 14 people were killed when the Teton Dam in Idaho burst.

In 1981, the Centers for Disease Control reported that five men in Los Angeles had come down with a rare kind of pneumonia; they were the first recognized cases of what later became known as AIDS.

In 2002, 14-year-old Elizabeth Smart was abducted from her Salt Lake City home. (Smart was found alive by police in a Salt Lake suburb in March 2003. One kidnapper, Brian David Mitchell, was sentenced to life without parole; the other, Wanda Barzee, was released in September 2018.)

In 2004, Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, died in Los Angeles at age 93 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

In 2006, more than 50 National Guardsmen from Utah became the first unit to work along the U.S.-Mexico border as part of a crackdown by President George W. Bush.

In 2012, science-fiction author Ray Bradbury, 91, died in Los Angeles.

In 2016, Novak Djokovic (NOH'-vak JOH'-kuh-vich) became the first man in nearly a half-century to win four consecutive major championships, finally earning an elusive French Open title with a win over Andy Murray to complete a career Grand Slam.

In 2017, Bill Cosby went on trial in Norristown, Pennsylvania, on charges he drugged and sexually assaulted Andrea Constand, a former employee of Temple University's basketball program, at his suburban Philadelphia mansion in 2004. (The jury deadlocked, resulting in a mistrial, but Cosby was convicted in a second trial; Pennsylvania's highest court later tossed out that conviction.)

In 2018, the Miss America pageant announced that it was eliminating the swimsuit competition from the event; the new head of the organization's board of trustees, Gretchen Carlson, said on ABC, "We're not going to judge you on your appearance because we are interested in what makes you you."

In 2020, Minneapolis banned chokeholds by police, the first of many changes in law enforcement practices to be announced in the aftermath of George Floyd's death; officers would also now be required to intervene any time they saw unauthorized force by another officer.

In 2022, Queen Elizabeth II appeared at the balcony of Buckingham Palace, delighting fans who had hoped to catch a glimpse of her during the final day of festivities marking the monarch's 70 years on the throne. (The queen died three months later, and her son Charles became king.)

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Bill Moyers is 90. Former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark is 85. Author Dame Margaret Drabble is 85. Country singer Don Reid (The Statler Brothers) is 79. Rock musician Freddie Stone (AKA Freddie Stewart) (Sly and the Family Stone) is 77. Rock singer Laurie Anderson is 77. Country singer Gail Davies is 76. Author Ken Follett is 75. Financial guru Suze Orman is 73. Rock musician Nicko McBrain (Iron Maiden) is 72. Jazz musician Peter Erskine is 70. Jazz musician Kenny G is 68. Rock singer Richard Butler (Psychedelic Furs) is 68. Actor Beth Hall is 66. Actor Jeff Garlin is 62. Actor Karen Sillas is 61. Actor Ron Livingston is 57. Singer Brian McKnight is 55. Rock musician Claus Norreen (Aqua) is 54. Actor Mark Wahlberg is 53. Actor Chad Allen is 50. Rock musician P-Nut (311) is 50. Actor Navi Rawat (ROH'-waht) is 47. Actor Liza Weil is 47. Rock musician Pete Wentz (Fall Out Boy) is 45. Rock musician Seb Lefebvre (Simple Plan) is 43. Actor Chelsey Crisp is 41. Actor Amanda Crew is 38. Musician/songwriter/producer DJ Mustard is 34. Actor Sophie Lowe is 34. Actor Hank Greenspan is 14.