

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, June 8

Inaugural Groton Day of Baseball/Softball
Junior Legion hosts W.I.N., 5 p.m. (1)
Legion hosts W.I.N., 7 p.m. (1)
Junior Teeners hosts Redfield, 3 p.m. (1)
U12 All host Britton
U10 All hosts Columbia
U8 R/B hosts Britton
SB hosts Britton (U8 at 9 a.m. (2), U10 Gld at 11 a.m. (1), U10 Blk at noon (1), U12 at 1 p.m. (2))
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.



Sunday, June 9

U12 All at Sisseton Tourney
United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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1440

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US Hiring Rises

US employers added 272,000 nonfarm jobs in May, exceeding economist estimates of 190,000 and surpassing the downwardly revised 165,000 jobs in April, according to government data released yesterday. However, the unemployment rate rose to 4%, the highest jobless level since January 2022. Economists had expected the rate to remain unchanged from April's 3.9%.

Most of the jobs in May were added in healthcare (68,000), government (43,000), and leisure and hospitality (42,000). Average hourly earnings in May were also higher than expected, rising 0.4% month-over-month and 4.1% year-over-year.

Analysts say the report suggests the economy continues to be resilient and lowers the likelihood of any interest rate cuts until after September; the Federal Reserve previously projected three rate cuts this year. The Fed is expected to leave its benchmark federal funds rate—which has been at a range between 5.25% and 5.5% since July—unchanged at its meeting next week.

Houthi rebels detain Yemeni international aid workers.

The Houthis, who took control of Yemen's capital nearly 10 years ago, reportedly detained the group of international aid workers following a series of raids. Of those detained, at least 11 are UN staffers, three are from a US-funded prodemocracy group, and three are from local human rights organizations. The circumstances of the detainment are unclear.

Phoenix and Las Vegas break daily records as western US swelters.

Phoenix reached 113 degrees Thursday, breaking a record for the hottest daily temperature for this time of year that was last set with 111 degrees in 2016. Las Vegas also broke a record, reaching 111 degrees. Extreme temperatures are expected to continue through today in California, Nevada, and Arizona thanks to a heat dome (see 101).

Supreme Court justice's 2023 financial disclosures released.

Supreme Court justices have long been required to annually disclose their finances, including conflicts of interest. They have come under closer scrutiny after a 2023 report found Justice Clarence Thomas accepted paid vacations and gifts without disclosure. The filings for 2023 showed Thomas amended his 2019 disclosure to include two trips paid for by billionaire Harlan Crow. The filings (see here) also revealed book royalties earned by four justices, rental properties, and more.

Last leg of horse racing's Triple Crown takes place today.

Saratoga Springs, New York, hosts the Belmont Stakes (6:41 pm ET, Fox) for the first time due to construction at Belmont Park, New York, where the race typically occurs. Another change for the 156th running of the Belmont Stakes is the prize increase of \$2M, from \$1.5M in 2023. The winners of this year's Kentucky Derby (Mystik Dan) and Preakness (Seize the Grey) are among the 10 horses competing in the last leg.

Oklahoma wins record fourth straight NCAA softball title.

The Oklahoma Sooners defeated the Texas Longhorns 8-4 in Game 2 of the 2024 Women's College World Series championship, securing their fourth consecutive win and their eighth overall title. Oklahoma is now tied with Arizona for the second most championships won, behind UCLA's 12 championships.

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US defeats Pakistan in historic upset at cricket World Cup.

The US is cohosting the T20 World Cup and participating in it for the first time ever. Team USA, which features all part-time players, beat Pakistan in the group-stage round of the tournament. Pakistan won the T20 World Cup in 2009 and was runner-up in 2007 and 2022. Pakistan's match against rival India, which won in 2007 and was runner-up in 2014, takes place tomorrow. Cricket is the second most watched sport in the world, behind soccer.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Maria B. in Ontario, Canada.

"Recently I topped up my gas tank with premium gas (approximately half a tank). I proceeded to the kiosk to pay and another woman and I met at the door at the same time. We both said, 'Go ahead.' She said, 'You go ahead because I don't want to leave my bicycle unattended out here.' I said, 'Well, you go first and I'll watch your bike.' She thanked me and went in. On her way out she said, 'Thanks so much for watching my bike—you don't have to worry about the gas, I got it.' I was truly surprised and very thankful!"

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GFP Commission Holds June Meeting

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Park (GFP) Commission held their monthly meeting on June 6-7 at the NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Center in Yankton.

Wildlife Proposals

Antelope Hunting Season

The Commission continued discussions regarding the 2024 and 2025 Firearms Antelope Hunting Seasons for the following dates:

Sept 28-Oct. 13, 2024

Oct 4 – Oct 19, 2025

The proposal allows an individual that applies for a special antelope license to apply for an antelope license in the second lottery drawing instead of the third drawing as previously allowed.

The proposal also had minor unit boundary adjustments for Butte County and the Stanley and Jones County portions of the Ft. Pierre National Grasslands.

The Commission also proposed to restrict landowner own land license types to one buck antelope license. Previously, landowner own land licenses had allowed one any antelope license or one two-tag any antelope and any doe-fawn antelope license. Additionally, the Commission proposed to close the mentored youth antelope season to increase antelope population growth across the state, thus eliminating all doe harvest.

The proposal would also do away with the five archery antelope access permits for Custer and Pennington Counties within the Black Hills Fire Protection District.

License numbers for the 2024 and 2025 seasons will be proposed at the July meeting.

Spring Turkey

The Commission proposed the 2025 and 2026 Spring Turkey Hunting Seasons with the following dates:

2025
April 12 – May 31, 2025 Single-season prairie units

April 26 – May 31, 2025 Black Hills and Black Hills archery

April 12 – 30, 2025 Split-season early prairie units (08A and 44A) and unit 58B

May 1 – 31, 2025 Split-season late prairie units (08B and 44B)

April 12 –30, 2025 Access Permit Areas

2026

April 11 – May 31, 2026 Single-season prairie units

April 25 – May 31, 2026 Black Hills and Black Hills archery

April 11 – 30, 2026 Split-season early prairie units (08A and 44A) and unit 58B

May 1 – 31, 2026 Split-season late prairie units (08B and 44B)

April 11 –30, 2026 Access Permit Areas

* Depending on the geographic area being hunted, the mentored and archery spring seasons align with the prairie and Black Hills seasons, respectively.

The Commission proposed to expand the archery statewide turkey hunting unit to include the portion of Lake County south of State Highway 34.

The Commission proposed to change the name of the unit including Aurora and Douglas Counties to PST-10A from PST-18A.

License numbers for the 2025 and 2026 seasons will be proposed at the July and September meetings.

Fall Turkey

The Commission proposed the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Fall Turkey Hunting Seasons with the following dates of Nov. 1 – Jan 31.

The Commission proposed to exclude Douglas County from Unit PFT-17A (Charles Mix County) and change the name of the unit including Aurora and Douglas Counties to PFT-10A from PFT-18A .

The Commission also proposed to open Unit PFT-58 (Stanley County), for fall turkey hunting.

License numbers for the 2024 and 2025 seasons will be proposed at the July meeting.

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Air Rifle

The Commission proposed to reduce the air gun muzzle velocity minimum from 1,000 feet per second to 600 feet per second to hunt cottontail rabbit, red squirrel, fox squirrel, grey squirrel, and any species defined as a predator/varmint. This list includes coyote, gray fox, red fox, skunk, gopher, ground squirrel, chipmunk, jackrabbit, marmot, opossum, porcupine, crow, and prairie dog.

Parks Proposals

License Entrance Fees

Senate Bill 55 was introduced by the Department during the 2024 Legislative Session and was passed and signed by the Governor. The new law amended SDCL 41-17-13 to eliminate the option to purchase a discounted second annual park entrance license through the stub/coupon method and eliminated the ability to buy multiple discounted annuals through common vehicle registration.

The Commission proposed to eliminate the stub/coupon method of discounted park entrance licenses and multiple discounted annual process using vehicle registrations.

The proposal would formalize the availability of a double license option (one full price license and one-half price license when purchased together). There are no limits on how many double licenses may be purchased.

Wildlife Finalizations

Landowner Own Land Prairie Antlerless Elk Hunting License

During the 2024 South Dakota Legislative session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 173, an act to provide a landowner own land elk license for antlerless elk in the prairie elk season.

The Commission created such a license within the Prairie Elk Season with the following qualifications:

An applicant must own/lease a minimum of 240 acres for agricultural purposes within a prairie elk unit.

Members of the qualifying landowner-operator's family including grandparents, parents, spouse, children, children's spouse, or grandchildren who live on the ranch or in the closest community and have an active role in the ranch operation also qualify.

Only one qualifying applicant per ranch unit per year may purchase a landowner own land license.

A qualifying applicant for a ranch unit may not purchase a landowner own land elk license if any qualifying member of the ranch unit holds an elk license in the prairie elk hunting season.

A ranch unit is described as all private property owned and leased for agricultural purposes by written agreement by an individual qualifying landowner in the state; and,

A ranch unit may not be subdivided for the purposes of qualifying for more than one landowner own land elk license.

The Commission amended the proposal to include Harding County Units PRE-35A and PRE-35B to the list of eligible areas for this license and finalized as amended.

Raccoon Hunting Season

The Commission voted to allow nonresidents to use dogs, statewide, as an aid in the taking of a raccoon within the existing nonresident raccoon season structure.

Elk Raffle License

The Commission voted to allow someone who had previously held an elk raffle license the ability to win another raffle license. However, a person is still limited to one elk license in an individual year.

Public Comment Opportunity and Upcoming Meeting

To hear the discussion on any of the topics on the agenda, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these documents in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, public comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT, July 7.

The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on July 11-12 2024, starting at 1 pm CST in Sioux Falls.

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Service Notice: Merle Harder

Merle E. Harder passed away Tuesday, June 4, 2024 at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, SD at the age of 78. A Memorial service will be held at 3:00 p.m., on Sunday, June 30th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Jeremy Yeadon and Rev. Craig Crams will officiate. Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

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Groton Chamber of Commerce

June 5, 2024

12pm City Hall

• Individuals present: Hannah Gruenwald, Katelyn Nehlich, Topper Tastad, Ashley Bentz, April Abeln and Douglas Heinrich

• Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Heinrich and seconded by Tastad. All members present voted aye.

• Treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$37,607.50. \$2,374.80 is in the Bucks account. Abeln will check to see why the Princess Prom donation check hasn't cleared. The report was approved by Tastad and seconded by Abeln. All members present voted aye.

• Information on the Spirit of Dakota Award was passed around as well as a thank you from Claire Heinrich, one of our 2024 scholarship recipients.

• Briggs Sperry, the bike recipient from the Lion's Easter Egg Hunt has submitted a receipt and has been reimbursed.

• BK Custom T's created 3 designs for our 2024 Chamber shirts. It was decided to offer all 3 designs since there will be online ordering available. Abeln will see what other styles are available. It was decided to table discussion on where proceeds will go until we hear if we are awarded the POET grant.

• Nehlich's Dacotah Bank Give Where You Live monetary donation will be given to the Chamber again this year.

• Designs for tumblers were handed out. Abeln will reach out to Aberdeen Awards for a quote for the tumblers with a handle. Tumblers may also be sold this year instead of just being used for gifts.

• Heinrich and Abeln completed the POET Community Grant application for Main Street flags.

• A quote for garbage cans like Dairy Queens was received for \$5323 for 4 units.

• Tastad gave a report on the finished bench restoration project and requested \$3600 for supplies and labor for the completed benches. Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich to make that payment. All members present voted aye.

• Main Street planters have been set out by city employees and plants have been planted and donated by Weber Landscaping. Paul Kosel has reached out to businesses to keep them watered.

• Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Abeln to advertise on the top page rotator of the Aberdeen Insider for 1 month for \$376. Gruenwald will ask for more details and suggested Canva.com be used to create an ad.

• Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich to promote Forever 605 Day with a Facebook giveaway. Viewers are encouraged to like, share, and comment with their favorite SD picture to win a basket of Groton Chamber and Forever 605 goodies. The winner will be drawn at the next meeting.

• Discussion was held on donating to a new event in the city park. Event will be held July 27th and will include a rib fest, cornhole tournament, beer gardens and possible band. More information will be available at the next meeting regarding sponsorship.

• Subway is reopening under new owners, Beau and Chelsea Larson from Webster's Subway. A grand opening is set for June 12th from 10am-8pm. Abeln will check with them on a business welcome.

• Hope Block would like to step down from Facebook Coordinator, but a replacement has not been found.

• Next Meeting: July 3rd, 2024, at City Hall at 12:00pm

Upcoming events

• 06/08/2024 Inaugural Groton Day of Baseball/Softball

• 06/14/2024 SDSU Alumni & Friends Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Shotgun Start

• 06/17/2024 Women's 2-Person Scramble at Olive Grove 9am Registration 10am Shotgun Start

• 06/20/2024 Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 5-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)

• 06/22/2024 Groton Triathlon 9am-5pm • 06/22/2024 U8 Youth Baseball Tourney

• 06/24/2024 JVT Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-6pm

• 06/29/2024 U10 Youth Baseball Tourney • 06/30/2024 U12 Youth Baseball Tourney

• 07/04/2024 His & Hers Firecracker Tourney at Olive Grove 9am Registration 10am Start (4th of July)

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

June 11, 2024 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Aberdeen Development Corporation Presentation
5. Jessi Paysen & Jodi Hepperle, Behavioral Health & Addiction Care Services
 - a. Discuss Services for Brown County & FY2025 Budget Request
6. Public Hearing for Temporary Special Event Alcohol License for Richmond Lake Association
7. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Temporary Special Event Alcohol Permit for Stacy Gossman DBA: Flying Pig
8. Approve & Authorize Advertising RFP for Court Appointed Attorneys
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2024
 - b. Approval of Primary Election Canvass of June 7, 2024
 - c. Claims
 - d. HR Report
 - e. Lease Agreements
 - f. Landfill Tonnage Report for May
 - g. Travel Requests
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

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

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

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

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

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

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Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors

4.0 GPA: Emily Clark, Hannah Monson, Camryn Kurtz, Holden Sippel, Claire Heinrich, Kyleigh Englund, Cadence Feist, Abigail Jensen, Emma Schinkel, Lydia Meier, Anna Fjeldheim, Bradin Althoff, Anna Bisbee, Faith Flihs, Sydney Leicht, Ashlyn Sperry

3.99-3.50: Logan Ringgenberg, Lexi Osterman, Colby Dunker, Lane Tietz, Ava Wienk, Jacob Zak, Austin Aberle, Shea Jandel, Karsyn Jangula

3.49-3.00: Carly Guthmiller, Jackson Garstecki, Kate Profeta, Dillon Abeln, Bryson Wambach

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Gretchen Dinger, Axel Warrington, Faith Traphagen, Elizabeth Flihs, Blake Pauli, Emma Kutter, Diego Eduardo Nava Remigio, Logan Pearson, Laila Roberts, Payton Mitchell

3.99-3.50: Brooklyn Hansen, Kennedy Hansen, Kaden Kampa, Kayla Lehr, Korbin Kucker, Carter Simon, Turner Thompson, Jeslyn Kosel, Abby Yeadon

3.49-3.00: Easten Ekern, Corbin Weismantel, Ashlyn Feser, Brevin Flihs, Kellen Antonsen

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Nathan Unzen

3.99-3.50: Mia Crank, Ryder Johnson, Raelee Lilly, Gage Sippel, Talli Wright, Rylee Dunker, Karsten Flihs, Aiden Meyers, De Eh Tha Say, Keegen Tracy, Natalia Warrington, Paisley Mitchell, Hannah Sandness

3.49-3.00: Garrett Schultz, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Benjamin Hoeft, Cali Tollifson, Logan Warrington, Breslyn Jeschke, Cambria Bonn, Jayden Schwan, Karter Moody, London Bahr

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Kira Clocksene, Teagan Hanten, Carlee Johnson, Emerlee Jones, Ashlynn Warrington, Colt Williamson

3.99-3.50: Liby Althoff, Brody Lord, McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Blake Lord, Zander Harry, Halee Harder, Gavin Kroll, Avery Crank, Hailey Pauli

3.49-3.00: Aiden Strom, Skyler Kramer, Addison Hoffman Wipf, Leah Jones, Claire Schuelke, Dylan Alexander Lopez Marin, Alyssa Beauchamp, Brenna Imrie, Walker Zoellner, Jackson Hopfinger

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Makenna Krause

3.99-3.50: Layne Johnson, Thomas Schuster, Mya Feser, Kyleigh Kroll, Addison Hoeft, Chesney Weber, Rylen Ekern, Sydney Locke, Ryder Schelle, Rylie Rose, Elizabeth Cole, Ruelle Gilbert, Ethan Kroll, Taryn Thompson, Jace Johnson, Gracie Pearson, Easton Weber, Wyatt Wambach, Alex Abeln

3.49-3.00: John Bisbee, Brysen Sandness, Kinsley Rowen, Karson Zak, Brayden Barrera, Ella Kettner, Audrey Davis, Aimee Heilman, Kason Oswald

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Neely Althoff, Wesley Borg, Madison Herrick, Brooklyn Spanier, Novalea Warrington

3.99-3.50: Aspen Beto, Abby Fjeldheim, Zachary Flihs, Tevan Hanson, Asher Johnson, Kolton Antonsen, Lincoln Shilhanek, Logan Olson, Arianna Dinger, Savannah Beauchamp, Connor Kroll, Madison Little, Jordan Schwan, Aurora Washenberger

3.49-3.00: Adeline Kotzer, Sydney Holmes, Wesley Morehouse, Kenzey Anderson, Samuel Crank, Kaedynce Bonn, Tenley Frost, Grayson Flores

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Axel Abeln, Hudson Eichler, Amelia Ewalt, Gavin Hanten, Liam Johnson, Liam Lord

3.99-3.50: Asher Zimmerman, Haden Harder, Jameson Penning, Ryder Schwan, Sophia Flihs, Trey Tietz, Elias Heilman, Trayce Schelle, Illyanna Dallaire, Dawson Feist, Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Nolan Bahr, Andi Gauer, Peyton Castles, Jace Hofer

3.49-3.00: Major Dolan, Rowan Patterson, Tucker Leicht, Wyatt Morehouse, Gavin Younger, Kinzleigh Furman



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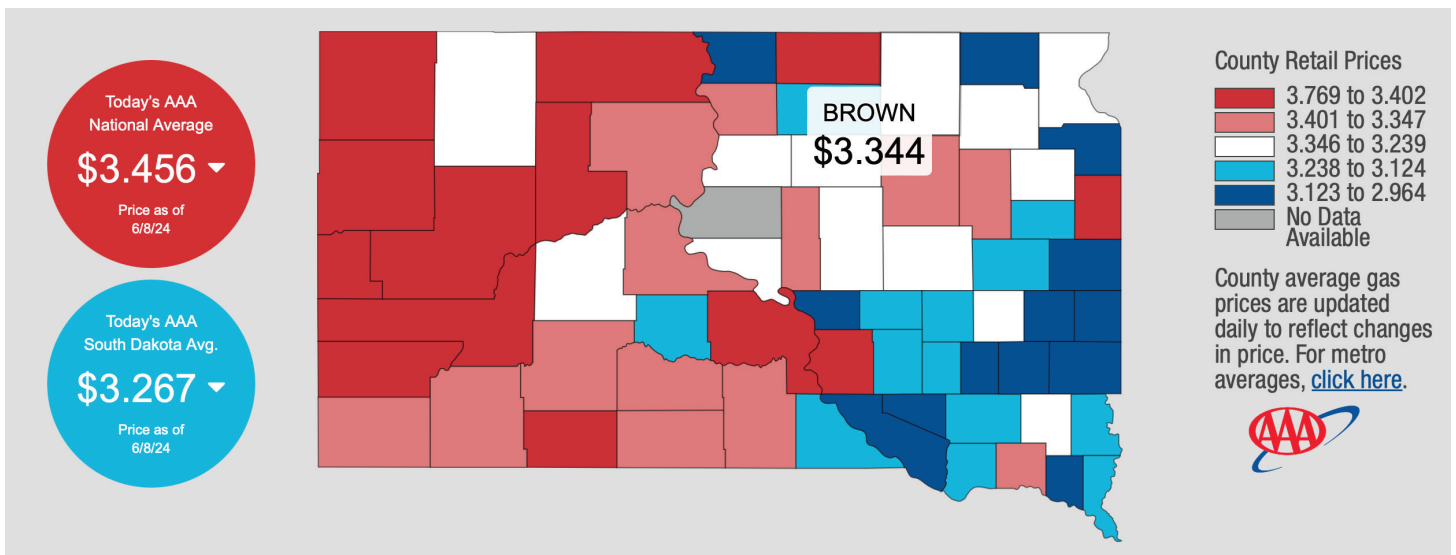
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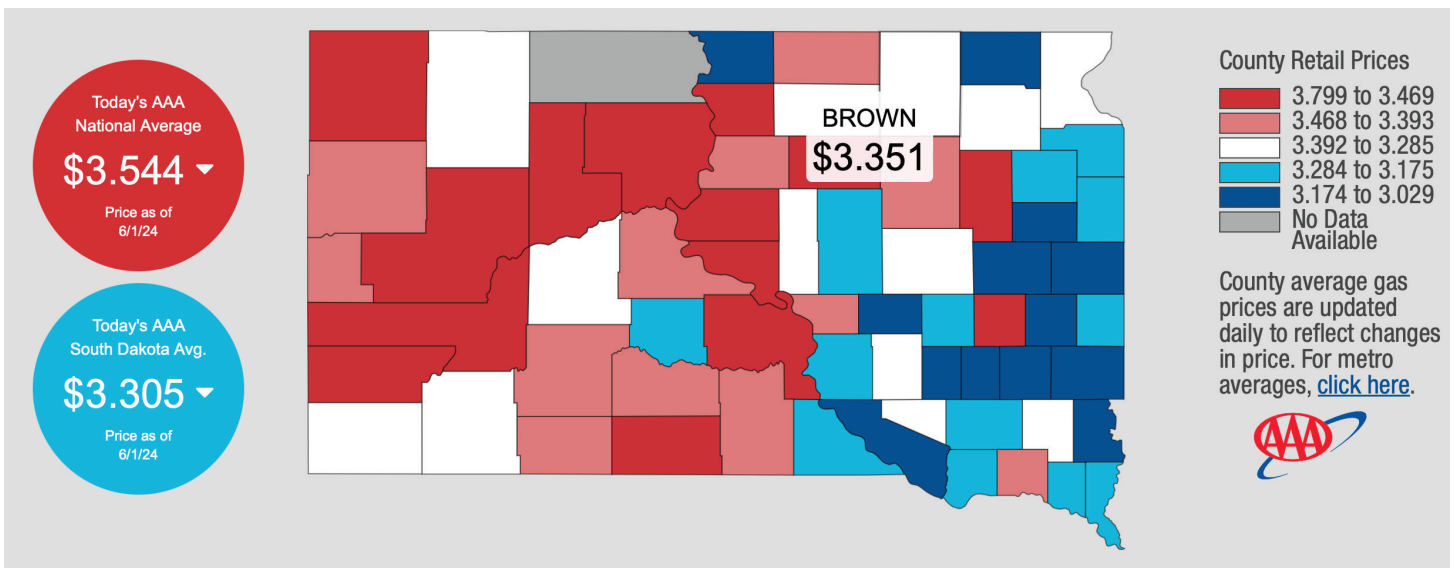
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.267	\$3.455	\$3.890	\$3.418
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.278	\$3.459	\$3.894	\$3.437
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.305	\$3.487	\$3.926	\$3.461
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.339	\$3.502	\$3.932	\$3.628
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.468	\$3.611	\$4.084	\$3.750

This Week



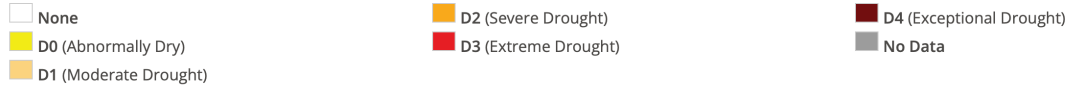
Last Week



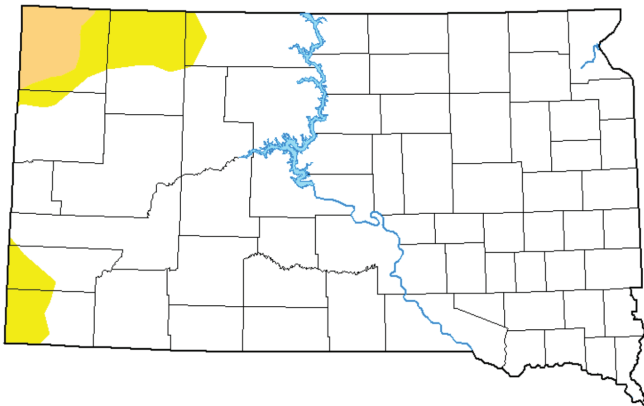
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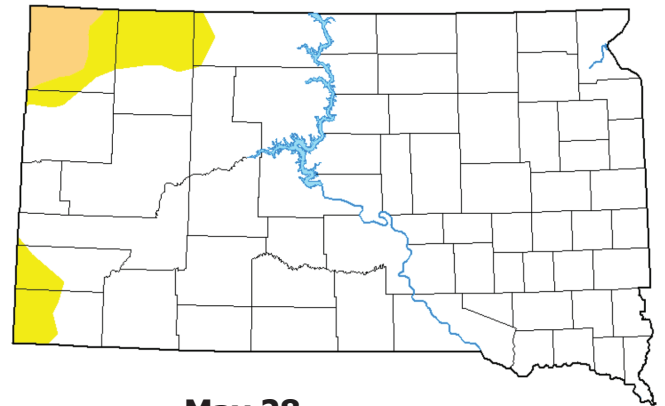
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



June 1



May 28

Widespread heavy precipitation (1 to 3 inches, locally more) resulted in a 1-category improvement to parts of Kansas, eastern Colorado, and southeastern Nebraska. A small area of long-term D1 was maintained for southeastern Nebraska that received less than 1 inch of precipitation this past week and a long-term drought signal continues. Based on neutral or wet soil moisture percentiles and NDMC drought blends, a 1-category improvement was made to northwestern North Dakota where more than 1 inch of precipitation occurred this past week. 30 to 60-day SPI and soil moisture indicators supported an expansion of abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1) for northern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming

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Groton Transit Fundraiser

Thursday, June 20th, 2024

5:00 pm - 7:00pm at

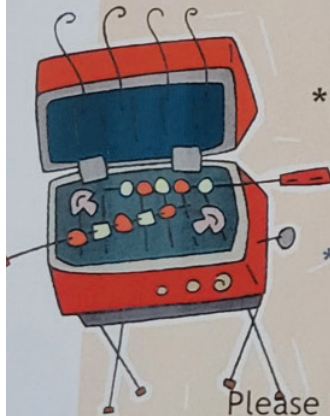
Groton Community Center

109 N 3rd Street-One block East of Groton Transit

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Fund to compensate radiation victims, including in SD, expires without U.S. House action

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JUNE 8, 2024 6:00 AM

A federal program to compensate Americans sickened by radiation from government activities during the Cold War — including at uranium mining and milling sites in South Dakota — expired Friday as advocates vowed to continue pushing Congress for action.

The United States conducted nearly 200 atmospheric nuclear weapons tests during the 1940s, '50s and '60s while supporting uranium mining and milling, all of which exposed people in some states to unhealthy levels of radiation. Uranium is the element used to produce the atomic fission in nuclear bombs.

Congress passed the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act in 1990 and expanded its scope in 2000. A fund created by the act has paid more than \$2 billion to about 55,000 claimants diagnosed with diseases such as lung cancer, pulmonary fibrosis or silicosis after working or living in an area covered by the legislation.

As of last year, the fund had awarded 76 South Dakotans a total of \$6.56 million. The state is included in the program because of the uranium mining and milling that occurred within its borders, most notably in the Edgemont areasouth of the Black Hills.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, signed a letter to House leadership last month urging a vote to reauthorize the fund.

"Congress must not forget those innocent people who were irradiated and permanently impacted — simply because of where they lived or how they tried to earn a living for their families," the letter said.

House Delegate James Moylan, R-Guam, has introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would reauthorize the fund and expand eligibility to additional areas. The amendment is one of many that representatives are hoping to tack on to the defense spending bill as soon as next week.

"We will continue this fight until the job gets done," Moylan said Wednesday in a news release.

The U.S. Senate voted in March to expand eligibility and extend the life of the radiation compensation



A sign identifies a repository near Edgemont where 4 million tons of radioactive tailings from a former uranium mill have been buried since the 1980s. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

fund, but the House has not acted on it. The Senate bill passed with support from Republican Mike Rounds of South Dakota but opposition from his fellow South Dakota Republican John Thune.

South Dakota Searchlight requests to the senators' offices for comments on their votes have not been answered.

Former lawmaker Turbak Berry will lead new group supporting abortion-rights amendment

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 7, 2024 4:03 PM

Organizers of the campaign to enshrine abortion rights in the South Dakota state constitution announced Friday that Democratic former lawmaker, former magistrate judge and Watertown lawyer Nancy Turbak Berry will lead a new group supporting the effort.

Turbak Berry will chair the Freedom Amendment Coalition to support the Nov. 5 ballot question that would reinstate abortion rights in the state. The announcement came from Dakotans for Health, the ballot question committee that gathered the thousands of signatures required to put the measure on the ballot.

Turbak Berry served as a lawmaker for four years in the 2000s and has been an outspoken advocate for reproductive rights, open government and privacy rights.

The issue motivated her campaign for the Legislature after lawmakers passed an abortion ban in 2006. Voters repealed the law later that year and Democrats gained legislative seats for two consecutive elections.

The semi-retired lawyer and founder of Turbak Law Office introduced unsuccessful bills during her legislative tenure to include contraception drugs and devices under health insurance. In 2008, she was invited to give the commencement speech at Presentation College before the institution rescinded the offer because of her position on abortion, according to news reports at the time.

"I have never really been interested in politics. I hate partisan politics. I'm interested in public policy," Turbak Berry said. "This has pretty much always been an issue that prompts me to get involved. Then I have to hold my nose and deal with politics in the process."

As chair of the new coalition, Turbak Berry said her focus is to "tell the truth about the crushing injustice of South Dakota's current anti-abortion law" and to work with groups and people who support the initiative across the state.

Turbak Berry also called on Gov. Kristi Noem to convene a special session of the Legislature to "repeal our extreme abortion ban." The ban — with one exception to "preserve the life of the pregnant female" — took effect in 2022 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The proposed state constitutional amendment would legalize abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy but allow the state to impose limited regulations in the second trimester and a ban in the third trimester, with exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

The American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood have said they don't plan to support the



Nancy Turbak Berry is the founder of Turbak Law Office in Watertown. (Courtesy

of Turbak Law Office)

constitutional amendment, due to what their local leaders described as the amendment's hasty drafting and lack of adequate input from stakeholders. Turbak Berry said she is focused on local groups, such as lawyers, medical professionals and others who support the amendment.

"It's about women's reproductive freedom. We had it. They took it away. We want it back," she said.

Turbak Berry is remembered as a legislator who used her legal background and debating skills to stand out as one of 18 female lawmakers at the time (including then-legislator and current Gov. Noem) in a Legislature with 105 seats.

Gary Hanson is a Democratic former state senator from Sisseton who served as assistant minority leader at the time. He remembers Turbak Berry as someone who worked across the aisle and was "well schooled" on each bill. Hanson said Turbak Berry's choice to return to the South Dakota political fray is significant for Democrats.

"I think it's good for the Democratic Party," Hanson said. "A lot of the issues she was fighting for out there are Democrat-involved. It's refreshing to see her active again."

Turbak Berry has practiced law in Watertown since 1982 and has two sons who are taking over her law firm.

The Life Defense Fund, which is opposing the abortion-rights ballot question, is planning a legal challenge against the validity of the measure's petition signatures. Co-chair Leslee Unruh issued a statement to South Dakota Searchlight referencing Turbak Berry and Rick Weiland of Dakotans for Health.

"Nancy Turbak Berry and Rick Weiland need to acknowledge the forgotten woman hurt by abortion and dignity of all human life," Unruh said, in part.

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.

Republican primary shakeup continues to play out at state convention

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 7, 2024 3:27 PM

The Republican Party divide that was evident in Tuesday's primary election continued to play out Thursday and Friday as rival factions clashed during the state party convention, with more turmoil expected Saturday.

Fourteen Republican legislators lost their primary races Tuesday to fellow Republicans. Two days later, party delegates from around South Dakota gathered in Pierre.

"There is a lot of frustration from the grassroots people who have come to partake in the convention," said Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton, who won her primary.

She said some of those people feel party officials are attempting to sideline the everyday Republicans who make up the base of the party.

"That is the heartbeat of the Republicans of the state of South Dakota," Lems said.



Rep. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, speaks on the House floor on Jan. 16, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Property rights debate

She described the divide as "the corporatists" who currently run the state versus "the constitutionalists"

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who gained ground during Tuesday's election.

A major factor in the primary was a division over the proposed multi-billion-dollar Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline. It would cross farms, ranches and other private property to transport carbon dioxide captured from Midwest ethanol plants to North Dakota for underground storage. Summit wants to capitalize on federal tax incentives to keep heat-trapping carbon out of the atmosphere.

Lems and others in her faction have pushed to prevent the project from using the legal right of eminent domain to cross private property. Others in the party — including some of the incumbents who lost Tuesday — helped pass a bill during the last legislative session that implements new protections for landowners but also preserves a path forward for the project.

"That is why they went down, and that is why they will continue to lose," Lems said.

Pat Powers, a Republican who is at the convention and writes the Dakota War College political blog, sees it differently.

"They believe themselves to be the base, but they don't take into account the other 80% of registered Republicans," Powers said. "They are by no means reflective of the views of South Dakota Republicans as a whole."

He said the allegation that some people at the convention are being sidelined is "silliness."

"If they have the votes, they can do what they want," Powers said.

Races for party nominations, positions

The rift has been underscored during the convention by a newly announced challenge to incumbent Public Utilities Commissioner Kristie Fiegen, from Amber Christenson of Rapid City. The PUC position is the only nomination for a public office up for grabs at the convention this year. The person chosen by convention delegates as the party's nominee will run in the Nov. 5 general election. The PUC denied Summit a project permit last year, but the company has said it plans to reapply.

There are other races at the convention for party positions. Rep. Phil Jensen, of Rapid City, is challenging Watertown Mayor and former legislator Ried Holien for the position of national committeeman.

Jensen said party members want and deserve more deeply conservative leadership.

"I want to be a voice for the grassroots," Jensen said. "These county parties have gotten organized so that they can be represented."

Powers said the national committeeman represents the state party at the national level — voting at the national party convention, coordinating with state officials and assisting in fundraising and campaigns.

After learning Jensen announced his bid for national committeeman, Powers published commentary on his Dakota War College blog calling on fellow Republicans to ask themselves "what image we want to represent."

"Because Phil Jensen might be the worst role model to represent South Dakota Republicans," Powers wrote.

Powers cited numerous controversial statements and positions taken by Jensen, including 2011 legislation from Jensen that unsuccessfully sought to expand the definition of justifiable homicide to include killings intended to protect a fetus from an abortion.

Powers also cited 2016 comments by Jensen about a tip Jensen said he received regarding "dozens of South Americans" fleeing a bus parked in Rapid City. Jensen said at the time that the tip was substantiated by a witness who "knew they were South Americans because they had different skull structures and skin tones from Mexicans."

Powers wrote that sending Jensen to the national convention would reflect poorly on the state party: "If the South Dakota Republican Party wants to portray to the rest of the nation that we are a bunch of backwater redneck crazy uncles who might be racists, then he might be a good selection."

Jensen said convention delegates are also debating language used in GOP materials.

"In the rules committee yesterday morning, they about had a riot in there," Jensen said, "And we had one of the guys on the platform committee try to get rid of the phrase 'our Judeo-Christian heritage'

because it would offend the Muslims in the state.”

Lems said one committee tried to stop attendees from including language that describes the use of eminent domain by private industry for profit as “fascism,” calling that language “too divisive.”

“We have to start saying the truth, speaking the truth,” Lems said.

State Party Chairman John Wiik did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Several other Republicans, including legislators and current or former party officials, declined to comment or did not return messages.

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.

For some rural communities, a stripped-down hospital is better than none at all

Dying rural hospitals scale back services to get federal help

BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS, STATELINE - JUNE 7, 2024 7:00 AM

On many days, some small hospitals in rural Mississippi admit just one patient — or none at all.

The hospitals are drowning in debt. The small, tight-knit communities they’ve anchored for decades can do little but watch as the hospitals shed services and staff just to stay afloat.

The federal government recently offered a lifeline: a new Medicare program designed to save dying rural hospitals that will pay them millions to stop offering inpatient services and instead focus on emergency care.

More than two dozen hospitals across the country, including five in Mississippi, have taken the offer.

Community reaction has been mixed, said Chad Netterville, director of the Mississippi Hospital Association’s Rural Health Alliance.

“Some of the community feedback is, ‘You’re giving up. You’re not a hospital any longer,’” said Netterville, himself a former administrator at a small rural hospital in south Mississippi. “In reality, the local hospital is giving up a service that’s no longer viable anyway.”

Under the new federal program, rural hospitals with fewer than 50 beds can become a “rural emergency hospital” to unlock additional government funding — about \$3.3 million extra per year plus a 5% increase in Medicare reimbursements.

But there’s a catch: Participating hospitals must stop all inpatient services. No labor and delivery, no inpatient surgeries, no inpatient psychiatric units.



(Photo by Susan J. Demas)

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Instead, they must become 24-hour emergency departments that offer some outpatient services but, on average, keep patients for 24 hours or less. They can only stabilize patients who need more acute care and transfer them out of the community to larger hospitals.

"It's not a panacea for rural health," said George Pink, deputy director of the North Carolina Rural Health Research Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "It's targeted at a small subgroup of rural hospitals, those that have typically been losing money for a long period of time and are at risk of closing."

Nearly one-third of rural hospitals around the country are at risk of closing, according to a new report from the Center for Healthcare Quality & Payment Reform, a national health policy research group. Research suggests rural hospital closures increase community death rates, harm local economies and force patients to travel farther for care.

In 2020, Congress established the Rural Emergency Hospital program, which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services put into effect in January 2023. The goal is to preserve emergency care and at least some health services in communities that can no longer support a full-fledged hospital. More than 150 rural hospitals have closed or converted to other types of facilities in the past 15 years, primarily due to financial distress.

That distress has many causes. Rural communities have shrinking populations, leading to fewer patients filling hospital beds. Rural residents tend to be older and sicker than people in cities, requiring more expensive care. They are also more likely to be uninsured or underinsured, forcing hospitals to pick up the tab. And reimbursement rates by public and private insurers haven't kept pace with the cost of care.

In the past two years, at least 17 states have amended or enacted laws to allow hospitals to scale back their services under the new program. Other states, such as Mississippi, have existing state regulations they can modify to allow their hospitals to qualify.

Since January 2023, 27 hospitals have joined the program, out of 1,700 that researchers estimate are eligible, according to the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Pink and other experts say it's too soon to know how well the program will work. Some community hospitals are embracing the new model. Meanwhile, some for-profit health care companies are testing whether a rural emergency hospital could be profitable.

In the middle of it all, rural communities are waiting to see what this "better-than-nothing" approach to health care will mean for them.

Community pushback

Mississippi is currently home to the most rural emergency hospitals in the nation, with five.

It's also home to a hospital management company, Progressive Health Group, that is focused on converting struggling rural hospitals to the new model. Progressive Health's CEO, Mississippi attorney Quentin Whitwell, said conversion might make sense for many hospitals — even some that aren't at death's door.

His company has converted a handful of hospitals in Mississippi, Arkansas and Georgia, with more in the works.

"We analyze hospitals that are either brought to us or that we identify, to see if we believe we can recruit the necessary providers, provide the necessary services, and be a benefit to the community," Whitwell said. Rather than trying to keep rural hospitals with empty beds and few patients open, he said, the new federal designation can provide the funding needed for a successful, leaner facility focused on select essential outpatient services, such as emergency care.

"We have contracts, letters of intent and expressions of interest in place, and are looking at hospitals from the West Coast to the East Coast," he said. "We don't necessarily have a target number of hospitals; we just want to be effective where we are."

But hospitals looking to make the switch can face pushback from their communities — and from physicians. An obstetrician in rural Alabama recently warned the state's health department that conversions

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could undermine maternal care by removing even more labor and delivery services from rural communities.

When asked about that possibility, Netterville, of the Mississippi Hospital Association, said many of Mississippi's small rural hospitals gave up their labor and delivery services long ago.

In some rural communities, converting a hospital won't result in a meaningful loss of services, said Brock Slabach, chief operations officer with the National Rural Health Association. Most of the rural hospitals that might consider converting have few patients using those services in the first place, he said.

Of the rural emergency hospitals listed in federal hospital enrollment data, nine are owned by private health care systems, while a few more are owned by hospital management companies such as Progressive Health.

It could make financial sense for larger health systems to convert smaller, less-profitable rural hospitals to rural emergency hospitals, said Pink. They would in turn funnel sicker patients from their outlying communities to the systems' larger flagship hospitals.

But, he said, "It would be a source of concern if systems are converting to this new model for the sole purpose of saving the system money, because I'm not sure that would be serving the care and access concerns of the rural community."

Changes ahead

"What do I have to give up?" is usually one of the first questions that rural hospital leaders have about the conversion program, Netterville said.

One of their biggest concerns is that converting means a hospital can't participate in some federal programs already designed to offset their costs. The 340B Drug Pricing Program, for example, allows them to purchase outpatient drugs at discount prices, while the Medicare "swing bed" program gives small, rural hospitals more flexibility in providing and billing for different types of care. Neither is available to rural emergency hospitals.

The National Rural Health Association supports some changes to the federal program, including allowing participating hospitals to be part of the 340B and swing bed programs.

But operators such as Whitwell also have been working on changes at the state level. Whitwell said his organization advocated for a bill in Mississippi that would have allowed rural emergency hospitals to license inpatient geriatric psychiatry beds on their campuses, creating another source of revenue. The bill died in committee this year, but Whitwell hopes a similar one will be filed in the next legislative session.

If a rural emergency hospital can't have a geriatric psychiatry unit under federal law, but a state authorizes the hospital's owners to separately license a unit, "that would be essentially a workaround," he said.

Stops and starts

Last May, Alliance Health Care System in Holly Springs, Mississippi, became the first hospital in the state to convert to a rural emergency hospital. Whitwell is the hospital's chief operating officer and legal counsel.

Less than a year later, the federal Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services rescinded its new status, saying the hospital is too close to Memphis, Tennessee, to meet its definition of "rural."

Hospital leadership had just laid off staff and shuttered its inpatient services to complete its transition to a rural emergency hospital. Now the North Mississippi community of fewer than 7,000 is without an emergency department.

Leaders assumed the hospital would be allowed to quickly return to an acute care facility, Whitwell said. "But they have forced us to relicense completely. Therefore, the hospital is essentially open without the ability to bill and collect for services."

While changes are proposed at the state and federal levels, Pink said it's still too soon to know how rural emergency hospitals will affect local communities.

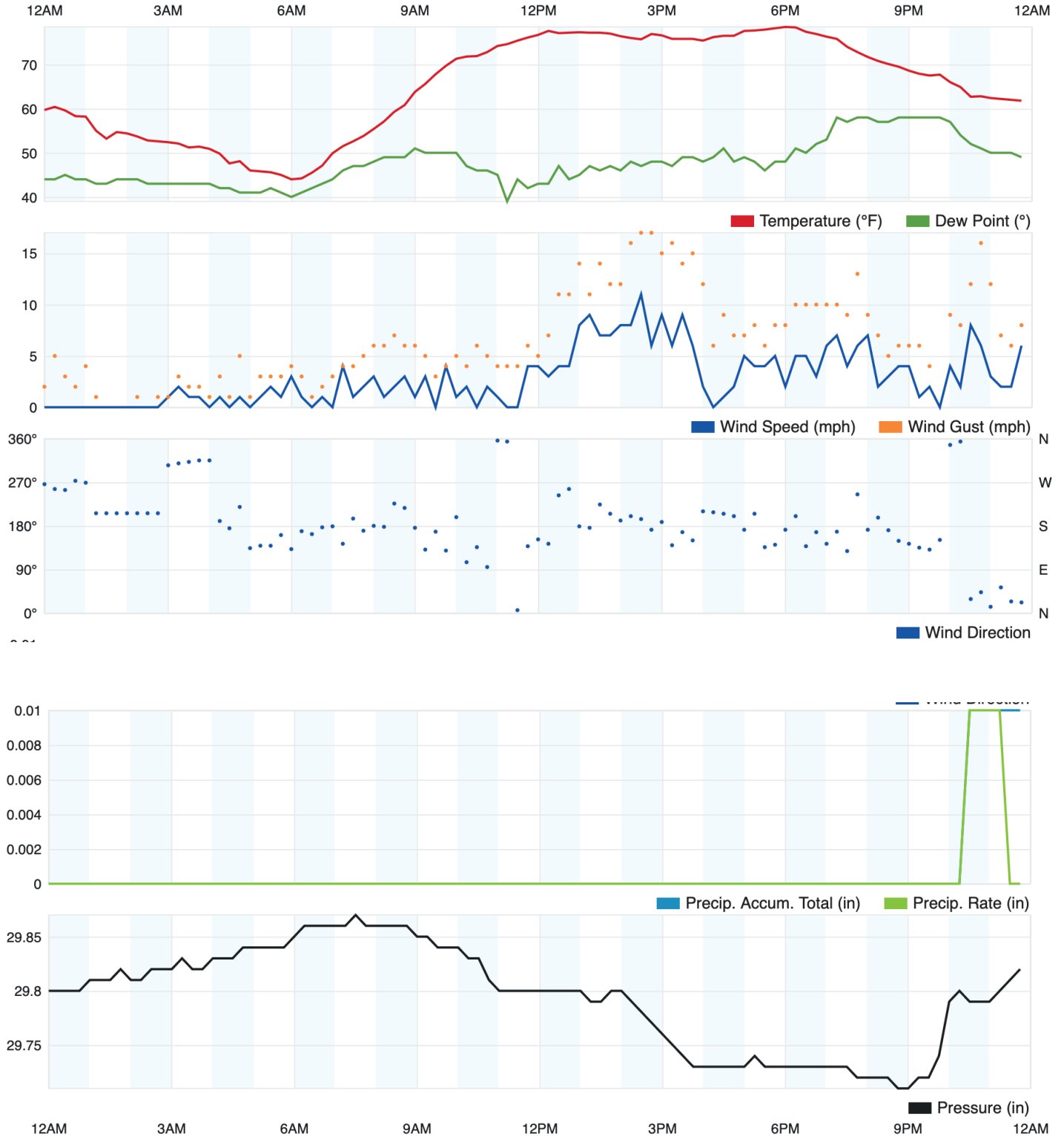
"It's a not just a different kind of hospital," he said. "It's a whole new way of doing things."

Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 77 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 49 °F

Partly Cloudy

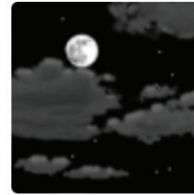
Sunday



High: 74 °F

Mostly Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 49 °F

Partly Cloudy

Monday



High: 78 °F

Mostly Sunny

Weekend Forecast

Today



70 to 78°

Tonight



47 to 52°

Sunday



70 to 77°

Central and western South Dakota has a 20-30% chance for showers and storms today and again Sunday. Most locations will see dry conditions this weekend.

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



Central and western South Dakota has a 20-30% chance for showers and storms today and again Sunday. Most locations will see dry conditions this weekend.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 5:56 PM

Low Temp: 48 °F at 5:40 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 3:10 PM

Precip: : 0.01

Day length: 15 hours, 38 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 98 in 2000

Record Low: 32 in 1938

Average High: 78

Average Low: 53

Average Precip in June.: .90

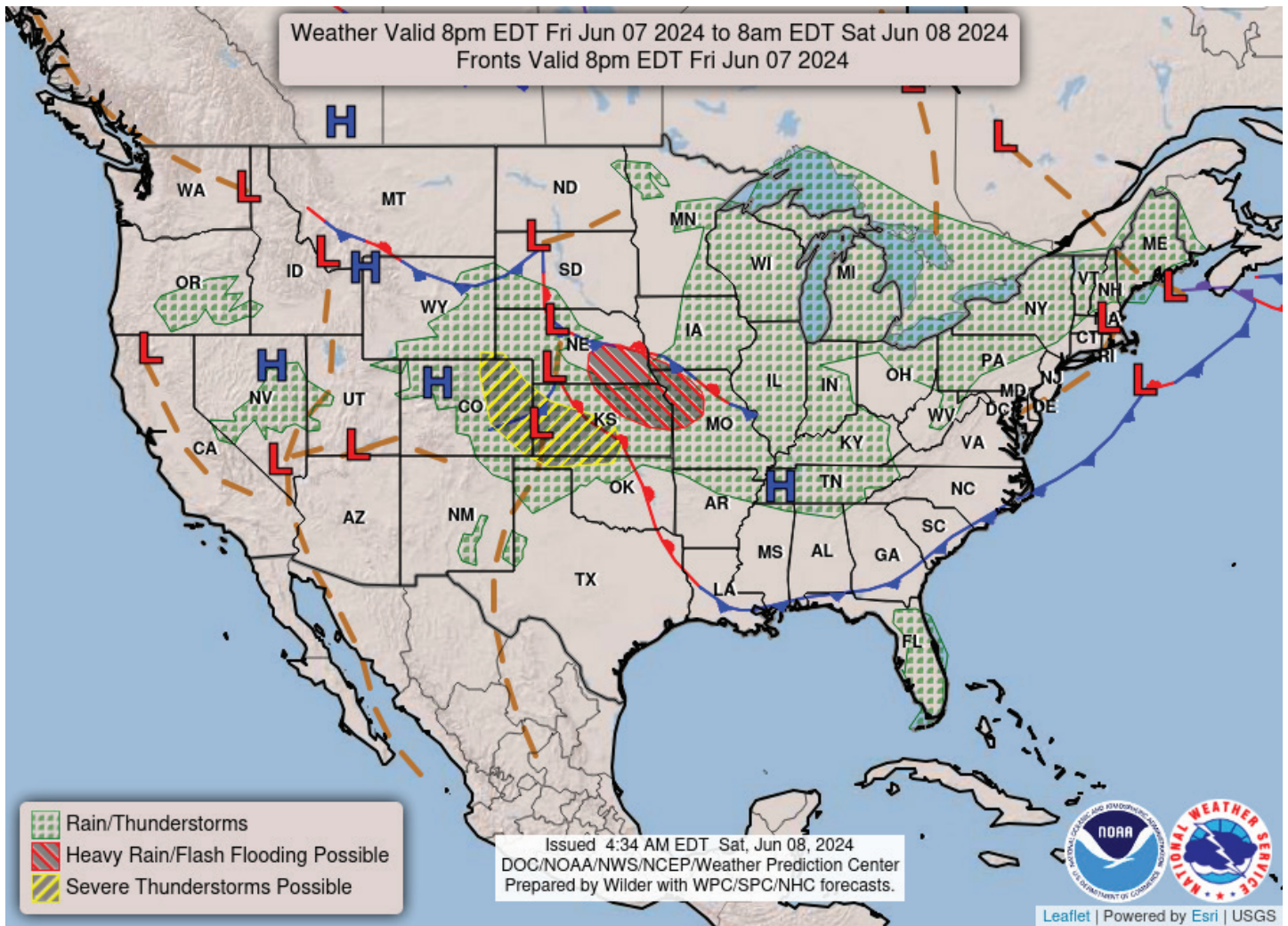
Precip to date in June: 0.08

Average Precip to date: 8.15

Precip Year to Date: 7.15

Sunset Tonight: 9:21:01 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:00 am



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Today in Weather History

June 8, 2004: Over eight inches of rain fell near Okreek in rural Todd County causing nearly \$200,000 in damage to local roads. Lightning destroyed the Okreek Community Center.

1951: A tornado was captured on motion pictures for the first time in the USA.

1953 - The worst tornado of record for the state of Michigan killed 116 persons. Flint MI was hardest hit. The tornado, half a mile in width, destroyed 200 homes on Coldwater Road killing entire families. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - A tornado ripped right through the heart of the capitol city of Topeka KS killing sixteen persons and causing 100 million dollars damage. The tornado, which struck during the evening, cut a swath of near total destruction eight miles long and four blocks wide. It was the most destructive tornado of record up until that time. (David Ludlum)

1974 - Severe thunderstorms spawned at least twenty-three tornadoes in Oklahoma during the afternoon and evening hours. One of the tornadoes struck the town Drumright killing sixteen persons and injuring 150 others. A tornado struck the National Weather Service office in Oklahoma City, and two tornadoes hit the city of Tulsa. Thunderstorms in Tulsa also produced as much as ten inches of rain. Total damage from the storms was around thirty million dollars. It was the worst natural disaster of record for Tulsa. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in the northeastern U.S. produced large hail and damaging winds in Vermont injuring two persons. Thunderstorms in Ohio produced wind gusts to 75 mph near Akron, and deluged Pittsfield with two inches of rain in thirty minutes. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Overnight thunderstorms in Iowa produced 5.20 inches of rain at Coon Rapids. Thunderstorms in the Florida Keys drenched Tavernier with 7.16 inches of rain in 24 hours. Eleven cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Central Gulf Coast Region during the day and evening. Severe thunderstorms spawned 17 tornadoes, including one which injured ten persons and caused a million dollars damage at Orange Beach, AL. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 90 mph killed three persons and injured four others at Mobile AL. Thunderstorms also deluged Walnut Hill and Avalon Beach, FL, with eight inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2001: Tropical Storm Allison hits Houston, Texas, for the second time in three days. Louisiana and southern Texas were inundated with rain. Baton Rouge received 18 inches over just a couple of days. Some portions of Texas racked up 36 inches by June 11.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

FROM FARM TO FAME

Grover Cleveland Alexander is recognized as one of the greatest baseball pitchers of all time. His record of ninety shutouts still stands and his 373 recorded victories has been achieved by only one other pitcher. In 1938 he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

From his earliest days on the farm his only desire was to play baseball and be a pitcher. He actually began his career by throwing apples and stones at fence posts between chores to sharpen his throwing skills.

One day he bought a few baseballs and nailed an old catcher's mitt to the chicken coop. He would spend every available moment throwing baseballs at the mitt and finally became successful at hitting the mitt nine times out of ten.

During his pitching career reporters mounted heaps of praise on him as his record grew and fame spread. But none of them were ever aware of the many hours he practiced with no one watching or helping him develop the skills that would eventually bring him world recognition.

Fame never comes unless one is willing to pay the price it requires. Hard work is God's plan for all of us. Those who work diligently are the recipients of many benefits in their own lives and the lives of others. God blesses those who develop the skills He gives them.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to take the gifts You give us with great humility and work with all of our might to develop them to bring honor and glory to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12



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:
06.07.24

3 5 12 22 66 7

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$30,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.05.24

3 15 17 43 49 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,900,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 14 Mins 18 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.07.24

3 12 15 25 32 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 29 Mins 19 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.05.24

12 20 23 24 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 29 Mins 18 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.05.24

4 11 20 45 49 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 58 Mins 18 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.05.24

8 44 45 51 69 12

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$206,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 58 Mins 19 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the Associated Press

Netflix's recipe for success includes 'secret sauce' spiced with Silicon Valley savvy

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

LOS GATOS, Calif. (AP) — Although its video streaming service sparkles with a Hollywood sheen, Netflix still taps its roots in Silicon Valley to stay a step ahead of traditional TV and movie studios.

The Los Gatos, California, company, based more than 300 miles away from Hollywood, frequently reaches into its technological toolbox without viewers even realizing it. It often just uses few subtle twists on the knobs of viewer recommendations to help keep its 270 million worldwide subscribers satisfied at a time when most of its streaming rivals are seeing waves of cancellations from inflation-weary subscribers.

Even when hit TV series like "The Crown" or "Bridgerton" have wide appeal, Netflix still tries to cater to the divergent tastes of its vast audience. One part of that recipe includes tailoring summaries and trailers about its smorgasbord of shows to fit the personal interests of each viewer.

So someone who likes romance might see a plot summary or video trailer for "The Crown" highlighting the relationship between Princess Diana and Charles, while another viewer more into political intrigue may be shown a clip of Queen Elizabeth in a meeting with Margaret Thatcher.

For an Oscar-nominated film like "Nyad," a lover of action might see a trailer of the title character immersed in water during one of her epic swims, while a comedy fan might see a lighthearted scene featuring some amusing banter between the two stars, Annette Bening and Jodie Foster.

Netflix is able to pull off these variations through the deep understanding of viewing habits it gleans from crunching the data from subscribers' histories with its service — including those of customers who signed up in the late 1990s when the company launched with a DVD-by-mail service that continued to operate until last September.

"It is a secret sauce for us, no doubt," Eunice Kim, Netflix's chief product officer, said while discussing the nuances of the ways Netflix tries to reel different viewers into watching different shows. "The North Star we have every day is keep people engaged, but also make sure they are incredibly satisfied with their viewing experiences."

As part of that effort, Netflix is rolling out a redesign of the home page that greets subscribers when they are watching the streaming service on a TV screen. The changes are meant to package all the information that might appeal to a subscriber's tastes in a more concise format to reduce the "gymnastics with their eyes," said Patrick Flemming, Netflix's senior director of member product.

What Netflix is doing with its previews may seem like a small thing, but it can make a huge difference, especially as people looking to save money start to winnow the number of streaming services they have.

Last year, video streaming services collectively suffered about 140 million account cancellations, a 35% increase from 2022 and nearly triple the volume in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic created a boom in demand for entertainment from people corralled at home, according to numbers compiled by the research firm Antenna.

Netflix doesn't disclose its cancellation, or churn rate, but last year its streaming service gained 30 million subscribers — marking its second-biggest annual increase behind its own growth spurt during the 2020 pandemic lockdowns.

Part of last year's subscription growth flowed from a crackdown on viewers who had been freeloading off Netflix subscribers who shared their account passwords. But the company is also benefiting from the technological know-how that helps it to keep funneling shows to customers who like them and make them think the service is worth the money, according to J. Christopher Hamilton, an assistant professor of television, radio and film at Syracuse University.

"What they have been doing is pretty ingenious and very, very strategic," Hamilton said. "They are definitely ahead of the legacy media companies who are trying to do some of the same things but just don't

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have the level of sophistication, experience nor the history of the data in their archives.”

Netflix’s nerdy heritage once was mocked by an entertainment industry that looked down at the company’s geekdom.

“It’s a little bit like, is the Albanian army going to take over the world?” former Time Warner CEO Jeff Bewkes said of Netflix during a 2010 interview after being asked about the threat Netflix posed at the time.

Not long after that put-down, Netflix began mining its viewing data to figure out how to produce a slate of original programming that would attract more subscribers — an ambitious expansion that forced Time Warner (now rolled into Warner Bros. Discovery) and other long-established entertainment companies such as Walt Disney Co. into a mad scramble to build their own streaming services.

Although those expansions initially attracted hordes of subscribers, they also resulted in massive losses that have resulted in management shakeups and drastic cutbacks, including the abrupt closure of a CNN streaming service.

What Netflix is doing with technology to retain subscribers to boost its fortunes — the company’s profit rose 20% to \$5.4 billion last year — now is widening the divide with rival services still trying to stanch their losses.

Disney’s 4-year-old streaming service recently became profitable after an overhaul engineered by CEO Bob Iger, but he thinks more work will be required to catch up with Netflix.

“We need to be at their level in terms of technology capability,” Iger said at a conference earlier this year. “We’re now in the process of creating and developing all of that technology, and obviously the gold standard there is Netflix.”

Netflix isn’t going to help its rivals by divulging its secrets, but the slicing and dicing generally starts with getting a grasp on which viewers tend to gravitate to certain genres — the broad categories include action, adventure, anime, fantasy, drama, horror, comedy, romance and documentary — and then diving deeper from there.

In some instances, Netflix’s technology will even try to divine a viewer’s mood at any given time by analyzing what titles are being browsed or clicked on. In other instances, it’s relatively easy for the technology to figure out how to make a film or TV series as appealing as possible to specific viewers. If Netflix’s data shows a subscriber has watched a lot of Hindi productions, it would be almost a no-brainer to feature clips of Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt in a role she played in the U.S. film, “Heart of Stone” instead of the movie’s lead actress, Gal Gadot.

“We want to do a really good job putting the things that you prefer in front of you,” Kim said. “Part of that is the content recommendations themselves, but it’s also about how we present the content to you.”

Macron is hosting Biden for a state visit as the two leaders try to move past trade tensions

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, ZEKE MILLER and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — President Joe Biden is being feted by French President Emmanuel Macron with a state visit Saturday as the two allies aim to show off their partnership on global security issues and move past trade tensions.

Biden and Macron attended ceremonies marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day on Thursday and met separately the following day with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Paris. The leaders both used those engagements used to underscore the urgent need to support Kyiv’s fight against Russia’s invasion.

But Macron and Biden have often chafed at the pace of support for Ukraine, especially as the United States, by far the largest contributor to Kyiv’s defense, was forced to pause aid shipments for months while congressional Republicans held up an assistance package.

The state visit began with a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe, including a wreath-laying at France’s tomb of the unknown soldier, and a military parade along the Champs-Élysées leading to the Élysée Palace, where the two will hold official meetings and deliver public statements. Later, there is a state dinner at the palace for Biden and his wife, Jill.

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Biden hosted Macron in December 2022 at the White House for the first state visit of his presidency as the COVID-19 pandemic receded.

Jill Biden flew back to Paris aboard a U.S. government plane after spending Friday in Delaware to support their son, Hunter Biden, who is standing trial on federal gun charges.

As the president's trip draws to a close, the far right is likely to emerge as one of the biggest winners in Sunday's European Parliament election while Macron's pro-European Union movement is flagging.

A top French official said Macron and Biden have a friendly and warm relationship and stressed that the U.S. president is spending five days in France, reflecting the importance he attaches to the visit. The official spoke anonymously, in line with customary practices for Macron's office.

The official said the U.S. presidential campaign was not a factor in the discussion.

Macron hosted then-President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee this year, for Bastille Day in 2017, and he came to Washington for a state visit in 2018 before their relationship soured.

U.S. and French officials said Ukraine would be at the top of Saturday's agenda, but the centerpiece of the weekend event would be the strength of the alliance, fortified at Normandy 80 years ago, but with roots far deeper.

"It's probably a good thing for us to remember that we didn't win our independence either without some foreign help or foreign assistance, specifically from France," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Friday.

Max Bergmann, a former U.S. State Department official who leads Europe research at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the U.S.-French relationship is strong despite occasional disagreements.

"There's always tension in Franco-American relations because the French try to do stuff," he said. "They're bold, they throw up proposals, and that leads to some friction when we push back."

For example, he said, France proposed putting Western trainers on the ground in Ukraine, leading to questions of whether this is "really giving Ukraine a major, tangible benefit" or has the "potential to be escalatory and dangerous."

Regarding Macron, Bergmann said, "he's the one that pushes the boundaries and throws up ideas."

Kirby said the two leaders would have an announcement Saturday on deepening maritime law enforcement cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. They also were to discuss economic and climate challenges.

While praising the Biden administration's commitment to supporting Ukraine, Macron said earlier this year that Europe must become "capable of defending its interests, with its allies by our side whenever they are willing, and alone if necessary," arguing the continent should rely less on the U.S. for its own defense.

He also warned Western powers against showing any signs of weakness to Russia as he repeatedly said that sending Western troops into Ukraine to shore up its defense should not be ruled out.

The leaders were also set to discuss their efforts to bring about a cease-fire to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, as the U.S. and Israel await Hamas' response to a Biden-promoted cease-fire proposal that would allow a surge of humanitarian assistance into the territory.

Macron is expected to raise U.S. trade practices that he has often criticized, including the Inflation Reduction Act, which favors American-made climate technology such as electric vehicles. Macron said the U.S., like China, has "decided not to respect the rules of global trade" by shoring up protections and subsidies while Europe's industry remains open and is stuck in overregulation.

The French official said Europe has to defend European interests, after watching the U.S. do the same with its own, but said Macron hopes to find a mutually acceptable outcome.

Gary Hufbauer, nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said trade with China is a sticking point between the U.S. and Europe, particularly France. The U.S. has been more eager to restrict trade, particularly regarding technology.

Biden is also moving toward tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and batteries, which could affect European cars that include Chinese parts.

Overall, Hufbauer said, "Europe wants to maintain much more trade with China than the U.S. wants."

Attacks in Russian-occupied Ukrainian regions leave 28 dead, Moscow-backed officials say

By SUSIE BLANN and ELISE MORTON undefined

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Luhansk said Ukrainian attacks left at least 28 people dead as Russia and Ukraine continued to exchange drone attacks overnight into Saturday.

A Ukrainian attack Friday on the small town of Sadove in Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region killed 22 and wounded 15 people, Moscow-backed governor Vladimir Saldo said.

Russian state news agency Tass cited Saldo as saying that Ukrainian forces first struck the town with a French-made guided bomb, then attacked again with a U.S.-supplied HIMARS missile. He said Ukrainian forces had "deliberately made a repeat strike to create greater numbers of casualties" when "residents of nearby houses ran out to help the injured".

Further east, Leonid Pasechnik, the Russia-installed governor in Ukraine's partially occupied Luhansk region, said Saturday that two more bodies had been pulled from the rubble following Friday's Ukrainian missile attack on the regional capital, also called Luhansk. Russian state news agency Interfax cited regional authorities as saying this brought the death toll to six. Pasechnik also said 60 people were wounded in the attack.

Pasechnik declared Saturday a day of mourning in the region, with public events canceled.

Ukraine did not comment on either assault.

Meanwhile, drone attacks between Russia and Ukraine persisted.

Ukraine launched a barrage of drones across Russian territory overnight Friday, Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday. Twenty-five drones were reportedly destroyed over Russia's southern Kuban and Astrakhan regions, the western Tula region, and the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula.

On Saturday morning, officials said air defenses for the first time shot down Ukrainian drones over the North Ossetia region in the North Caucasus, some 900 km (560 miles) east of the front line in Ukraine's partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said that one drone had been destroyed, whereas regional Gov. Sergei Menyailo reported three downed drones over the region. Menyailo said that the target was a military airfield.

Ukrainian air defense overnight shot down nine out of 13 Russian drones over the central Poltava region, southeastern Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions, and the Kharkiv region in the northeast, Ukraine's air force said Saturday.

Dnipropetrovsk regional Gov. Serhiy Lysak said the overnight drone attack damaged commercial and residential buildings.

Israel rescues 4 hostages kidnapped in a Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7

By SAM MEDNICK and JACK JEFFREY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel said Saturday it rescued four hostages who were kidnapped in a Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, in the largest such hostage recovery operation since the war with Hamas began in Gaza.

The army said it rescued Noa Argamani, 25; Almog Meir Jan, 21; Andrey Kozlov, 27; and Shlomi Ziv, 40, in a complex special daytime operation in Nuseirat. The hostages were rescued in two separate locations in the heart of Nuseirat, it said.

Hamas kidnapped some 250 hostages during its attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, which triggered the Israel-Hamas war. About half were released in a weeklong cease-fire in November. Israel says more than 130 hostages remain, with about a quarter of those believed dead, and divisions are deepening in the country over the best way to bring them home.

The rescue comes as international pressure mounts on Israel to limit civilian bloodshed in its war in Gaza, which reached its eighth month on Friday. Seeking a breakthrough in the apparently stalled cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return to the Middle

East next week.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its figures.

Saturday's operation is the largest recovery of alive hostages since the war erupted, bringing the total of rescued captives to seven.

Two men were rescued in February when troops stormed a heavily guarded apartment in a densely packed town and another hostage, a woman, was rescued in the aftermath of October's attack. Israeli troops have so far recovered at least 16 bodies of hostages from Gaza, according to the government.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing growing pressure to end the fighting in Gaza, with many Israelis urging him to embrace a deal announced last month by U.S. President Joe Biden, but far-right allies threatening to collapse his government if he does.

One of those rescued on Saturday, Argamani, has been one of the most widely recognized hostages since she was abducted from a music festival.

The video of her abduction was among the first to surface, images of her horrified face widely shared — Argamani detained between two men on a motorcycle, one arm outstretched and the other held down as she screams "Don't kill me!"

Her mother, Liora, has stage four brain cancer and in April released a video pleading to see her daughter before she dies.

Danish prime minister suffers minor whiplash after a man assaulted her in central Copenhagen

By JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The Danish prime minister is suffering a minor whiplash but is otherwise fine after a man assaulted her in central Copenhagen, her office said in a statement Saturday.

Police confirmed on social media Platform X on Friday that "there has been an incident" with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and that a 39-year-old man was arrested.

Frederiksen was rushed to a hospital for a check-up soon after, and though unharmed, she was "shaken by the incident," according to her office, adding that she has canceled her program for the day to rest.

The suspect is set to appear Saturday in a pre-trial custody hearing at 1100 GMT at the Copenhagen District Court in Frederiksberg, a municipality enclave within the Danish capital.

Details of the incident remain unclear but local media reported that the man seems to have forcefully walked toward Frederiksen and pushed her hard while she was passing Kultorvet Square, one of Copenhagen's main piazzas.

Two eyewitnesses, Anna Ravn and Marie Adrian, told the daily BT that they saw a man walking toward the prime minister and then "pushing her hard on the shoulder so she was shoved aside." They stressed that she did not fall down.

Another witness, Kasper Jørgensen, told the Ekstra Bladet tabloid that a well-dressed man, who seemed part of Frederiksen's protection unit, and a police officer took down the assailant.

Politicians in the Scandinavian country and abroad condemned the assault.

Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary-General, said he was shocked to hear what happened to Frederiksen, whom he called a friend.

"NATO allies stand together to protect our values, freedom, democracy and our rule of law," Stoltenberg wrote on the social media platform, X, on Saturday.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said that "an attack on a democratically elected leader is also an attack on our democracy." Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said he strongly condemned "all forms of violence against the democratically elected leaders of our free societies."

Charles Michel, president of the European Council, condemned on X what he called a "cowardly act of aggression."

European Union parliamentary elections are currently underway in Denmark and the rest of the 27-nation bloc and will conclude on Sunday.

Frederiksen has been campaigning with the Social Democrats' EU lead candidate, Christel Schaldemose. Media reports said the attack was not linked to a campaign event.

Violence against politicians has become a theme in the run-up to the EU elections. In May, a candidate from Germany's center-left Social Democrats was beaten and seriously injured while campaigning for a seat in the European Parliament.

In Slovakia, the election campaign was overshadowed by an attempt to assassinate populist Prime Minister Robert Fico on May 15, sending shockwaves through the nation of 5.4 million and reverberating throughout Europe.

Frederiksen, 46, is the leader of the Social Democratic Party and has been Denmark's prime minister since 2019.

She has steered Denmark through the global COVID-19 pandemic and a controversial 2020 decision to wipe out Denmark's entire captive mink population to minimize the risk of the small mammals retransmitting the virus.

Assaults on politicians in Denmark are rare.

On March 23, 2003, two activists threw red paint on then-Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen inside the parliament and were immediately arrested. Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller also suffered some splashes that day.

Slovaks and others go to the polls in EU elections under the shadow of an assassination attempt

By KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — Voters in Slovakia, Italy and other European Union nations are casting their ballots Saturday on the third day of elections for the European Parliament, with populist and far-right parties looking to make gains across the 27-member bloc.

In Slovakia, the election was overshadowed by an attempt to assassinate populist Prime Minister Robert Fico on May 15, sending shockwaves through the nation of 5.4 million and reverberating throughout Europe. Analysts say the attack could boost the chances of the premier's leftist Smer (Direction) party, the senior partner in the governing coalition, to win the vote.

Fico, who took office last fall after campaigning on a pro-Russian and anti-American platform, has been recovering from multiple wounds after being shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters in the town of Handlova.

He recovered in time to address the nation in a prerecorded video, his first public statement since the attack, just hours before the start of the preelection silence period on Wednesday.

Although Fico didn't talk directly about the vote, he attacked the European Union, suggesting he was a victim because of his views that differ sharply from the European mainstream.

Fico strongly opposes support for Ukraine in its war against Russia's full-scale invasion. He ended Slovakia's military aid for Ukraine after his coalition government was sworn in on Oct. 25. He also opposes EU sanctions on Russia and wants to block Ukraine from joining NATO.

Mainstream media, non-governmental organizations and the liberal opposition were also to blame for the assassination attempt, according to Fico, an allegation repeated by politicians in his governing coalition.

Soňa Szomolányi, a political science professor at Comenius University in Bratislava, said the timing of Fico's message was "no coincidence."

"It only confirms that the ruling coalition has been using the assassination (attempt) expediently and apparently effectively," Szomolányi said. As a result, "a mobilization of the supporters of Smer (at the election) can be expected," she said.

After voting in a hospital in Bratislava on Saturday, Fico said on his Facebook this election is important because "it is necessary to vote for MEPs who will support peace initiatives and not the continuation of war."

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In Italy, citizens aged 18 and above are casting ballots over two days to fill 76 European parliamentary seats, starting Saturday.

Premier Giorgia Meloni is expected to be the big winner, reflecting her far-right Brothers of Italy's growth, mostly at the expense of her coalition partners, the populist, anti-migrant League and the center-right Forza Italia. While the vote is not expected to affect the balance in the governing coalition, the result could expand Meloni's influence in the European Union, as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has not ruled out a coalition with her group.

Capitalizing on her popularity, Meloni is running as the preferential candidate, even though she has no intention of taking a European parliamentary seat.

Voters in Latvia, Malta, and the Czech Republic were also casting ballots Saturday. Final results will not be released until Sunday night, once every country has voted. The main voting day is Sunday, with citizens in 20 European countries, including Germany, France and Poland, casting their ballots for the 720-seat European Parliament.

Seats are allocated based on population, ranging from six in Malta or Luxembourg to 96 in Germany.

In Slovakia, Fico's Smer party is in a close race against the main opposition Progressive Slovakia, a pro-Western liberal party.

Fico's government has made efforts to overhaul public broadcasting — a move critics said would give the government full control of public television and radio.

That, along with his plans to amend the penal code to eliminate a special anti-graft prosecutor, has led opponents to worry that he would lead Slovakia down a more autocratic path, following the direction of neighboring Hungary under populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Thousands have repeatedly rallied in the capital and across Slovakia to protest Fico's policies.

Aneta Világi, an analyst from Comenius University, said that Smer's possible victory "will be interpreted by the coalition parties as evidence that a majority of voters still agree with the direction they're offering to the country."

UN will declare that both Israel and Hamas are violating children's rights in armed conflict

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. secretary-general will tell the Security Council next week that both Israel and Hamas are violating children's rights and leaving them exposed to danger in their war to eliminate each other.

The secretary-general annually makes a global list of states and militias that are menacing children and threatening them. Parties on the list have ranged from the Kachin Independence Army in Myanmar to — last year — Russia during its war with Ukraine.

Now Israel is set to join them.

António Guterres sends the list to the Security Council and the council can then decide whether to take action. The United States is one of five veto-wielding permanent council members and has been reluctant to act against Israel, its longtime ally.

Another permanent member is Russia and when the United Nations put Russian forces on its blacklist last year for killing boys and girls and attacking schools and hospitals in Ukraine, the council took no action.

The inclusion of Israel this month will likely just put more of a global spotlight on the country's conduct of the war in Gaza and increase already high tensions in its relationship with the global body.

The preface of last year's U.N. report says it lists parties engaged in "the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons."

The head of Guterres' office called Israel's U.N. ambassador, Gilad Erdan, on Friday to inform him that Israel would be in the report when it is sent to the council next week, U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told reporters.

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The militant Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad groups will also be listed.

Israel reacted with outrage, sending news organizations a video of Erdan berating the head of Guterres' office — who was supposedly on the other end of a phone call — and posting it on X.

"Hamas will continue even more to use schools and hospitals because this shameful decision of the secretary-general will only give Hamas hope to survive and extend the war and extend the suffering," Erdan wrote in a statement. "Shame on him!"

The Palestinian U.N. ambassador said that adding Israel to the "list of shame," will not bring back tens of thousands of our children who were killed by Israel over decades."

"But it is an important step in the right direction," Riyadh Mansour wrote in a statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "the U.N. put itself on the black list of history today" as the move heightened the long-running feud between Israel and the U.N. and even the routine mechanics of Israel's dealings with the world body are now fraught with tensions.

The normally equanimous secretary-general's spokesman broke from the good-natured tone of his noon briefing when asked to discuss the latest development.

"The call was a courtesy afforded to countries that are newly listed on the annex of the report," Dujarric said. "The partial release of that recording on Twitter is shocking and unacceptable and frankly, something I've never seen in my 24 years serving this organization."

Condemnation of the secretary-general's decision appeared to bring together Israel's increasingly fractious leadership — from the right-wing Netanyahu and Erdan to the popular centrist member of the War Cabinet, Benny Gantz.

Gantz cited Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, as saying "it matter not what say the goyim (non-Jews), what is important is what do the Jews."

For month Israel has faced heavy international criticism over civilian casualties in Gaza and questions about whether it has done enough to prevent them in the eight-month-old war. Two recent airstrikes in Gaza killed dozens of civilians.

U.N. agencies warned Wednesday that over 1 million Palestinians in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by the middle of next month if hostilities continue.

The World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization said in a joint report that hunger is worsening because of heavy restrictions on humanitarian access and the collapse of the local food system in the eight-month Israel-Hamas war.

The proportion of Palestinian women and children being killed in the Israel-Hamas war appears to have declined sharply, an Associated Press analysis of Gaza Health Ministry data has found, a trend that both coincides with Israel's changing battlefield tactics and contradicts the ministry's own public statements.

The trend is significant because the death rate for women and children is the best available proxy for civilian casualties in one of the 21st century's most destructive conflicts. In October, when the war began, it was above 60%. For the month of April, it was below 40%.

Yet the shift went unnoticed for months by the U.N. and much of the media, and the Hamas-linked Health Ministry has made no effort to set the record straight.

Former astronaut William Anders, who took iconic Earthrise photo, killed in Washington plane crash

By GENE JOHNSON and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — William Anders, the former Apollo 8 astronaut who took the iconic "Earthrise" photo showing the planet as a shadowed blue marble from space in 1968, was killed Friday when the plane he was piloting alone plummeted into the waters off the San Juan Islands in Washington state. He was 90.

His son, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Greg Anders, confirmed the death to The Associated Press.

"The family is devastated," he said. "He was a great pilot and we will miss him terribly."

William Anders, a retired major general, has said the photo was his most significant contribution to the space program along with making sure the Apollo 8 command module and service module worked.

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The photograph, the first color image of Earth from space, is one of the most important photos in modern history for the way it changed how humans viewed the planet. The photo is credited with sparking the global environmental movement for showing how delicate and isolated Earth appeared from space.

NASA Administrator and former Sen. Bill Nelson said Anders embodied the lessons and the purpose of exploration.

"He traveled to the threshold of the Moon and helped all of us see something else: ourselves," Nelson wrote on the social platform X.

Anders snapped the photo during the crew's fourth orbit of the moon, frantically switching from black-and-white to color film.

"Oh my God, look at that picture over there!" Anders said. "There's the Earth coming up. Wow, is that pretty!"

The Apollo 8 mission in December 1968 was the first human spaceflight to leave low-Earth orbit and travel to the moon and back. It was NASA's boldest and perhaps most dangerous voyage yet and one that set the stage for the Apollo moon landing seven months later.

"Bill Anders forever changed our perspective of our planet and ourselves with his famous Earthrise photo on Apollo 8," Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, who is also a retired NASA astronaut, wrote on X. "He inspired me and generations of astronauts and explorers. My thoughts are with his family and friends."

A report came in around 11:40 a.m. that an older-model plane crashed into the water and sank near the north end of Jones Island, San Juan County Sheriff Eric Peter said. Greg Anders confirmed to KING-TV that his father's body was recovered Friday afternoon.

Only the pilot was on board the Beech A45 airplane at the time, according to the Federal Aviation Association.

The National Transportation Safety Board and FAA are investigating the crash.

William Anders said in a 1997 NASA oral history interview that he didn't think the Apollo 8 mission was risk-free but there were important national, patriotic and exploration reasons for going ahead. He estimated there was about a one in three chance that the crew wouldn't make it back and the same chance the mission would be a success and the same chance that the mission wouldn't start to begin with. He said he suspected Christopher Columbus sailed with worse odds.

He recounted how Earth looked fragile and seemingly physically insignificant, yet was home.

"We'd been going backwards and upside down, didn't really see the Earth or the Sun, and when we rolled around and came around and saw the first Earthrise," he said. "That certainly was, by far, the most impressive thing. To see this very delicate, colorful orb which to me looked like a Christmas tree ornament coming up over this very stark, ugly lunar landscape really contrasted."

Anders said in retrospect he wished he had taken more photos but mission Commander Frank Borman was concerned about whether everyone was rested and forced Anders and Command Module Pilot James A. Lovell, Jr. to sleep, "which probably made sense."

Chip Fletcher, a University of Hawaii professor who has conducted extensive research on coastal erosion and climate change, recalls seeing the photo as a child.

"It just opened up my brain to realize that we are alone but we are together," he said, adding that it still influences him today.

"It's one of those images that never leaves my mind," he said. "And I think that's true of many, many people in many professions."

Anders served as backup crew for Apollo 11 and for Gemini XI in 1966, but the Apollo 8 mission was the only time he flew to space.

Anders was born on October 17, 1933, in Hong Kong. At the time, his father was a Navy lieutenant aboard the USS Panay, which was a U.S. gunboat in China's Yangtze River.

Anders and his wife, Valerie, founded the Heritage Flight Museum in Washington state in 1996. It is now based at a regional airport in Burlington, and features 15 aircrafts, several antique military vehicles, a library and many artifacts donated by veterans, according to the museum's website. Two of his sons

helped him run it.

The couple moved to Orcas Island, in the San Juan archipelago, in 1993, and kept a second home in their hometown of San Diego, according to a biography on the museum's website. They had six children and 13 grandchildren. Their current Washington home was in Anacortes.

Anders graduated from the Naval Academy in 1955 and served as a fighter pilot in the Air Force.

He later served on the Atomic Energy Commission, as the U.S. chairman of the joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. technology exchange program for nuclear fission and fusion power, and as ambassador to Norway. He later worked for General Electric and General Dynamics, according to his NASA biography.

Iran helicopter crash shows Tehran's reliance on an aging fleet as well as its challenges at home

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — By the time Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi boarded his window seat on a helicopter ferrying him, the foreign minister and six others, thick clouds already had begun forming around the mountaintops along the Azerbaijan-Iran border. Despite the worsening weather, the helicopter lifted off for a trip about 145 kilometers (90 miles) southwest to a new oil pipeline near Tabriz.

Within an hour, the Bell 212 helicopter had crashed into a cloud-covered mountainside.

While the cause of the May 19 crash remains unknown, the sudden death of the hard-line protégé of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei exposed the contradictions and challenges facing the country's Shiite theocracy.

The Iranian military investigators probing the crash have previously faced international criticism over their report on troops shooting down a Ukrainian airliner in 2020. The hourslong desperate rescue attempt after the helicopter crash saw Tehran even reach out to the United States for help, just weeks after launching an unprecedented attack on Israel and as it enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Even the type of helicopter that crashed links back to Iranian history, both before and after the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

"Iran is a culture of dualities," said Farzin Nadimi, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near-East Policy who studies Iran's military. "Some aspects, they seem so good and well-managed, well-oiled and very capable. ... In many levels, it's quite lacking."

Iranian military investigators have released two statements on the crash, largely ruling out possibilities rather than offering a suspected cause. They've rejected the possibility of an onboard "explosion caused by sabotage" or a "cyberattack" targeting the Bell 212, a two-blade, twin-engine helicopter more widely known as the Huey for its use by the U.S. military in the Vietnam War.

"The recorded conversations between the flight crew show that the last contact with the pilots up to the time of the incident and when they stopped responding lasted 69 seconds," the investigators said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. "No emergency declaration was recorded during that time."

In conspiracy-minded Iran, some officials still insist foul play could have caused the crash. However, some other officials have begun to ask why the helicopter took off from the site of the new Giz Galasi Dam when the weather had started to turn.

Mostafa Mirsalim, a member of the country's Expediency Council, wrote on the social platform X that he had asked prosecutors to "address the mistakes that led to the loss of the president and his delegation," without elaborating.

Abbas Abdi, a prominent journalist, also wrote on X that the flight path taken by Raisi's helicopter suggested the pilot didn't follow a standard Iranian practice of shadowing main roads in rural areas. That can both help navigation and provide a safe landing area in an emergency. Former Iranian Presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Abolhassan Banisadr both survived helicopter crashes while in office.

The helicopter involved in the crash, nearly 30 years old, came directly from a Bell manufacturing plant in Montreal, Canada, to the Iranian air force, according to data from the firm Cirium. It counts 12 Bell 212 aircraft registered in Iran that are still in service.

Bell Textron Inc., based in Fort Worth, Texas, said it "does not conduct any business in Iran or support their helicopter fleet, and we do not have knowledge about the active state of the helicopter involved in this accident."

But despite being decades old, the Bell 212 and its military counterpart the Huey still are flown around the world. In the United States, Hueys still fly as part of America's nuclear forces to support its silos and for some VIP missions, said Roger D. Connor, an aeronautics curator at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington. Over 440 still fly worldwide, according to Cirium.

"It's a simple aircraft to fly by medium helicopter standards. It doesn't typically have much automation which can have both positive and negative implications for operators," Connor said. "More automation means more opportunities for pilot confusion in certain circumstances, but also better capabilities in low-visibility conditions."

Iran's use of the Bell 212 remains pervasive, in part due to the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who struck deals to purchase hundreds of the helicopters and had plans to build a local variant, Nadimi said. Those already in the country at the time of the Islamic Revolution ended up being a key component of Iran's bloody war against Iraq in the 1980s.

But as Western sanctions dried up the supply of parts, fewer of the aircraft were airworthy, despite efforts to locally overhaul them. That saw Iran engage in covert means to secure parts, sparking several U.S. criminal cases for those involved, who sought everything from safety equipment to full engines and night-vision goggles for the aircraft.

Former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sought to blame sanctions for the crash. U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller responded by saying America was "not going to apologize for our sanctions regime at all" as Iran has used aircraft to "transport equipment to support terrorism."

"Ultimately, it's the Iranian government that is responsible for the decision to fly a ... helicopter in what was described as poor weather conditions, not any other actor," Miller said.

Meanwhile, questions remain over why Iran couldn't find the helicopter for hours, even though one of the victims reportedly talked by cellphone with officials. Such calls, in theory, can be triangulated by security services. Also, it remains unclear if the helicopter had any emergency tracker, which are common on aircraft.

While the investigation continues, Nadimi said he believed that the Bell 212 that flew Raisi did not have advanced avionics that could have been useful for low-visibility flight. However, he stressed that the major issue in the crash likely involves who allowed the flight to take off as the weather turned poor and whether the pilot faced pressure from his VIP passengers to make the journey no matter what.

"Pilot error, human error might be to blame, but there was a chain of events that caused this crash, not just pilot error," Nadimi said. "That helicopter should have been able to clear that terrain and fly safely to its destination. They should not have been dispatched for flying."

Demand for food delivery has skyrocketed. So have complaints about some drivers

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A soaring demand for food delivered fast has spawned small armies of couriers — and increasing alarm — in big cities where scooters, motorcycles and mopeds zip in and out of traffic and hop onto pedestrian-filled sidewalks as their drivers race to drop off salads and sandwiches.

Officials in Boston, New York and Washington, D.C., have started cracking down on delivery companies by issuing warning letters, seizing illegally registered or driven vehicles, and launching special street patrols to enforce speed limits. The pushback is not limited to the U.S.: There have also been a series of crackdowns in London and other British cities.

For their part, the delivery companies have pledged to work with city officials to ensure that all of their drivers operate both legally and safely.

In a letter this week to food delivery companies DoorDash, Grubhub and Uber, Boston officials cited an

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"alarming increase in unlawful and dangerous operation of motorcycles, mopeds and motorized scooters" that they said put the drivers, other motorists and pedestrians "in imminent danger."

The letter alleged that some drivers were operating unregistered vehicles and breaking traffic laws, and warned of an imminent crackdown on the vehicles. It also demanded that the companies explain how they can ensure their drivers are operating safely. The Massachusetts State Police said they identified dozens of mopeds and scooters that were improperly registered or being operated by unlicensed drivers. Fourteen illegal mopeds and scooters were seized Wednesday in one Boston neighborhood alone.

In New York City, authorities have seized 13,000 scooters and mopeds so far this year; on Wednesday, they crushed more than 200 illegal mopeds and other delivery vehicles. Authorities in Washington, D.C., meanwhile, launched a program Wednesday called Operation Ride Right to ensure drivers of two-wheeled vehicles are complying with the law. Since it began, authorities have made five arrests and impounded 17 mopeds.

"They have terrorized many of our pedestrians, particularly our senior and older adults," New York City Mayor Eric Adams said Wednesday at an event in which motorized two-wheeled delivery vehicles were destroyed. "Riders who think the rules don't apply to them, they're going to see an aggressive enforcement policy that's in place."

When food delivery services had their major resurgence during the COVID-19 pandemic, most drivers used cars to deliver their fare. That led to increased traffic congestion, prompting a shift to motorcycles and other two-wheeled modes of transportation.

The drivers, many of them immigrants from Latin American countries but also from West Africa and South Asia, say they are just trying to earn a living and are providing a service that gets customers their food fast.

"We're not all bad," said Luis López, a delivery driver from the Dominican Republic who spoke to The Associated Press on Friday from his motorcycle in an area of multiple fast-food restaurants near the Boston Public Library. "We come to work, to earn a living, pay the rent and send something to our families."

López, who came to the U.S. about three years ago, acknowledged that some drivers are unlicensed or driving unregistered vehicles, and he's seen them running red lights and onto sidewalks, menacing pedestrians. Some people are so reckless that they're also putting other delivery drivers at risk, he said.

He said he was among a group of 10 delivery drivers outside a Chick-fil-A on Thursday night when a police officer approached them with a flyer describing how to register their scooters and mopeds. The whole group agreed to do just that.

"We have to respect the law," he said, speaking in Spanish. "We are going to respect the law so that they let us work here."

Drivers of motorized two-wheeled vehicles are coming under much more scrutiny than was faced years ago by other gig workers in cars, such as Uber and Lyft drivers, because they can more easily violate traffic laws, said Hilary Robinson, an associate professor of law and sociology at Northeastern University.

The switch to the vehicles "is really an attempt to make low-wage, high-risk labor available so that all of us can have cheap goods and services," Robinson said. "It's perhaps one of the reasons why people are starting to realize that there really is no such thing as a free lunch."

William Medina, a delivery worker in New York who is also an organizing leader with the Los Deliveristas Unidos Campaign, blames the delivery companies.

"This is a problem that started because the companies force you to complete the deliveries from far distances," he said in a telephone interview Friday. Medina started out delivering food on a bicycle, switched to an electric bike, and now is using a moped to make the longer trips.

"If you have to complete the delivery 6 miles, 7 miles, you have to complete it," he said.

Among those advocating for tougher enforcement in Boston is City Councilor Edward Flynn, who said on Facebook that it "can no longer be the Wild West on the streets of Boston."

"Everyone using city roads needs to abide by the rules of the road. If you're able to go 25 mph like a car — you should be licensed, registered, and carry liability insurance in the event of an accident and injury," he wrote.

Some Boston residents are supportive of tougher action against the scooters.

"I get frustrated when they don't follow the traffic laws," said Anne Kirby, a 25-year-old student having lunch in a Boston neighborhood within a few hundred feet of several scooters. "I feel like I almost get hit every day when they go through the crosswalk when it's not their turn to go."

But Jaia Samuel, a 25-year-old hospital worker from Boston, was more conflicted. She said she agreed that delivery scooters can be dangerous, but she also acknowledged that she relies heavily on delivery services for her food.

"I do think it's unsafe to an extent, the weaving in between cars and the not stopping for red lights," she said. "But I feel like everybody should be able to make a living, so who am I to say anything? It would be unfortunate for me. I would be taking a hit with the crackdown on them. I order a lot of Uber Eats, DoorDash."

Three major food delivery services have pledged to work with officials and neighborhood advocates to address the problem.

"The overwhelming majority of Dashers do the right thing and like all drivers must follow the rules of the road. If they don't, then they face consequences — just like anyone else," DoorDash said in a statement Wednesday.

Grubhub said its employees already agree to obey all local traffic laws. "While enforcement of the law is best handled by the police, we take safety seriously and will take action to address any reports of unsafe driving," the company said in a statement Thursday.

Optimism is just what the doctor ordered. But what if I'm already too negative?

By ALBERT STUMM Associated Press

Prince Bhojwani never thought of himself as a negative person, until three trips to the hospital in one month forced him to reconsider.

Before May 2018, he was a healthy but chronically worried start-up founder who regularly did 20-mile (32-kilometer) bike rides. When he suddenly became barely able to walk, with blurry vision and spiking blood pressure, emergency room doctors suspected a stroke, but couldn't pinpoint the cause of his illness.

A close friend, however — "one of the most optimistic people I know," he said — pointed out Bhojwani often lacked faith that things would work out, and suggested that had pushed him to burn out.

"I started looking at the world very differently, literally the next day," said Bhojwani, who lives in New York City. He started meditating and taking a moment every morning to feel grateful to be alive. He also found purpose by co-founding a nonprofit, Asana Voices, a South Asian advocacy organization.

In the years since, he hasn't had any similar health crises, despite working longer hours. He credits his newfound positive outlook.

"After there was a life-changing event, it kind of forced me to become optimistic," he said. "I can't even imagine living life the way I did back then."

Optimism in itself is hardly a cure-all, but numerous studies over the decades have demonstrated a link between a positive outlook and good health outcomes.

A LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE? Experts say a standard for measuring someone's relative optimism has long been the 10-question Life Orientation Test-Revised, published in 1994. (Sample question: On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents are asked how strongly they agree with the statement, "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best"?)

Generally, optimism is defined as the "expectation that good things will happen, or believing the future will be favorable because we can control important outcomes," said Hayami Koga, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.

She was the lead author on a 2022 study that found optimism associated with longer life spans and a greater chance of living past 90. In another study, published in May in JAMA Psychiatry, she and other

researchers said optimists generally maintained better physical functioning as they aged. They looked at 5,930 postmenopausal women over a 6-year period.

"We know that more optimistic people are more likely to live a healthier life, with healthier habits, eating healthier, having more exercise," Koga said.

CAN I LEARN TO BE AN OPTIMIST? Some people are born more optimistic but it can definitely be learned, too, said Sue Varma, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at New York University and author of "Practical Optimism: The Art, Science, and Practice of Exceptional Well-Being."

Optimism training, she said, can improve life satisfaction and lessen anxiety.

"Even if you were not born with this natural disposition to anticipate favorable outcomes and see the glass as half full, there are skills that you can learn," Varma said.

Begin by noticing how you deal with uncertainty, she said. Do you tend to worry? Assume the worst?

Try to reframe the thought in an objective manner. "Is there a silver lining? Is this a problem to be solved or a truth to be accepted?" said Varma, noting that her book builds upon the work of Martin Seligman, one of the fathers of positive psychology.

Try to envision the best possible outcome and a step-by-step path to get there. Varma asks her clients to describe the path in detail until the problem is resolved, and encourages them to bask in their success.

"Then you are already approaching your day and your life as if things have worked out," she said. "And you tend to be more proactive, more positive, more resilient, more buoyant in the face of obstacles."

Finding a sense of purpose also can help. Volunteering would be beneficial, but for those who can't find the time, Varma suggested trying to remake your role at work to align better with your interests. That could be as simple as a very social person organizing outings with co-workers.

Trying to master a skill, whether a sport, a musical instrument, a language or a hobby such as knitting or chess can help prevent you from ruminating on negative possibilities.

Even with these and other interventions, it's not easy to change your mindset, Varma noted. But practice helps.

"It's a toolset, it's a mindset," she said. "I have to practice it every day in my mind."

Appointed by Trump, Hunter Biden trial judge spent most of her career in civil law

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

The judge presiding over Hunter Biden's federal gun trial in Delaware is a former corporate civil lawyer with a background in biology who was nominated to the bench by the Biden family's chief political antagonist: former President Donald Trump.

But even while that might raise partisan eyebrows and questions of political pressure in the highly watched case, District Judge Maryellen Noreika was recommended for the bench by the two Democratic senators.

She has a brief history of political donations to both parties — mostly Republicans — and had not worked on criminal cases or presided over a courtroom before getting the nod as a federal judge. The New York Times reported she was registered to vote as a Democrat from 2000-2020 until changing her registration to no party affiliation.

She has presided over a trial that has laid bare some of the president's son's darkest moments, including drug addiction. Outside her courtroom, international media strain to get a glimpse of members of the first family as they come and go.

In her Senate confirmation hearing, Noreika said she admires judges who are prepared and "willing to listen and give litigants an opportunity to be heard. ... They want to make people feel like they've been listened to and been given a fair shot."

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.

In a written answer to questions about sentencing from now-Vice President Kamala Harris, Noreika said

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she “would listen to arguments from the parties, including requests for leniency, and consider statements made by victims. If confirmed, I would do my best to impose a sentence that is sufficient, but not greater than necessary.”

Born in Pittsburgh, the 57-year-old Noreika graduated from Lehigh University in 1988 before earning her master’s degree in biology from Columbia University in 1990. She earned her law degree in 1993 from the University of Pittsburgh with magna cum laude honors.

Noreika spent the next 25 years at the Delaware law firm of Morris, Nichols, Arsht & Tunnell, where she earned partner in 2001. According to her Senate confirmation questionnaire, most of her work was in federal civil litigation involving intellectual property. It said she tried “at least 30” cases to verdict or final decision and most were nonjury trials. She also listed no criminal law experience.

Asked to list “all professional business, fraternal scholarly, civic or charitable” organizations she had belonged to since law school, Noreika answered, “None.”

For pro bono work, Noreika wrote she had spent 15 years as a guardian ad litem for children in Delaware Family Court.

“These cases have involved difficult custody issues, including allegations of sexual and physical abuse, neglect and abandonment,” Noreika wrote. She described “taking children out to lunch and to dinner and fun activities to get them to engage with me and trust me.”

Her position as judge in the Hunter Biden criminal trial put her in the national spotlight and made her a target of speculation over political partisanship.

It was Noreika who torpedoed a plea deal that would have settled the gun case when she raised concerns about the terms of the agreement in 2023.

Noreika has presided over a Biden-related case before: In March 2023, she dismissed part of a defamation lawsuit brought by the owner of a Delaware computer repair shop where Hunter Biden left his laptop in 2019.

Federal campaign finance records show she had donated at least \$15,000 to political candidates between 2005-2014, most of it going to Republicans, including current U.S. Sens. Tom Cotton and Mitt Romney. But she also donated to the presidential campaigns of both Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain in 2008.

After editor’s departure, Washington Post’s publisher faces questions about phone hacking stories

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Washington Post’s new publisher is facing questions about whether he made efforts to conceal — in his own newspaper and elsewhere — his involvement in a British phone hacking scandal from his time working for Rupert Murdoch a decade ago.

The weeklong saga, which began with the abrupt departure of the Post’s executive editor Sunday night, offers a window into differences between approaches to journalism in Britain and the United States — and touches on delicate issues of trust in the American media community as it approaches a contentious and seismic presidential election.

The publisher and CEO, Will Lewis, has denied any wrongdoing in Britain and at the Post.

Lewis, a former publisher of The Wall Street Journal, arrived in January to turn around the Post, which is awash in red ink and seen its digital readership drop by a half since 2020. Lewis is also the vice chairman of The Associated Press’ board of directors.

He announced a restructuring plan on Sunday that did not include the top news executive, Sally Buzbee, who apparently was either forced out or chose not to accept a demotion. Buzbee, the former top news executive at the AP, has led the Post newsroom for three years. She has not talked about her departure.

This week, The New York Times reported that Lewis told Buzbee in a phone conversation last month that a development in litigation by Prince Harry about the phone hacking scandal did not warrant coverage in the Post.

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That sprawling case involved the alleged interception of voicemails of celebrities and royals by Murdoch-owned newspapers in Britain. Plaintiffs in a civil case have alleged that Lewis was involved in efforts to tamp down trouble, in part by destroying evidence. Lewis has denied this.

The Times said Lewis told Buzbee that it would be a lapse in judgment to run the story, which was eventually published. The Post said Friday that that account was inaccurate and Lewis did not pressure Buzbee not to publish any stories. "To suggest otherwise is completely false," the newspaper said in a statement.

Buzbee did not respond to a message from the AP on Friday requesting comment on her own characterization of the conversation.

In mainstream American journalism, it's generally considered an ethical breach for a publisher to get involved in these kinds of news decisions, particularly one that involves him.

Later Thursday, National Public Radio media reporter David Folkenflik wrote that Lewis, before he took over at the Post, "repeatedly and heatedly" offered NPR an exclusive interview about his plans — in return for Folkenflik dropping a story that he was writing about the executive's involvement in the phone hacking case.

Folkenflik refused, and the story ran on Dec. 20, 2023.

Asked about this, Lewis called Folkenflik an activist instead of a journalist, telling the Post: "I had an off-the-record conversation with him before I joined the Post and some six months later he has dusted it down, and made up some excuse to make a story of a non-story."

Folkenflik said that the offer, later confirmed by a press representative, was not off the record.

"Certainly journalists at The New York Times, CNN and inside his own newsroom have concluded that what I reported this week about him and previously has been newsworthy," he said on Friday. "I think that's the verdict on our carefully reported journalism. He can say what he wants, but that doesn't make this go away."

In an email to staff members Friday, Lewis acknowledged that he needed to improve on how well he listens and communicates. He invited them to a series of discussions next week on his restructuring plan.

"I know trust has been lost because of scars from the past and the back-and-forth from this week," Lewis wrote. "Let's leave those behind and start presuming the best of intent. If we do that, you will see where we are going in a different light. We don't have to agree about everything but we all are dedicated to building the future of The Post, and mapping our way there together."

In his Post comments, Lewis said that he decided early that he was not going to talk about his job dealing with the aftermath of the phone hacking scandal. "And it's either right or wrong that I've done that," he said.

Lewis grew up as a journalist in Britain, where there is a more bare-knuckle style of reporting. One of the editors he has hired in the Post's restructuring, Robert Winnett, worked with Lewis at the Daily Telegraph. One of their biggest stories, about abused expense accounts by members of Parliament, was based in part on records the newspaper reportedly paid for — an approach that would be forbidden in most American newsrooms.

While some Post journalists have voiced questions and concerns about the restructuring plan that Lewis is pursuing, he has emphasized the need for decisive, urgent action. He told the staff in a meeting his week that he can't sugarcoat that "people are not reading your stuff."

The turmoil at one of the nation's most important sources for political journalism comes at a delicate time, a month before Republicans are due to nominate Donald Trump for president and the campaign against incumbent President Joe Biden begins in earnest.

The Olympic rings are mounted on the Eiffel Tower to mark 50 days until the Paris Games

PARIS (AP) — The Paris Olympics organizers on Friday unveiled a display of the five Olympic rings mounted on the Eiffel Tower as the French capital marks 50 days until the start of the Summer Games.

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The structure of rings, made of recycled French steel, was displayed on the south side of the 135-year-old landmark in central Paris, overlooking the Seine River. Each ring is 9 meters (30 feet) in diameter.

Thousands of athletes will parade through the heart of the French capital on boats on the Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route in the opening ceremony at sunset on July 26.

There will be no shortage of iconic venues at the Paris Olympics.

The tower, nicknamed La Dame de Fer (The Iron Lady), will feature prominently in the July 26-Aug. 11 Paris Games and the following Paralympics.

Men's and women's volleyball players will compete at the foot of the 330-meter (1,083-foot) monument. They will be watched by nearly 13,000 fans at the temporary Eiffel Tower Stadium on the nearby Champ de Mars, where Parisians and tourists like to have picnics on the grass or watch July 14 firework displays.

The Olympic and Paralympic medals in Paris are being embedded with pieces from a hexagonal chunk of iron taken from the tower.

The hugely popular landmark in central Paris has seen soaring visitor numbers in the leadup to the 2024 Games.

Two huge cranes were used to lift the 30-ton structure and mount it between the first and second floors of the tower.

The Olympic rings will be illuminated every night with 100,000 LED bulbs through the Paralympic Games that start Aug. 28, 17 days after the Olympics' closing ceremony.

The Paralympics will bring together 4,400 athletes from 180 countries in 549 events and 22 sports. Many sports will take place near landmarks including the Eiffel Tower, Versailles and the Grand Palais.

Pat Sajak says goodbye to 'Wheel of Fortune': 'An incredible privilege'

By KAITLYN HUAMANI Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After 41 years and over 8,000 episodes, Pat Sajak made his final turn as the renowned host of "Wheel of Fortune" on Friday.

The season 41 finale, dubbed the "Thanks for the memories" show, opened on Friday with a clip from Sajak's first episode as the host of "Wheel of Fortune" in 1981 and closed with Sajak's warm message of gratitude.

In his farewell message, Sajak thanked the viewers of the beloved game show for granting him the "incredible privilege to be invited into millions of homes, night after night, year after year, decade after decade."

Sajak, 77, also gave a heartfelt thanks to his "professional other half," Vanna White, who has co-hosted with him for over 40 years and delivered her emotional tribute to Sajak a day earlier.

"We've seen a lot of changes in each other's lives over the years, but we've always been there for each other," he said. "I will miss our nightly closes and her laughter and her good nature. She's a very special woman."

Among the many thanks and shoutouts Sajak offered during the final episode before his retirement, he said the crew and staff, some of whom have been working on the show as long as he has, were a "joy" to work with. "Your skills and dedication and good humor made this a place I always wanted to be," he added.

Sajak thanked one staff member by name: his daughter Maggie. She began working as the show's social correspondent in 2021 and he said their collaboration has been the "best part of the last couple of years." Sajak also mentioned his son, Patrick, and his wife, Lesly, and said that he is "blessed" to have his family.

The famed host also said that the "real stars of the show" have been the contestants who competed for cash and luxury prizes throughout the decades of the show's run. He called them "kind and considerate," noting that they always "took great pride in talking about their family, their hometown, their friends, their schools, their jobs, even their pets."

Reflecting on the show's massive reach, Sajak noted that he always found it important to keep the daily half-hour show a "safe place for family fun," excluding any social issues or political topics from the banter he shared with contestants and White. He said he wanted to keep the show "just a game," before noting

that to many, it became a part of their daily lives.

"Gradually, it became more than that," Sajak continued. "A place where kids learned their letters, where people from other countries honed their English skills, where families came together along with friends and neighbors and entire generations. What an honor to have played even a small part in all that."

Sajak's closed out his message with a crack about how viewers could still see more of him through re-runs of the show during its summer break. "The jokes will be the same, but I'd appreciate it if you'd laugh anyway," he quipped before saying a final goodbye.

To make time for his closing message, Sajak truncated the game by cutting out a round. He said he wanted to ensure the competition was still fair for contestants Tammi, Adrienne and Nino, so Sajak spun the wheel himself and added to their totals. While he initially said he'd add \$1,000 to the prize money the wheel landed on, he bumped the bonus up to \$5,000 for each person after noting that it wasn't his money he was allocating. "Little Jimmy's surgery can wait," he joked.

During her tribute on Thursday, White called Sajak "like a brother" and a "true lifelong friend." In the pre-recorded video that featured clips and photos of their decades as co-workers, she added that their personal friendship has meant even more than their professional collaboration.

Sajak announced in June 2023 that he would retire from his hosting duties at the end of the show's 41st season, with Ryan Seacrest set to succeed him. White will stay on as Seacrest's co-host through the 2025-2026 season, based on a contract extension she signed in September.

The US is making its biggest push yet to get Israel and Hamas to halt fighting. Is it succeeding?

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In Middle East capitals, at the United Nations, from the White House and beyond, the Biden administration is making its most concentrated diplomatic push of the eight-month-old war in Gaza to persuade Israeli and Hamas leaders to take a proposed deal that would bring a cease-fire and release of more hostages.

But one week into the U.S. pressure campaign, the world still is waiting for signs that the cease-fire appeal begun May 31 by President Joe Biden was working, by moving Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leaders toward a negotiating breakthrough.

For Israel and Hamas, the U.S. diplomatic press has become a public test of whether either side is ready to stop fighting — at least on any terms that fall short of their professed goals, whether it's the complete crushing of the militant group or the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

For Biden, who describes the proposal as Israeli, it's the latest high-profile test of U.S. leadership in trying to convince ally Israel as well as the militant group to relent in a conflict that is killing tens of thousands of people, inflaming regional tensions and absorbing much of the administration's focus.

Here's a look at the U.S.-led push for a Gaza cease-fire and where it stands:

GOING PUBLIC It wasn't that the cease-fire proposal Biden outlined in a televised address from the White House a week ago was startlingly new. It was that Biden laid out the terms to the world and put the full weight of the U.S. presidency behind the appeal for both sides to take this deal.

The terms that Biden described for the first of three phases sounded much like the deal that U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators and Israel and Hamas have been haggling over for months.

There would be a six-week cease-fire in which Israeli forces pulled back from populated areas of Gaza. In exchange for Israel releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, Hamas would release some women, older people and wounded among hostages it had seized in the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel that set off the war.

The proposal calls for a full release of remaining hostages and an Israeli withdrawal in later phases, although the terms are vague.

"Everyone who wants peace now must raise their voices and let the leaders know they should take this deal," Biden said a week ago.

But by Friday, neither Israel nor Hamas had said yes. Netanyahu says the terms of the proposal aren't

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as they have been described publicly and that Israel will never cease fighting until “the destruction” of Hamas’ military and leadership.

In effect, said Nimrod Novik, a former senior adviser to the late Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Biden “decided to ‘out’ Netanyahu and let the Israeli public know how serious the potential for bringing all hostages out.”

The U.S. aim: “So Israel would say ‘yes’ to its own proposal,” said Novik, now the Israel fellow at the Washington-based Israel Policy Forum.

KEEPING UP THE PRESSUREThe Biden administration isn’t letting up in its drive to get Hamas and Israel on board.

“The U.S. is going to do everything it can in some formulation to keep pushing this. Until there’s no place to go any more,” said Jonathan Panikoff, a former U.S. intelligence official. He’s now the director of the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council’s Middle East program.

At the U.N., U.S. diplomats are asking the Security Council to adopt a resolution demanding a permanent cease-fire between Hamas and Israel in Gaza, over Israel’s objections. Biden is sending Secretary of State Antony Blinken back to the Middle East next week for his eighth visit since the war began, a lightning tour of Middle East capitals to promote the cease-fire proposal.

CIA director Bill Burns and Biden Middle East adviser Brett McGurk also have traveled to the region to garner support for the deal and show key players how it could work.

The Group of Seven leading global economies endorsed the proposal. So have countries with hostages held by militants in Gaza. Biden, Blinken and other U.S. officials are working the phones to rally support among Arab governments from Egypt and Qatar to Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Many allies appear to welcome the president’s initiative to get the cease-fire talks back on course after weeks of drift, Panikoff said.

THE VIEW FROM ISRAELThere’s little sign — yet — that the U.S. efforts have been enough to change the political equation in Israel. Netanyahu’s far-right coalition partners have vowed to bring down the government if the Israeli prime minister accepts the proposal that Biden outlined.

Trailing in opinion polls and facing an ongoing corruption trial, Netanyahu has little incentive to risk heading to another election. Although opposition leader Yair Lapid has offered to give Netanyahu backing for a hostage deal, the two men are bitter enemies and there is little reason to think any alliance would last.

Benny Gantz, a centrist member of Netanyahu’s war Cabinet, has called a news conference for Saturday, where he is expected to address his earlier threat to resign by this weekend if Netanyahu failed to release a plan for the war and Gaza.

Netanyahu will still control a parliamentary majority if Gantz leaves. But the departure of Gantz, a former military chief and defense minister who is respected in Washington, would weaken Netanyahu’s international credibility and leave him more dependent than ever on far-right coalition partners, who believe Israel should reoccupy Gaza and oppose the cease-fire proposal.

Popular protests could be one of the few scenarios that sway Netanyahu toward a deal, Novik said. Alternatively, Novik contended, just the threat of a public denunciation by Biden could prod Netanyahu toward compromise, given the United States’ importance as an ally.

HOW ABOUT HAMAS?Hamas is expected to deliver a formal response in coming days to the proposal that Biden is pushing, according to what the Qataris and Egyptians, who handle the direct communications with Hamas officials in the negotiations, told U.S. officials this week.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told reporters this week in Beirut that Biden’s announcement was “positive” but said the group couldn’t accept any deal without Israel’s guarantee of a permanent cease-fire, a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, a prisoner exchange and other conditions.

While the supreme leader of Hamas and other political figures are based abroad, Hamas also must relay any proposals to Yahya Sinwar — whose opinion is paramount — and other military leaders in Gaza. They inhabit tunnels up to 100 feet (30 meters) or more underground and are believed to have surrounded themselves with foreign hostages to discourage attack.

New charges for alleged Gilgo Beach serial killer cast scrutiny on another man's murder conviction

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For years prosecutors saw a connection in the killings of three young women who disappeared in the winter of 1993 and 1994, their nude bodies found strangled, beaten and left in similar poses in the Long Island brush.

In new charges unveiled Thursday, prosecutors said Rex Heuermann — the man already accused in a string of deaths known as the Gilgo Beach serial killings — was responsible for the death of one of the women, Sanda Costilla. The findings, authorities said, indicate that Heuermann began hunting victims more than a decade earlier than previously thought.

That in turn has raised questions about the conviction of another man, John Bittrolff, who is incarcerated for the murder of the other two women — Rita Tangredi and Colleen McNamee — and who prosecutors once considered a suspect in Costilla's death.

Bittrolff's lawyers have long accused prosecutors of relying on dubious forensics to convict him. They say the new charges against Heuermann cast further doubt on the case against their client, who has maintained his innocence since being sentenced to 50 years to life in 2017.

"You have three women killed in the same time frame and displayed in the same way, and now one is alleged to have been killed by Rex Heuermann," said attorney Lisa Marcoccia of the Legal Aid Society, which is handling the appeal. "The evidence points to one killer, and the new indictment supports John Bittrolff's claim of innocence."

The trio of killings came roughly 16 years before the discovery of the remains of 10 people — mostly female sex workers — along a highway near Gilgo Beach on Long Island's south shore. Heuermann, an architect, has pleaded not guilty to five of those killings and is considered a suspect in a sixth, in addition to Costilla's death.

In the new indictment, prosecutors said forensic testing of hairs found on Costilla's body determined they were likely Heuermann's. The killing occurred shortly after Heuermann's mother and another person moved out of his home, leaving him with "unfettered time to execute his plans," prosecutors said.

Like the Gilgo Beach killings, those in the early 1990s stumped investigators for years. Then, in 2014, authorities caught a break: A DNA sample taken from Bittrolff's brother proved a partial genetic match to semen found on the bodies of Tangredi and McNamee.

That led them to Bittrolff, a carpenter and father of two living in Manorville, on Long Island. His DNA was a full match.

Shortly after the arrest, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota speculated publicly that Bittrolff might have also been responsible for the death of Costilla, who disappeared weeks after Tangredi and two months before McNamee.

Though Bittrolff's DNA was not found on Costilla, all three victims were displayed in the same sexual manner and missing a single shoe, prosecutors said, and wood shavings were found at all three scenes. Both Tangredi and McNamee were known to engage in sex work, while Costilla "led a similar lifestyle," Spota said.

At the 2017 trial, Bittrolff's lawyer conceded it was possible his client had sex with the two women but said that didn't mean he killed them. Multiple sperm samples were found on the two women.

Prosecutors relied on the testimony of Suffolk County Medical Examiner Dr. Michael Caplan, who said he analyzed the density of the sperm to conclude Bittrolff had sex with them shortly before their deaths.

Defense lawyers did not call an expert to rebut that. But in an appeal motion, they cited DNA analyst and molecular biologist Dr. Karl Reich, who described sperm density analysis as "pure junk science."

"Dr. Caplan's testimony on a timeline since intercourse is not based on any scientific foundation," Reich wrote in an affidavit, adding that such methods have "no precedent in forensic DNA practice."

Jurors deliberated for seven days, repeatedly telling a judge they were deadlocked before eventually convicting Bittrolff. Afterward one said Caplan's testimony was key to swaying undecided jurors, according

to trial lawyer Jonathan Manley.

Spota credited the "miracle of DNA evidence" for catching and convicting Bittrolff.

Less than six months after the conviction, Spota was arrested for obstructing an investigation into the chief of the Suffolk County Police Department, who was accused of beating a prisoner. Both men were eventually convicted and sentenced to prison.

As with the Gilgo Beach investigation, the case against Bittrolff was dogged by allegations of mistakes and misconduct by police and prosecutors. During the trial, the Suffolk County police admitted to accidentally destroying the wood chips found on one of the women's bodies and, separately, wood chips discovered in a car used by a police sergeant who was a potential suspect.

Police were also accused of prematurely destroying the sergeant's investigative file. In their appeal, defense attorneys said prosecutors did not turn over another internal file containing allegations by the wife of a separate officer that her husband killed one of the women. Prosecutors maintain they did turn over that document; a judge has yet to rule.

John Ray, an attorney who has represented the families of some of the Gilgo Beach victims, said he had concerns about the case against Bittrolff from the beginning.

"There were huge defects in the presentation of the testimony, there was a question of incompetent counsel and the handling of the evidence was disgraceful," he said. "Given what is now known, the prosecutors have an ethical duty to revisit and reexamine the Bittrolff case."

Suffolk County Legislator Rob Trotta, a former detective on the FBI's violent crime task force, agreed. "It's worth another look," he said. "Nothing would surprise me in this county."

A spokesperson for the DA's office did not respond to a request for comment. Outside court Thursday, an attorney for Heuermann, Michael Brown, said that his client was "obviously in a bad place in terms of the new charges."

In the months before his arrest, court records show, Heuermann may have had an interest in the man whose high-profile murder charges proceeded his own. Among the hundreds of online searches that prosecutors say they found on his computer was a query that read: "John Bitroff."

Carlos Alcaraz will play Alexander Zverev in the first French Open final for each

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

PARIS (AP) — Carlos Alcaraz started poorly and fell behind early in his French Open semifinal against Jannik Sinner. Later, as both dealt with cramps under Friday's afternoon sun, Alcaraz trailed by two sets to one.

By the end of the latest installment in this burgeoning rivalry between two young, talented players, an engaging five-setter that lasted 4 hours, 9 minutes, Alcaraz actually had accumulated fewer total points, 147-145.

That, of course, is not the score that matters. And Alcaraz, who says he takes pleasure from challenges, ultimately persevered, pulling out a 2-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Sinner to get to his first final in Paris. It made the 21-year-old from Spain the youngest man to reach a Grand Slam title match on three surfaces.

"You have to find the joy (while) suffering. That's the key — even more on clay, here at Roland Garros. Long rallies. Four-hour matches. Five sets," Alcaraz said. "You have to fight. You have to suffer. But as I told my team many, many times, you have to enjoy suffering."

He won championships at the U.S. Open in 2022 on hard courts and at Wimbledon in 2023 on grass.

Now the No. 3-seeded Alcaraz will face No. 4 Alexander Zverev of Germany on the red clay Sunday. Hours before his 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 semifinal victory over No. 7 Casper Ruud of Norway, Zverev's domestic abuse case in Berlin ended, because he reached an out-of-court settlement with his accuser, a former girlfriend.

"I'm happy that it's over," Zverev said about the court proceeding at his post-match news conference. "Yeah, nothing else more to say."

When a reporter tried to follow up on the topic, Zverev said: "We move on. I never, ever want to hear

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another question about the subject again. That goes out to everybody.”

Ruud started well, but then began to fade, and he was handed some pills by a doctor during a third-set changeover. Ruud, who said afterward he had a stomach problem, looked listless and stopped chasing some shots, a shell of the player who leads the tour in match wins this season and has been the runner-up at majors three times — including in 2022 and 2023 in Paris.

Zverev finally broke through at Roland Garros after bowing out in the semifinals each of the past three years. This will be his second Grand Slam final: He blew a two-set lead and lost in five against Dominic Thiem at the U.S. Open in 2020.

“I was not mature enough. I was maybe too much of a kid still,” said Zverev, who is now 27. “I didn’t know what the occasion means.”

This will be the first French Open men’s final without Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic or Roger Federer since 2004.

Djokovic was the defending champion in Paris, but he withdrew before the quarterfinals after tearing the meniscus in his right knee and had surgery this week. Because he failed to get back to the final, he will drop from atop the ATP rankings, allowing Sinner to rise a spot from No. 2, despite his defeat on Friday.

“Obviously disappointed how it ended, but it’s part of my growing and the process,” said Sinner, who won the Australian Open in January for his first major trophy. “The winner is happy, and then the loser tries to find a way to beat him the next time.”

The 22-year-old Italian showed up in Paris with a lingering hip injury that forced him to sit out the clay-court tournament in Rome last month. Alcaraz missed that event, too, because of a right forearm issue that he said made him afraid to hit his booming forehands at full force.

Both men experienced physical problems in the third set. Alcaraz’s right hand began to cramp. Sinner had his right forearm and left thigh massaged by a trainer during changeovers.

It brought to mind last year’s French Open semifinals, when Alcaraz got off to a terrific start against Djokovic but then dealt with full-body cramps that rendered the remainder of the match anticlimactic.

“I learned from last year’s match against Djokovic, when I was in the same position as today,” Alcaraz said. “I know that, in this moment, you have to be calm, you have to keep going, because the cramp is going to go away. You have to stay there, fighting.”

He and Sinner are seen as the future of men’s tennis. The present isn’t too shabby, either. Even though this was not necessarily the most aesthetically pleasing of their nine head-to-head meetings — Alcaraz leads 5-4 — and they combined for 102 unforced errors, there were moments of brilliance that generated dueling clap-accompanied chants of each man’s first name from the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd.

In the fifth set, with shadows covering more than half the court, Alcaraz moved out front by sliding until he could reach across his body to snap a backhand passing winner for a break point. A forehand winner — one of his 30 in the match — made it 2-0 at the 3½-hour mark, earning a yell of “Vamos!” from his coach, 2003 French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Soon, it was 3-0, and Alcaraz was on his way.

“It was a great match. For sure, the sets he won, he played better in the important points,” Sinner said. “That was the key.”

Both players walloped the ball with such force that the ball-off-strings thuds elicited gasps from spectators in the middle of points.

Sinner, his rust-colored shirt a few shades darker than the clay, came out ready at the start of the match, barely ever missing, gliding more than grinding along the baseline, stretching his long limbs to get to nearly everything Alcaraz offered. Alcaraz, his right arm covered by a white sleeve, would deliver a powerful shot to a corner, punctuated with a grunt, and Sinner would somehow get to it, flip it back and draw a mistake.

Sinner led 4-0 and it took Alcaraz 20 minutes of striving to simply place a “1” beside his name on the scoreboard. The second set began inauspiciously for Alcaraz, who fell behind 2-0.

“I told myself,” Alcaraz said, “that it’s going to be a long match.”

Here’s how Alcaraz came through: He came up with a 32-23 edge in winners over the last two sets.

With his strokes, somehow, gaining zest, and the fans, somehow, getting louder, Alcaraz advanced at a tournament he grew up watching on TV at home in Spain as his countryman Nadal piled up a record 14 titles.

Not that it was easy.

"It's one of the toughest matches that I've played, for sure," Alcaraz said. "The toughest matches that I played in my short career have been against Jannik."

Hunter Biden's daughter Naomi testifies about her father in his federal gun trial, ending 1st week

By RANDALL CHASE, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, COLLEEN LONG and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Hunter Biden's daughter Naomi testified Friday in his federal gun trial about visiting her father while he was at a California rehab center, telling jurors that he seemed to be improving in the weeks before he bought the revolver in 2018.

"I hadn't seen my dad in a long time, and I knew he was in a rehab facility there. He reached out," she told jurors softly, explaining that they met at a coffee shop, along with his "sober coach." As she was dismissed from the stand, she paused to hug her dad before leaving the courtroom.

The defense began calling witnesses shortly after federal prosecutors wrapped up their case. Hunter Biden's attorney Abbe Lowell started by calling another gun store clerk who was there when the gun was purchased, raising questions about what he saw as inconsistencies on the form.

He also questioned the owner of the shop who allowed the sale to go through using Hunter's passport, though it did not include an address as required.

Then he called Hunter's daughter. In October 2018, the month Hunter Biden bought the gun, Naomi traveled from Washington to New York in her father's truck to move her boyfriend's belongings. Hunter drove Joe Biden's Cadillac to New York later that month to retrieve his truck, leaving the Cadillac with Naomi. She told jurors she didn't see any drug paraphernalia or evidence of drug use.

"He seemed great. He seemed hopeful," she said.

But prosecutors showed Naomi texts where he didn't respond to her for hours after she messaged him about switching cars. At 2 a.m., Hunter texted Naomi asking where the keys to his truck were and whether her boyfriend could meet and swap vehicles.

"Right now?" she responded.

"Do you know what your father was doing at two o'clock in the morning and why he was asking you for the car then?" prosecutor Leo Wise asked.

"No," she said.

Wise read out to her a text message from the time, where she responded: "I'm really sorry dad I can't take this."

When court broke for lunch, and as Hunter Biden prepared to leave, he motioned to the first row that was full of his family members, including first lady Jill Biden, who traveled back from France for the proceedings. The first lady took Hunter's hand and held it until they got to the door.

Jurors were sent home for the afternoon after the defense had no more witnesses, and Lowell said he was weighing who else to call, though previously he said the president's brother James would take the stand, and he was in court. The trial will resume Monday.

The week's proceedings have been largely dedicated to highlighting the seriousness of Hunter Biden's drug problem through highly personal testimony, all in an effort by prosecutors to prove that the president's son lied on a mandatory gun-purchase form when he said he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs.

Jurors heard earlier in the week from Hunter Biden's ex-wife and a former girlfriend who testified about his habitual crack use and their failed efforts to help him get clean. They saw images of the president's son bare-chested and disheveled in a filthy room, and half-naked holding crack pipes. And they watched video of his crack cocaine weighed on a scale.

Prosecutors say the evidence is necessary to prove that Hunter, 54, was in the throes of addiction when

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he bought the gun and therefore lied when he checked "no" on the form that asked whether he was "an unlawful user of, or addicted to" drugs.

Lowell has argued Hunter did not think of himself as an "addict" when he bought the gun and did not intend to deceive anyone.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden worked to walk the line between president and father, telling ABC in an interview that he would accept the jury's verdict and ruling out a pardon for his son. Earlier this week, he issued a statement saying: "I am the President, but I am also a Dad. Jill and I love our son, and we are so proud of the man he is today."

Biden is in France this week for D-Day anniversary events. Jill Biden, who attended court most of the week, will return to France for a state dinner.

Hunter Biden has been charged with three felonies: 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.

He has pleaded not guilty. He had hoped to resolve the gun case and another separate tax case in California with a plea deal last year, the result of a yearslong investigation into his business dealings. The deal had him pleading guilty to lower-level charges that would have avoided the spectacle of a trial so close to the 2024 election. It fell apart after Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was appointed by Donald Trump, questioned unusual aspects of the proposed agreement, and the lawyers couldn't resolve them.

Hunter Biden said he got charged because the Justice Department bowed to pressure from Republicans who argued the Democratic president's son was getting special treatment, and who have escalated their attacks on the criminal justice system since Donald Trump's recent conviction in New York City in a hush money case.

It's unclear yet whether Hunter Biden will testify. But jurors have already heard his voice. Prosecutors played lengthy audio excerpts in court of his 2021 memoir "Beautiful Things," in which he wrote about his lifelong addiction issues and spiraling descent after the death of his brother Beau in 2015. The book, written after he got sober, covers the period he had the gun but doesn't mention it specifically.

Lowell has said Hunter Biden's state of mind was different when he wrote the book than when he purchased the gun, when he didn't believe he had an addiction. He pointed out to jurors that some of the questions on the firearms transaction record are in the present tense, such as "are you an unlawful user of or addicted to" drugs.

And he's suggested Hunter Biden might have felt he had a drinking problem at the time, but not a drug problem. Alcohol abuse doesn't preclude a gun purchase.

The reason law enforcement raised any questions about the revolver is because Hallie Biden, Beau's widow, found it unloaded in Hunter's truck on Oct. 23, 2018, panicked and tossed it into a garbage can at Janssen's Market, where a man inadvertently fished it out of the trash. She testified about the episode Thursday.

She eventually called the police. Officers retrieved the gun from the man who inadvertently took the gun along with other recyclables from the trash. The case was eventually closed because of lack of cooperation from Hunter Biden, who was considered the victim.

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.

He also faces a separate trial in September on charges of failing to pay \$1.4 million in taxes.

Women and children of Gaza are killed less frequently as war's toll rises, AP data analysis finds

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and LARRY FENN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The proportion of Palestinian women and children being killed in the Israel-Hamas war appears to have declined sharply, an Associated Press analysis of Gaza Health Ministry data has found, a trend that both coincides with Israel's changing battlefield tactics and contradicts the ministry's own public statements.

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The trend is significant because the death rate for women and children is the best available proxy for civilian casualties in one of the 21st century's most destructive conflicts. In October, when the war began, it was above 60%. For the month of April, it was below 40%. Yet the shift went unnoticed for months by the U.N. and much of the media, and the Hamas-linked Health Ministry has made no effort to set the record straight.

Israel faces heavy international criticism over unprecedented levels of civilian casualties in Gaza and questions about whether it has done enough to prevent them in an 8-month-old war that shows no sign of ending. Two recent airstrikes in Gaza killed dozens of civilians.

The AP analysis highlights facts that have been overlooked and could help inform the public debate, said Gabriel Epstein, a research assistant at the Washington Institute for Near East policy who has also studied the Health Ministry data.

The declining impact on women and children -- as well as a drop in the overall death rate -- are "definitely due to a change in the way the IDF is acting right now," Epstein said, using an acronym for the Israeli army. "That's an easy conclusion, but I don't think it's been made enough."

Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine director for Human Rights Watch, said his group has always found the Health Ministry's numbers to be "generally reliable" because it has direct access to hospitals and morgues.

Whatever the reason for fewer women and child being killed, Shakir said, in the grand scheme, the trend pales when compared with the war's overall devastation. "The death toll may be an undercount," he added, because many bodies are still under rubble and the war has made it difficult for the Health Ministry to comprehensively gather data.

AS THE WAR EVOLVES, A SHIFT OCCURS When Israel first responded to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, which killed some 1,200 people, it launched an intense aerial bombardment on the densely populated Gaza Strip. Israel said its goal was to destroy Hamas positions, and the barrage cleared the way for tens of thousands of ground troops, backed by tanks and artillery.

The Gaza death toll rose quickly and by the end of October women and people 17 and younger accounted for 64% of the 6,745 killed who were fully identified by the Health Ministry.

After marching across most of Gaza and saying it had achieved many key objectives, Israel then began withdrawing most of its ground forces. It reduced the frequency of aerial bombings and has focused in recent months on smaller drone strikes and limited ground operations.

As the intensity of fighting has scaled back, the death toll has continued to rise, but at a slower rate -- and with seemingly fewer civilians caught in the crossfire. In April, women and children made up 38% of the newly and fully identified deaths, the Health Ministry's most recent data shows.

"Historically, airstrikes (kill) a higher ratio of women and children compared to ground operations," said Larry Lewis, an expert on the civilian impacts of war at CNA, a nonprofit research group in Washington. The findings of the AP analysis "make sense," he said.

Another sign that Israel softened its bombing campaign: Beginning in January, there was a sharp slow-down in "new damage" to buildings in Gaza, according to Corey Scher, a satellite mapping expert at City University of New York who has monitored buildings damaged or destroyed since the war began.

DAILY DEATH TOLLS AT ODDS WITH UNDERLYING DATA The Health Ministry announces a new death toll for the war nearly every day. It also has periodically released the underlying data behind this figure, including detailed lists of the dead.

The AP's analysis looked at these lists, which were shared on social media in late October, early January, late March, and the end of April. Each list includes the names of people whose deaths were attributable to the war, along with other identifying details.

The daily death tolls, however, are provided without supporting data. In February, ministry officials said 75% of the dead were women and children -- a level that was never confirmed in the detailed reports. And as recently as March, the ministry's daily reports claimed that 72% of the dead were women and children, even as underlying data clearly showed the percentage was well below that.

Israeli leaders have pointed to such inconsistencies as evidence that the ministry, which is led by medical

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professionals but reports to Gaza's Hamas government, is inflating the figures for political gain.

Experts say the reality is more complicated, given the scale of devastation that has overwhelmed and badly damaged Gaza's hospital system.

Lewis said while the "beleaguered" Health Ministry has come under heavy scrutiny, Israel has yet to provide credible alternative data. He called on Israel to "put out your numbers."

HIGH CIVILIAN DEATH TOLL IS A LIABILITY FOR ISRAELThe true toll in Gaza could have serious repercussions. Two international courts in the Hague are examining accusations that Israel has committed war crimes and genocide against Palestinians – allegations it adamantly denies.

Israel has opened a potentially devastating new phase of the war in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where an estimated 100,000 civilians remain even after mass evacuations. How Israel mitigates civilian deaths there will be closely watched.

Israeli airstrikes in Rafah last month set off a fire that killed dozens of people, and on Thursday an airstrike on a school-turned-shelter in central Gaza killed at least 33 people, including 12 women and children, local health officials said.

Israel says it has tried to avoid civilian casualties throughout the war, including by issuing mass evacuation orders ahead of intense military operations that have displaced some 80% of Gaza's population. It also accuses Hamas of intentionally putting civilians in harm's way as human shields.

The U.N. secretary-general plans to list Israel and Hamas as violating the rights and protection of children in armed conflict in an upcoming annual report to the Security Council.

The fate of women and children is an important indicator of civilian casualties because the Health Ministry does not break out combatant deaths. But it's not a perfect indicator: Many civilian men have died, and some older teenagers may be involved in the fighting.

PARSING GAZA HEALTH MINISTRY DATAThe ministry said publicly on April 30 that 34,622 had died in the war. The AP analysis was based on the 22,961 individuals fully identified at the time by the Health Ministry with names, genders, ages, and Israeli-issued identification numbers.

The ministry says 9,940 of the dead – 29% of its April 30 total – were not listed in the data because they remain "unidentified." These include bodies not claimed by families, decomposed beyond recognition or whose records were lost in Israeli raids on hospitals.

An additional 1,699 records in the ministry's April data were incomplete and 22 were duplicates; they were excluded from AP's analysis.

Among those fully identified, the records show a steady decline in the overall proportion of women and children who have been killed: from 64% in late October, to 62% as of early January, to 57% by the end of March, to 54% by the end of April.

Yet throughout the war, the ministry has claimed that roughly two-thirds of the dead were women and children. This figure has been repeated by international organizations and many in the foreign media, including the AP.

The Health Ministry says it has gone to great lengths to accurately compile information but that its ability to count and identify the dead has been greatly hampered by the war. The fighting has crippled the Gaza health system, knocking out two-thirds of the territory's 36 hospitals, closing morgues and hampering the work of facilities still functioning.

Dr. Moatasem Salah, director of the ministry's emergency center, rejected Israeli assertions that his ministry has intentionally inflated or manipulated the death toll.

"This shows disrespect to the humanity for any person who exists here," he said. "We are not numbers ... These are all human souls."

He insisted that 70% of those killed have been women and children and said the overall death toll is much higher than what has been reported because thousands of people remain missing, are believed to be buried in rubble, or their deaths were not reported by their families.

AS DEATH TOLL RISES, THE DETAILS ARE DEBATEDTo be sure, this war's death toll is the highest of any previous Israel-Palestinian conflict. But Israeli leaders say the international media and United Nations have cited Palestinian figures without a critical eye.

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Israel last month angrily criticized the U.N.'s use of data from Hamas' media office – a propaganda arm of the militant group – that reported a larger number of women and children killed. The U.N. later lowered its number in line with Health Ministry figures.

Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, lashed out on the social platform X: "Anyone who relies on fake data from a terrorist organization in order to promote blood libels against Israel is antisemitic and supports terrorism."

AP's examination of the reports found flaws in the Palestinian record keeping. As Gaza's hospital system collapsed in December and January, the ministry began relying on hard-to-verify "media reports" to register new deaths. Its March report included 531 individuals who were counted twice, and many deaths were self-reported by families, instead of health officials.

Epstein, the Washington Institute researcher, said using different data-collection methodologies and then combining all the numbers gives an inaccurate picture.

"That's probably the biggest problem," he said, adding that he was surprised there hadn't been more scrutiny.

The number of Hamas militants killed in the fighting is also unclear. Hamas has closely guarded this information, though Khalil al-Hayya, a top Hamas official, told the AP in late April that the group had lost no more than 20% of its fighters. That would amount to roughly 6,000 fighters based on Israeli pre-war estimates.

The Israeli military has not challenged the overall death toll released by the Palestinian ministry. But it says the number of dead militants is much higher at roughly 15,000 – or over 40% of all the dead. It has provided no evidence to support the claim, and declined to comment for this story.

Shlomo Mofaz, director of Israel's Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, said such estimates are typically based on body counts, battlefield intelligence and the interrogations of captured Hamas commanders.

Mofaz, a former Israeli intelligence officer, said his researchers are skeptical of the Palestinian data.

In previous conflicts, he said his researchers found numerous "inconsistencies," such as including natural deaths from disease or car accidents among the war casualties. He expects that to be the case this time as well. The large number of unidentified dead raises further questions, he said.

Michael Spagat, a London-based economics professor who chairs the board of Every Casualty Counts, a nonprofit that tracks armed conflicts, said he continues to trust the Health Ministry and believes it is doing its best in difficult circumstances.

"I think (the data) becomes increasingly flawed," he said. But, he added, "the flaws don't necessarily change the overall picture."

US-built pier in Gaza is reconnected after repairs, and aid will flow soon, US Central Command says

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military-built pier designed to carry badly needed aid into Gaza by boat has been reconnected to the beach in the besieged territory after a section broke apart in storms and rough seas, and food and other supplies will begin to flow soon, U.S. Central Command announced Friday.

The section that connects to the beach in Gaza, the causeway, was rebuilt nearly two weeks after heavy storms damaged it and abruptly halted what had already been a troubled delivery route.

"Earlier this morning in Gaza, U.S. forces successfully attached the temporary pier to the Gaza beach," Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, told reporters by phone Friday. "We expect to resume delivery of humanitarian assistance from the sea in the coming days."

Cooper said operations at the reconnected pier will be ramped up soon with a goal to get 1 million pounds (500 tons or 450 metric tons) of food and other supplies moving through the pier into Gaza every two days.

The pier was only operational for a week before a storm broke it apart, and had initially struggled to reach delivery goals. Weather was a factor, and early efforts to get aid from the pier into Gaza were disrupted

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as civilians desperate for food stormed the trucks that aid agencies were using to transport the food to the warehouses for distribution.

However, before it broke apart the pier had been gradually increasing aid movement each day. Cooper said Friday that the lessons learned from that initial week of operations made him confident higher levels of aid throughout could be attained now.

The U.S. Agency for International Development said in a statement it was working with other U.S. government colleagues and humanitarian partners on the ground in Gaza to ensure that aid from the pier "can safely and effectively resume movement, which we expect in the coming days."

A large section of the causeway broke apart May 25 as heavy winds and high seas hit the area, and four Army vessels operating there went aground, injuring three service members, including one who remains in critical condition. The damage was the latest stumbling block in what has been a persistent struggle to get food to starving Palestinians during the 8-month-old Israel-Hamas war.

The maritime route for a limited time had been an additional way to help get more aid into Gaza because the Israeli offensive in the southern city of Rafah has made it difficult, if not impossible at times, to get anything through land routes, which are far more productive. Israel's Rafah military operations and military strikes in northern Gaza had also temporarily halted U.S. airdrops of food.

Cooper said Friday the U.S. also expects to resume those airdrops in the coming days.

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

After the May 25 storm damage to the causeway, large sections were disconnected and moved to an Israeli port for repairs. In addition, two of the U.S. Army boats that went aground during the same bad weather near Ashkelon in Israel have been freed.

Two other Army boats two beached onto the Gaza shoreline took on a lot of water and sand and the Israeli Navy has been helping with the repairs, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said.

Biden, a Democrat, announced his plan for the U.S. military to build a pier during his State of the Union address in early March, and the military said it would take about 60 days to get it installed and operational. The initial cost was estimated at \$320 million, but Singh said earlier this week that the price had dropped to \$230 million, due to contributions from Britain and because the cost of contracting trucks and other equipment was less than expected.

It took a bit longer than the planned two months for installation, with the first trucks carrying aid for the Gaza Strip rolling down the pier on May 17. Just a day later, crowds overran a convoy of trucks as they headed into Gaza, stripping the cargo from 11 of the 16 vehicles before they reached a U.N. warehouse.

The next day, as officials altered the travel routes of the convoys, aid finally began reaching people in need. More than 1,100 tons (1,000 metric tons) of aid were delivered before the causeway broke apart in the storm, Pentagon officials said.

Alex Jones seeks permission to convert his personal bankruptcy into a liquidation

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones is seeking court permission to convert his personal bankruptcy reorganization to a liquidation, which would lead to a sell-off of a large portion of his assets to help pay some of the \$1.5 billion he owes relatives of victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Jones and his media company, Free Speech Systems, both filed for bankruptcy reorganization after the Sandy Hook families won lawsuits against him for his repeatedly calling the 2012 shooting that killed 20 first graders and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut, a hoax on his Infowars programs.

But Jones and the Sandy Hook families have been unable to agree on how to resolve the cases, leading to Jones filing a motion Wednesday in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Houston asking a judge to convert his personal case from a Chapter 11 reorganization to a Chapter 7 liquidation.

"The Debtor does not anticipate that a resolution may be reached with the other parties in interest suf-

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ficient to confirm a chapter 11 plan of reorganization," Jones' filing said. "Given that there is no reasonable prospect of a successful reorganization, remaining in chapter 11 would incur additional administrative expenses without concomitant benefit to the Debtor's estate."

Jones' bankruptcy lawyers did not immediately reply to Friday messages seeking comment.

Christopher Mattei, a lawyer for the families, said in a statement that "Alex Jones has hurt so many people. The Connecticut families have fought for years to hold him responsible no matter the cost and at great personal peril. Their steadfast focus on meaningful accountability, and not just money, is what has now brought him to the brink of justice in the way that matters most."

The Sandy Hook families, meanwhile, are asking the same judge to convert Free Speech Systems' case from a reorganization to a liquidation.

Judge Christopher Lopez has scheduled a June 14 hearing in Houston to decide on how to resolve the cases.

Jones' lawyers have said that the company's case also appeared to be headed toward a liquidation, or it could be withdrawn.

Liquidation could mean that Jones would have to sell most of what he owns, including his company and its assets, but could keep his home and other personal belongings that are exempt from bankruptcy liquidation. Proceeds would go to his creditors, including the Sandy Hook families.

If Free Speech Systems' case is withdrawn, the company would return to the same position it was in after the \$1.5 billion was awarded in the lawsuits and it would send efforts to collect the damages back to the state courts in Texas and Connecticut where the verdicts were reached.

Jones already has moved to sell some of his personal assets to pay creditors, including his Texas ranch worth around \$2.8 million.

But a liquidation of Jones' and his company's assets would raise only a fraction of what he owes the Sandy Hook families.

According to the most recent financial statements filed in the bankruptcy court, Jones personally has about \$9 million in assets, including his \$2.6 million Austin-area home in Texas and other real estate. He listed his living expenses at about \$69,000 for April alone, including about \$16,500 for expenses on his home, including maintenance, housekeeping and insurance.

Infowars' parent company, Free Speech Systems, which employs 44 people, had nearly \$4 million in cash on-hand at the end of April. The business made nearly \$3.2 million in April, including from selling the dietary supplements, clothing and other items that Jones promotes on his show, while listing \$1.9 million in expenses.

Last weekend, Jones warned on his show that his company faced an imminent shutdown because of what he called a conspiracy by the government and Democrats related to his bankruptcy cases. He urged his supporters to form a human chain around his Austin studio to prevent a takeover, and said he was sleeping in the studio to guard against a shutdown — which didn't happen.

Lopez, the judge, ruled Monday that Jones could keep operating until June 14, when decisions on potential liquidations are expected.

Jones has said on his show that even if Free Speech Systems and Infowars are sold off, he could resume his broadcasts in some other fashion.

Jones had offered a bankruptcy reorganization plan that would have let him keep operating Free Speech Systems and Infowars while paying the Sandy Hook families a minimum total of \$55 million over 10 years. Before that proposal, the families had offered to settle their debt for a minimum of \$85 million.

The families of many, but not all, of the Sandy Hook victims sued Jones and won the two trials in Connecticut and Texas.

The relatives said they were traumatized by Jones' comments and the actions of his followers. They testified at the trials about being harassed and threatened by Jones' believers, some of whom confronted the grieving families in person saying the shooting never happened and their children never existed.

Thomas acknowledges more travel paid for by Harlan Crow.

Colleagues report six-figure book payments

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Clarence Thomas on Friday belatedly acknowledged more travel paid by Republican megadonor Harlan Crow, while several colleagues reported six-figure payments as part of book deals.

Thomas, who has faced criticism for failing to report luxury trips paid for by Crow and others over many years, said in his annual financial disclosure that, in 2019, Crow paid for a hotel room in Bali, Indonesia, for a single night, and food and lodging at a private club in Sonoma County, California. He did not report any travel paid by others last year.

The disclosure on Indonesia is curious for what it omits: the rest of the trip. ProPublica reported last year that Thomas flew to Indonesia on Crow's private jet and then boarded his superyacht for an islands tour, one of many trips Crow has given to Thomas and his wife, Ginni, over the years.

Another justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson, reported eye-popping numbers, a nearly \$900,000 advance for her upcoming memoir, and attention-grabbing gifts, four tickets to a Beyoncé concert valued at \$3,700 from the singer herself.

Jackson was one of four Supreme Court justices who reported sizable income from book deals. Justice Brett Kavanaugh reported being paid \$340,000 by the conservative Regnery Publishing company. The company was sold and the book is to be published by an imprint at Hachette Book Group, according to Axios, which also reported this week that Kavanaugh's book will deal with his contentious confirmation hearing that included allegations of sexual misconduct, which he has denied. The court confirmed Friday that the justice is writing a legal memoir.

Justices Neil Gorsuch and Sonia Sotomayor reported royalty income of \$250,000 and nearly \$90,000, respectively.

In their day jobs, the justices are being paid \$298,500 this year, except for Chief Justice John Roberts, who earns \$312,200.

The only justice whose report was not available Friday is Samuel Alito, who received an extension for up to 90 days, as he does most years. The justice has separately been under scrutiny over flags that flew outside homes he owned. He has said they were raised by his wife.

Jackson, the first Black woman on the nation's highest court, signed a book contract soon after taking her seat in 2022. The book, "Lovely One," is to be published in September.

The total value of her book deal has not been publicly disclosed, but it is expected to rival if not exceed what Sotomayor was paid for her memoir, "My Beloved World," more than \$3 million.

Among the current justices, only Roberts, Alito and Justice Elena Kagan have so far not cut book deals. Thomas received a \$1.5 million advance, stunning at the time, for his 2007 book, "My Grandfather's Son." Justice Amy Coney Barrett in 2022 reported receiving \$425,000 for a yet-to-be-released book, part of a reported \$2 million deal she signed soon after joining the court in 2020.

The disclosures paint a partial picture of the justices' finances, as they are not required to reveal the value of their homes or, for those who are married, their spouses' salary.

The justices adopted an ethics code in November, though it lacks a means of enforcement. The code treats travel, food and lodging as expenses rather than gifts, for which monetary values must be reported. Justices aren't required to attach a value to expenses.

In March, the federal judiciary began requiring judges to disclose travel-related gifts and their values — rather than reporting such gifts as reimbursements. The justices say they generally abide by the same rules, but Thomas did not disclose the cost of the Bali hotel.

Some Democratic lawmakers are continuing to press legislation that would require the court to adopt a binding code of conduct and provide for investigations of alleged violations. But the prospect for such legislation is considered remote in a closely divided Congress.

Only two justices reported receiving gifts last year. Thomas said he was given two photo albums worth

\$2,000 by Terrence Giroux and his wife. Giroux is the executive director emeritus of the Horatio Alger Association.

Jackson received artwork for her Supreme Court office worth \$12,500. And then there were the Beyoncé tickets, worth more than \$900 a pop. Beyoncé performed two concerts in the Washington area in August 2023, though Jackson's disclosure does not say when or where the tickets were for.

"Justice Jackson is Crazy in Love with Beyoncé's music," Supreme Court spokeswoman Patricia McCabe said, invoking a Beyoncé song. "Who isn't?"

Biden apologizes to Zelenskyy for monthslong congressional holdup to weapons that let Russia advance

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, SYLVIE CORBET and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday for the first time publicly apologized to Ukraine for a monthslong congressional holdup in American military assistance that let Russia make gains on the battlefield.

Biden met in Paris with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who appealed for bipartisan U.S. support going forward "like it was during World War II."

A day earlier, the two had attended ceremonies marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, where Biden had drawn common cause between the allied forces that helped free Europe from Nazi Germany and today's effort to support Ukraine against Russia's invasion and Zelenskyy had been greeted with a rapt ovation.

"I apologize for those weeks of not knowing what's going to happen in terms of funding," Biden said, referring to the six-month holdup by conservative Republicans in Congress to a \$61 billion military aid package for Ukraine. Still, the Democratic president insisted the American people were standing by Ukraine for the long haul. "We're still in. Completely. Thoroughly," he said.

The apology — and Zelenskyy's plea for rock-solid support akin to the allied coalition in WWII — served as a reminder that for all of Biden's talk of an unflagging U.S. commitment to Ukraine, recalcitrance among congressional Republicans and an isolationist strain in American politics have exposed its fragility. And, although unremarked upon, the specter of Donald Trump's candidacy loomed over the discussion, as the Republican former president and the presumptive nominee has spoken positively of Russian President Vladimir Putin and sparked Ukrainian concerns that he would call for it to cede territory to end the conflict.

Zelenskyy pressed for all Americans to support his country's defense against Russia's invasion, and he thanked lawmakers for eventually coming together to approve the weapons package, which has allowed Ukraine to stem Russian advances in recent weeks.

"It's very important that in this unity, United States of America, all American people stay with Ukraine like it was during World War II," Zelenskyy said. "How the United States helped to save human lives, to save Europe. And we count on your continuing support in standing with us shoulder to shoulder."

The United States is by far Kyiv's biggest supplier of wartime support, and Ukraine is trying to fend off an intense Russian offensive in eastern areas of the country. The push is focused on the Ukrainian border regions of Kharkiv and Donetsk, but Ukrainian officials say it could spread as Russia's bigger army seeks to make its advantage tell.

During their meeting, Zelenskyy shared a "very frank assessment" with Biden about conditions on the ground and the pressure that Ukraine continues to face from Russia, especially in the Donbas region, according to John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesman. But because of the recent infusion of U.S. aid, the Ukrainians have been able to "thwart Russian advances," particularly around Kharkiv.

"The Russians really have kind of stalled out up there, basically," Kirby said. "Their advance on Kharkiv is all but over because they ran into the first line of defenses of the Ukrainian armed forces and basically stopped, if not pulled back some units."

The offensive is seeking to exploit Kyiv's shortages of ammunition and troops along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line.

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The slow pace of delivery of pledged Western weaponry has long frustrated Zelenskyy, as has Biden's hesitation over supplying more hardware for fear of provoking Russian President Vladimir Putin. That has caused tension in their relationship.

The U.S. will send about \$225 million in military aid to Ukraine, Biden announced Friday. The latest package includes munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, as well as mortar systems and an array of artillery rounds, U.S. officials said Thursday.

A Ukrainian strike on its partially-occupied Luhansk region using U.S.-made ATACMS missiles killed three people and injured 35 others Friday, local Moscow-appointed authorities said.

Biden cast the additional aid in his meeting with Zelenskyy as money to "reconstruct the electric grid" in Ukraine, a reference aides said was to additional air defense and missile defense systems in the new package.

Easing their stance amid Russia's most recent onslaught and with Ukraine's army reeling, some NATO allies including the U.S. said last week they would allow Ukraine to use weapons they deliver to Kyiv to carry out limited attacks inside Russia.

That step brought a furious response from the Kremlin, which warned that Europe's biggest conflict since World War II could spin out of control.

Biden and Zelenskyy attended the anniversary events of D-Day in Normandy, northern France, on Thursday, along with European leaders who have supported Kyiv's efforts in the war. Biden pledged "we will not walk away" from Ukraine, drawing a direct line from the fight to liberate Europe from Nazi domination to today's war against Russian aggression.

Ukraine depicts its fight against the Kremlin's forces as a clash between Western democratic freedom and Russian tyranny. Russia says it is defending itself against a menacing eastward expansion of the NATO military alliance.

In a 20-minute speech Friday at the National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament, Zelenskyy drew a parallel with the sacrifices made during World War II and his country's current fight.

"This battle is a crossroads," Zelenskyy said. "A moment where we can now write history the way we need it. Or we can become victims of history as it suits ... our enemy."

Zelenskyy, who spoke in Ukrainian, was frequently interrupted by lawmakers' applause and cheers. He prompted a standing ovation when he said in French, "Dear France, I thank you for standing by our side as we defend life."

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, announced late Thursday that France will provide Ukraine with its Mirage combat aircraft. At a news conference Friday following his meeting with Zelenskyy at the Elysée presidential palace in Paris, Macron said the training of pilots and mechanics will start "immediately" but declined to specify the number of combat aircrafts.

France will also train and equip a brigade of the Ukrainian army that represents about 4,500 soldiers, while building a coalition with "partners" to send military instructors onto Ukrainian soil to train the country's troops, Macron said.

Macron said some other nations already agreed to participate, without providing details. He argued sending Western instructors to Ukraine would not be an "escalation" in the conflict.

"It's not about deploying European or allied people and soldiers to the front line," Macron said. "It's about recognizing Ukraine's sovereignty over its territory."

Macron has been a vocal supporter of Ukraine. He said in February that putting Western troops on the ground in Ukraine is not "ruled out."

Zelenskyy began a day of meetings in Paris with an official welcome ceremony at the golden-domed Invalides monument, site of Napoleon's tomb.

During the day, Zelenskyy skipped a scheduled visit to the Nexter arms manufacturer in Versailles, which makes the Caesar self-propelled howitzers that are among the weapons provided by France to Kyiv's forces. He went instead to France's military headquarters with defense manufacturers, and his delegation signed defense agreements.

Zelenskyy's foreign trips aim to keep Ukraine's plight in the public eye, secure more military help for its fight against Russia's invasion and lock in long-term Western support through bilateral alliances.

France and Ukraine in February signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement. Zelenskyy has since signed similar bilateral agreements with many European countries.

Biden looks to Pointe du Hoc to inspire the push for democracy abroad and at home

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

POINTE DU HOC, France (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday summoned Americans to defend democracy from threats at home and abroad — and cast an implicit contrast with Donald Trump — as he drew on the heroism of Army Rangers who scaled the seaside cliffs of Pointe du Hoc in the D-Day invasion 80 years ago.

The same spot was etched in the nation's political memory in 1984, when President Ronald Reagan honored the "boys of Pointe du Hoc" and drew common cause between their almost unthinkable feat in the face of Nazi Germany's tyranny and the Reagan-era Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union.

Now, Biden sought to channel both historic moments to advance his own vision for the country's global role in the face of two grueling wars and in an election year when former President Trump has continued to lie about his 2020 election loss and has threatened to dismantle U.S. commitments overseas if he regains the White House.

"As we gather here today, it's not just to honor those who showed such remarkable bravery that day June 6, 1944," Biden said. "It's to listen to the echo of their voices. To hear them. Because they are summoning us. They're asking us what will we do. They're not asking us to scale these cliffs. They're asking us to stay true to what America stands for."

It was ostensibly an official speech, and Biden, a Democrat, never referenced the Republican former president's name. But his remarks were steeped in political overtones as his campaign tries to attract national security-minded Republican voters who lionized Reagan and have never warmed to Trump's "America First" foreign policy.

"They're not asking us to do their job," Biden said of the "ghosts of Pointe du Hoc." "They're asking us to do our job: to protect freedom in our time, to defend democracy, to stand up aggression abroad and at home, to be part of something bigger than ourselves."

A day earlier, Biden paid his respects to the D-Day force in an emotional ceremony at the Normandy American Cemetery that was also attended by dozens of veterans in their late 90s and older. A Navy officer recited "The Watch," affirming that a new generation was taking up the defense of freedom; a 21-gun salute cast eerie smoke over 9,388 white marble headstones; and the president grew heavy-eyed and pumped his fist as an F-35 flew past performing a missing-man salute.

Biden, at 81 not that many years removed from the Normandy fighters, cast himself — and his nation — as their inheritors in the timeless struggle between freedom and tyranny, saying "we're the fortunate heirs of a legacy of these heroes."

But the country's willingness to take up the mantle has in many ways never been more uncertain as Trump seeks to return to the White House. Biden seemed to give a nod to that as he invoked the heroes of old and asked, "Does anyone doubt they would move heaven and earth to vanquish hateful ideologies of today?"

Before flying to Normandy, Biden sat down with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday in Paris, where he stressed the U.S. commitment to Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion and for the first time publicly apologized to the Ukrainian people for a monthslong congressional holdup in American military assistance that let Moscow make battlefield gains. It was their first meeting since Biden signed the legislation authorizing the additional military assistance. He also announced a new \$225 million in ammunition shipments, including rockets, mortars, artillery rounds and air-defense missiles.

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"I apologize for those weeks of not knowing what's going to happen in terms of funding," Biden said, but insisted that the American people were standing by Ukraine for the long haul. "We're still in. Completely. Thoroughly," he said.

As he works to shore up Ukraine, Biden is grappling with other global challenges, among them seeking to end fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza while also trying to reorient U.S. foreign policy to confront China's rising power in Asia.

Pointe du Hoc is located on the sheer cliffs between Omaha and Utah beaches. Before D-Day, the Nazis were believed to have stationed artillery there, which would have allowed them to shell critical landing zones for Allied troops.

Army Rangers used ropes, ladders and their hands to scale Pointe du Hoc while under fire. When they reached the top, they realized that the artillery had already been moved elsewhere and only decoys remained. The weapons were tracked down nearby and disabled, and the Americans spent two days repelling Nazi counterattacks.

The mission was memorialized by Reagan on the 40th anniversary of D-Day in 1984.

"These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc," he said. "These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war."

Reagan's speech, coming as the Cold War with the Soviet Union remained underway, was also a call for the U.S. to not turn its back on Europe.

"We in America have learned bitter lessons from two World Wars," he said. "It is better to be here ready to protect the peace, than to take blind shelter across the sea, rushing to respond only after freedom is lost. We've learned that isolationism never was and never will be an acceptable response to tyrannical governments with an expansionist intent."

It's a view that would likely put him out of step with the modern Republican Party, which under Trump's leadership has become increasingly skeptical of foreign entanglements.

Biden highlighted the contrast during his State of the Union this year.

"It wasn't that long ago when a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, thundered, 'Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,'" a reference to another famous speech in Berlin. "Now, my predecessor, a former Republican president, tells Putin, 'Do whatever the hell you want.'"

Trump made that comment at a February rally in South Carolina, warning European allies not to be "delinquent" in their military spending or he would refuse to help them as president.

Zombies: Ranks of world's most debt-hobbled companies are soaring, and not all will survive

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — They are called zombies, companies so laden with debt that they are just stumbling by on the brink of survival, barely able to pay even the interest on their loans and often just a bad business hit away from dying off for good.

An Associated Press analysis found their numbers have soared to nearly 7,000 publicly traded companies around the world — 2,000 in the United States alone — whiplashed by years of piling up cheap debt followed by stubborn inflation that has pushed borrowing costs to decade highs.

And now many of these mostly small and mid-sized walking wounded could soon be facing their day of reckoning, with due dates looming on hundreds of billions of dollars of loans they may not be able to pay back.

"They're going to get crushed," Valens Securities Managing Director Robert Spivey said of the weakest zombies.

Added Miami investor Mark Spitznagel, who famously bet against stocks before the last two crashes: "The clock is ticking."

Zombies are commonly defined as companies that have failed to make enough money from operations in the past three years to pay even the interest on their loans. AP's analysis found their ranks in raw num-

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bers have jumped over the past decade by a third or more in Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the U.S., including companies that run Carnival Cruise Line, JetBlue Airways, Wayfair, Peloton, Italy's Telecom Italia and British soccer giant Manchester United.

To be sure, the number of companies, in general, has increased over the past decade, making comparisons difficult, but even limiting the analysis to companies that existed a decade ago, zombies have jumped nearly 30%.

They include utilities, food producers, tech companies, owners of hospitals and nursing home chains whose weak finances hobbled their responses in the pandemic, and real estate firms struggling with half-empty office buildings in the heart of major cities.

As the number of zombies has grown, so too has the potential damage if they are forced to file for bankruptcy or close their doors permanently. Companies in the AP's analysis employ at least 130 million people in a dozen countries.

Already, the number of U.S. companies going bankrupt has hit a 14-year high, a surge expected in a recession, not an expansion. Corporate bankruptcies have also recently hit highs of nearly a decade or more in Canada, the U.K., France and Spain.

Some experts say zombies may be able to avoid layoffs, selloffs of business units or collapse if central banks cut interest rates, which the European Central Bank began doing this week, though scattered defaults and bankruptcies could still drag on the economy. Others think the pandemic inflated the ranks of zombies and the impact is temporary.

"Revenue went down, or didn't grow as much as projected, but that doesn't mean they are all about to go bust," said Martin Fridson, CEO of research firm FridsonVision High Yield Strategy.

For its part, Wall Street isn't panicking. Investors have been buying stock of some zombies and their "junk bonds," loans rating agencies deem most at risk of default. While that may help zombies raise cash in the short term, investors pouring money into these securities and pushing up their prices could eventually face heavy losses.

"We have people gambling in the public markets at an unprecedented level," said David Trainer, head of New Constructs, an investment research group that tracks the cash drain on zombies. "They don't see risk."

WARNING SIGNSCredit rating agencies and economists warned about the dangers of companies piling on debt for years as interest rates fell but got a big push when central banks around the world cut benchmark rates to near zero in the 2009 financial crisis and then again in the 2020-21 pandemic.

It was a giant, unprecedented experiment designed to spark a borrowing binge that would help avert a worldwide depression. It also created what some economists saw as a credit bubble that spread far beyond zombies, with low rates that also enticed heavy borrowing by governments, consumers and bigger, healthier companies.

The difference for many zombies is they lack deep cash reserves, and the interest they pay on many of their loans is variable, not fixed, so higher rates are hurting them right now. Most dangerously, zombie debt was often not used to expand, hire or invest in technology, but on buying back their own stock.

These so-called repurchases allow companies to "retire" shares, or take them off the market, a way to make up for new shares often created to boost the pay and retention packages for CEOs and other top executives.

But too many stock buybacks can drain cash from a business, which is what happened at Bed Bath & Beyond. The retail chain that once operated 1,500 stores struggled for years with a troubled transition to digital sales and other problems, but its heavy borrowing and decision to spend \$7 billion in a decade on buybacks played a key role in its downfall.

Those buybacks came amid big paydays for top management, which Bed Bath & Beyond said in regulatory filings were intended to align with financial performance. Pay for just three top executives topped \$140 million, according to executive data firm Equilar, even as its stock sunk from \$80 to zero. Tens of thousands of workers in all 50 states lost their jobs as the chain spiraled to its bankruptcy filing last year.

Companies had a chance to cut their debt after then-President Donald Trump's 2017 tax overhaul slashed

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corporate rates and allowed repatriation of profits overseas. But most of the windfall was spent on buybacks instead. Over the next two years, U.S. companies spent a record \$1.3 trillion repurchasing and retiring their own stock, a 50% jump from the prior two years.

SmileDirectClub went from spending a little over \$1 million a year on buying its own stock before the tax cut to spending \$780 million as it boosted pay packages of top executives. One former CEO got \$20 million in just four years. Stock in the heavily indebted teeth-straightening company plunged before it went out of business last year and put 2,700 people out of work.

"I was like, 'How did this ever happen?'" said George Pettigrew, who held a tech job at the company's Nashville, Tennessee, headquarters. "I was shocked at the amount of the debt."

Another zombie, JetBlue, suffered problems felt by many airlines, including the lingering impact of lost business during the pandemic. But it also was hurt by the decision to double its debt in the past decade and purchase hundreds of millions of dollars of its own stock. As interest costs soared and profits evaporated, that stock has dropped by two-thirds, and JetBlue has not made enough in pre-tax earnings to pay \$717 million in interest over four straight years.

JetBlue said the AP's way of screening for zombies isn't accurate for airlines because big purchases of aircraft "are an intrinsic part of the business model" and don't reflect an airline's true health. The company added that it's been shoring up its finances recently by cutting costs and putting off purchases of new planes. JetBlue also hasn't done a major stock buyback in four years.

In some cases, borrowed cash has gone straight into the pockets of controlling shareholders and wealthy family owners.

In Britain, the Glazer family that owns much of the Premier League's Manchester United soccer franchise loaded up the company with debt in 2005, then got the team to borrow hundreds of millions a few years later. At the same time, the family had the team pay dividends to shareholders, including \$165 million to the Glazers themselves, while its stadium, the Old Trafford, fell into disrepair.

"They've papered over the cracks but we've been in decline for more than a decade," fan lobbying group head Chris Rumfitt said after a recent downpour sent water cascading from the upper stands in what spectators dubbed "Trafford Falls." "There have been zero investments in infrastructure."

The Glazers, who separately own the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, recently brought in a new part owner at Manchester United who has promised to inject \$300 million into the business. The stock is falling anyway, down 20% so far this year to \$16.25, no higher than it was a decade ago.

Manchester United declined to comment.

Zombie collapses wouldn't be so scary if robust spending by governments, consumers and larger, more stable companies could act as a cushion. But they also piled up debt.

The U.S. government is expected to spend \$870 billion this year on interest on its debt alone, up a third in a year and more than it spends on defense. In South Korea, consumers are tapped out as credit card and other household debt hit fresh records. In the U.K., homeowners are missing payments on their mortgages at a rate not seen in years.

A real concern among investors is that too many zombies could collapse at the same time because central banks kept them on life support with low interest rates for years instead of allowing failures to sprinkle out over time, similar to the way allowing small forest fires to burn dry brush helps prevent an inferno.

"They've created a tinderbox," said Spitznagel, founder of Universa Investments. "Any wildfire now threatens the entire ecosystem."

TIME RUNNING OUT? For the first few months of this year, hundreds of zombies refinanced their loans as lenders opened their wallets in anticipation that the Federal Reserve would start cutting in March. That new money helped stocks of more than 1,000 zombies in AP's analysis rise 20% or more in the past six months across the dozen countries.

But many did not or could not refinance, and time is running out.

Through the summer and into September, when many investors now expect the first and only Fed cut this year, zombies will have to pay off \$1.1 trillion of loans, according to AP's analysis, two-thirds of the total due by the end of the year.

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For its calculations, the AP used pre-tax, pre-interest earnings of publicly-traded companies from the database FactSet for both years it studied, 2023 and 2013. The countries selected were the biggest by gross domestic product: the U.S., China, Japan, India, Germany, the U.K., France, Canada, South Korea, Spain, Italy and Australia.

The study did not take into account cash in the bank that a company could use to pay its bills or assets it could sell to raise money. The results would also vary if other years were used due to economic conditions and interest rate policies. Still, studies by both the International Monetary Fund and the Bank for International Settlements, an organization for central banks in Switzerland, generally support AP's findings that zombies have risen sharply.

Most of the publicly traded companies in the countries studied — 80% of 34,000 total — are not zombies. These healthier companies tend to be bigger with more cash, and many have reinvested it in higher-yielding bonds and other assets to make up for the higher interest payments now. Many also took advantage of pandemic-era low rates to refinance, pushing out repayment due dates into the future.

But the debt hasn't gone away, and could become a problem for these companies as well if rates don't fall over the next few years. In 2026, \$586 billion in debt is coming due for the companies in the S&P 1500.

"They aren't on anyone's radar yet, but they are a hurricane. They could be a Category 4 or Category 5 if interest rates don't go down," Valens Securities' Spivey said. "They're going to lay people off. They're going to have to cut costs."

Some zombies aren't waiting.

Telecom Italia struck a deal last year to sell its landline network but debt fears continue to push down its stock, so it has moved to put its subsea telecom unit and cell tower business up for sale, too.

Radio giant iHeartMedia, after exiting bankruptcy five years ago with less debt, is still struggling to pay what it owes by unloading real estate and radio towers. Its stock has fallen from \$16.50 to \$1.10 in five years.

Exercise company Peloton Interactive has laid off hundreds of workers to help pay debt that has more than quadrupled to \$2.3 billion in just five years even though its pretax earnings before the new borrowing weren't enough to pay interest. Stock that had soared to more than \$170 a share during the pandemic recently closed at \$3.74.

"If rates stay at this level in the near future, we're going to see more bankruptcies," said George Cipolloni, a fund manager at Penn Mutual Asset Management. "At some point the money comes due and they're not going to have it. It's game over."

Putin says he sees no threat warranting use of nuclear arms but warns Russia could arm Western foes

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (AP) — President Vladimir Putin said Friday that he sees no current threat to Russia's sovereignty that would warrant the use of nuclear weapons but again warned that Moscow could send arms to countries or groups to strike Western targets.

Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin said use of nuclear weapons is only possible in "exceptional cases" and that he does not believe "such a case has arisen." The Russian leader has repeatedly raised the specter of a nuclear attack since he sent troops into Ukraine in 2022.

On Friday, he repeated a warning made days earlier that Moscow "reserves the right" to arm Western adversaries as a response to some NATO allies allowing Ukraine to use their weapons to strike targets inside Russia.

"If they supply (weapons) to the combat zone and call for using these weapons against our territory, why don't we have the right to do the same?" Putin asked.

"But I'm not ready to say that we will be doing it tomorrow, either," Putin added, suggesting that it might affect global stability.

He didn't specify where such arms might be sent. The U.S. has said that Russia has turned to North Korea and Iran to beef up its stock of relatively simple weapons, but Moscow could dip into its stock of

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high-tech missiles to share with adversaries of the West if Putin decides to fulfill his threat.

The United States and Germany recently authorized Ukraine to hit some targets on Russian soil with the long-range weapons they are supplying to Kyiv.

On Wednesday, a Western official and a U.S. senator said Ukraine has used American weapons to strike inside Russia under newly approved guidance from President Joe Biden that allows American arms to be used to defend Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly on the sensitive matter, spoke on condition of anonymity.

Putin also said he sees no need for a new round of mobilization to beef up Russia's forces in Ukraine because, he said, "people come voluntarily and go to the front lines to defend the Motherland."

Russia mobilized 300,000 reservists in the fall of 2022 amid a series of military setbacks in Ukraine, an unpopular move that prompted hundreds of thousands to flee the country to avoid being drafted.

Putin made the comments during a question and answer session with a pro-Kremlin moderator at the forum, which has been used by Russia for decades as a showcase for touting the country's development and to woo investors.

Earlier in a speech, he said the Russian economy is growing despite international sanctions and said Moscow has increasing economic ties with countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Putin said Russia "remains one of the key participants in world trade," despite the sweeping sanctions, imposed for sending troops into Ukraine, that cut off much of Russia's trade with Western Europe, the U.S. and their allies.

The main driver of Russia's economic growth is the fighting — now as important to the Kremlin economically as it is politically.

Russians are finding a few imported staples, and most global brands have disappeared — or been re-incarnated as Russian equivalents. But not much else has changed economically for most people, with massive state spending for military equipment and hefty payments to volunteer soldiers giving a strong boost to the economy.

Kids are upstaging their political parents — by acting like kids

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For one shining moment this week, the country's ongoing political crises were swept away by the comedic power of one cherubic and wildly exuberant 6-year-old.

Rep. John Rose, R-Tenn., was giving an impassioned defense of former President Donald Trump when his young son Guy went into action. As C-Span recorded the moment, Guy mugged for the camera, stuck his tongue out, rolled his eyes and generally seemed to be having a blast. The nation reacted with a burst of pure bipartisan giddiness. Even Sen. Mitch McConnell's press secretary joined in the fun.

Guy's moment in the spotlight is the latest example of political kids upstaging their parents and bringing a moment of levity to the official workings of government. It's also a solid case study on the sheer unifying power of humor.

"It reminds us that we're all humans, we all have children. And maybe these things we're fighting about aren't all that important," said Caleb Warren, co-director of the University of Colorado's Humor Research Lab and a marketing professor at the University of Arizona. "And for him to be doing that during one of these hyperpolitical speeches, that's what makes it special ... If he was just making those faces in the classroom, it wouldn't have been the same."

That incongruity between behavior and environment is key, according to Tamara Sharifov, a licensed clinical social worker based in San Diego who uses humor in therapy sessions, mediation and conflict resolution. Sharifov recently spoke on a panel in Washington about the healing power of humor.

"Comedy allows a shift in perspective and a softening. It allows for an increase in empathy and a calmer environment," she said. "It's very healing. It breaks through rigidity."

A day after his House antics, Guy was at it again, rolling on the White House lawn during the annual congressional picnic.

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He now joins a long and proud line of political kids gaining attention for publicly acting like kids. Perhaps his purest spiritual predecessor is young Andrew Giuliani mugging his way through his father Rudy's 1994 mayoral inauguration — a performance so iconic that it merited a Saturday Night Live parody.

"This is my Guy!!!" Andrew Giuliani tweeted Tuesday, linking to the C-Span clip.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts' irrepressible son Jack, then 4 years old, gained attention for his enthusiastic dancing during the 2005 ceremony when former President Obama was introducing Roberts as a Supreme Court nominee. And an infamous Oval Office photo features the young son of a Secret Service agent face-planting into a couch as his parents chat in the background.

Sometimes the kiddie cuteness is slightly engineered — as when the White House made an event out of Take Our Kids to Work Day with kids acting as Secret Service agents and reporters.

And sometimes the attention isn't always positive. In 2014, Sasha and Malia Obama acted very much like a pair of bored, eye-rolling teenagers as their father spoke during an admittedly boring Thanksgiving turkey pardoning press conference. A Republican congressional staffer publicly blasted the pair for their lack of decorum and quickly resigned under pressure.

As for the newest member of this elite club, young Guy Rose has already achieved a notable form of bipartisanship in these fractured times. Father and son appeared together on CNN and Fox News, and the youngster's comedic confidence seemed to gain momentum over time.

When asked to describe his father's job, Guy told Fox News his dad "does boring stuff."

And when Rep. Rose started to give a very political answer about how interesting it is to meet and learn from his constituents, Guy — with a stage whisper and epic comedic timing — said, "He's not telling the truth!"

Rep. Rose has taken all the fuss in good spirits — especially considering that he was in the middle of giving a fairly angry speech that basically nobody listened to.

"Guy has been a source of joy in our family since we brought him home from the hospital six years ago," Rose told The Associated Press. "I certainly had no idea he was making those faces behind me while I was delivering remarks, but in hindsight, I'm glad he did. I think we all needed that laugh."

A new account rekindles allegations that Trump disrespected Black people on 'The Apprentice'

By GARANCE BURKE and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Gene Folkes had just been jettisoned as a contestant on "The Apprentice" and was commiserating with a crew member at a bar inside the lobby of Trump Tower. He was indignant — and not just at having been kicked off the reality show after its star, Donald Trump, had delivered his catchphrase: "You're fired."

One of two Black contestants chosen for that season in 2010, Folkes was insulted that Trump had called him inarticulate and accused him of illiteracy in a lengthy boardroom tirade minutes earlier.

As the crew member, a Black woman who worked as a contestant manager, consoled him, Trump suddenly appeared at the bar.

"He came up and he asked me: 'Is this your woman? Because you two would make a really great couple. You both have the same background,'" Folkes told The Associated Press.

The contestant manager quietly reminded Trump that she worked for him. Then, Trump made a comment similar to something he uttered in the boardroom that never aired on TV, Folkes said.

"He said again, 'It's not like I used the N-word,' and then he walked off, and that was that," said Folkes, a New York-based consultant, podcast host and U.S. Air Force veteran.

As Trump seeks to make inroads with African American voters in his third run for the White House, fresh allegations are surfacing about his disrespectful behavior toward Black people inside the Manhattan skyscraper that launched his show and political career. There are still questions about whether any of that behavior was caught on tape.

Bill Pruitt, a former producer on "The Apprentice," published a recent account alleging that Trump actually used the racist slur to refer to Kwame Jackson, a Black contestant who was a finalist on the show's first

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season. A spokesperson for Trump's campaign has vehemently dismissed the account about the Republican ex-president as false and politically motivated. President Joe Biden's Democratic campaign, meanwhile, spotlighted Pruitt's account on social media.

Trump, who hosted "The Apprentice" from 2004 to 2015, has long denied such claims and called former contestants criticizing him "failing wannabes" motivated by greed. But he has been trailed in his professional and political life by charges of racism, from a 1973 discrimination lawsuit against his real estate business, to his push to carry out executions of five Black and Latino youths who were later exonerated of rape allegations, to his yearslong fanning of the conspiracy theory that President Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president, was not born in the United States.

Trump's first campaign in 2016 was rocked by allegations about his conduct on "The Apprentice" and other appearances during his association with NBC, notably in footage in which he said he could sexually assault women and get away with it because he was a "star." MGM Studios, which bought the production company that made the show, has since been acquired by Amazon.

Almost a decade after he left his reality TV role to run for president, Trump's television career remains central to his biography and political rise. It presented Trump Tower to tens of millions of people as a symbol of power and success before Trump launched his first campaign from the building's lobby. Last week, the same lobby was the setting for his first appearance after being convicted of 34 felony counts in a hush money scheme to influence the 2016 election.

"The Apprentice' is probably underrated as a source of that kind of image construction," said Joel Penney, a professor at Montclair State University who studies the intersection of pop culture and politics. "There's nobody who could possibly compete on the level of name recognition, brand recognition, that kind of familiarity."

THE ROLES OF NBC AND AMAZON "The Apprentice" and its spinoffs were on air for more than a decade, featuring people from all walks of life and later celebrities who competed in contrived business challenges to win Trump's favor — and potentially a job with his organization.

Hundreds of cast and crew members signed non-disclosure agreements, limiting their ability to reveal what happened inside Trump Tower or any outtakes featuring the ex-president. The show's producer as well as the network that broadcast it also have refused to release unaired footage. Over the last week, after the AP reached out to more than two dozen former crew members and contestants about Trump's behind-the-scenes behavior, some said they wondered how contractual agreements may have insulated Trump from blowback about politically volatile comments.

Folkes said he believes his exchanges with Trump inside the bar were recorded since he was still wearing a mic.

After his firing in October 2010, Folkes blogged about his experience on the show. He said he soon got a call from NBC executives. According to a document provided by Folkes, in early November NBC's then-vice president for legal affairs, Shelly Tremain, sent him a cease-and-desist order and said the network would seek to recover \$1 million if he kept talking about his participation in the series or violating his "application agreement."

Folkes fired back to Tremain's team in an email, saying his portrayal on the show was "unfortunate, inaccurate, stereotyping being applied to a member of a protected class," according to a copy of the message viewed by the AP. "Review the boardroom scene of episode 5 in its entirety for a very clear picture of the false portrayal and stereotyping ... I harbor no interest in publicly commenting about Mr. Trump."

Folkes said the network did provide him with extra therapy sessions following his firing, which he said helped him to process the reputational damage he suffered as a contestant. NBC declined to comment about him and Tremain did not respond to a message.

"After a decade of (military) service, I can take a lot of stress. It's not like, 'Oh, he fired me and hurt my feelings,'" Folkes said. "When I say I am offended, that is a high bar to cross."

Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said in a statement that "these completely fabricated accusations" had already been debated in 2016 "and thoroughly debunked," dismissing all of them as rooted in campaign politics.

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"Now that Crooked Joe Biden and the Democrats are losing the election, and President Trump continues to dominate, they are bringing up old fake stories from the past because they are desperate," he said.

Folkes previously spoke out against Trump's candidacy and his comments toward and about female cast and crew members in an AP investigation published in October 2016. After reading the AP story, "Access Hollywood" producers said they dug into their own show's archive, uncovering a 2005 tape in which Trump made lewd remarks about being sexually aggressive toward women.

The tape sparked outrage and calls from some Republicans for Trump to drop out a month before the election. He didn't — and won. But many of his opponents have continued to press those involved in "The Apprentice" to release their archives, partly out of a belief that a tape of Trump using the racist slur exists.

Entertainment giant MGM said in 2016 that it owned the archive of the reality TV show and contractual obligations kept it from unilaterally releasing any unaired, archived material. In 2022, the online shopping giant Amazon finalized its acquisition of MGM, one of the oldest studios in Hollywood. Amazon MGM Studios declined to comment.

The show's executive producer Mark Burnett also has said that he doesn't have the ability or right to release footage from the show. NBC has stated that it does not own the series footage and only licensed it from Burnett for broadcast.

A NEW ACCOUNTWriting for Slate in an article published last week, Pruitt described a meeting with Trump in the show's boardroom set, where he famously would dismiss contestants.

According to Pruitt's account, one of Trump's company's managers suggested picking Jackson over Bill Rancic, the other remaining contestant and a white man. After a debate over Jackson's performance on the show, Pruitt writes, Trump winced before asking if America would accept a Black man winning, referring to Jackson by the racist slur.

Pruitt said he was coming forward now because his non-disclosure agreement — which carried a possible \$5 million fine if violated — expired this year. He told the AP that he recalled all quotes in his article to the best of his ability and that the conversation was recorded.

"He's about to run for a second term as president of the United States and I heard him use a term that should have and would have abolished him from politics forever had more people heard about it," Pruitt said. "Anyone who is capable of using it shouldn't be leading the country."

The Trump campaign denied Pruitt's claim that Trump used the slur. "Prove it," wrote Cheung, the campaign spokesperson, on the X platform, adding that Biden's allies were "peddling" the story "because Biden is hemorrhaging support from Black Americans." The Democratic president has seen his support among Black voters fall sharply since taking office.

In 2005, a year after Pruitt claims Trump used the slur, the former president proposed a "Blacks" versus "whites" version of "The Apprentice" on "The Howard Stern Show," telling listeners he was considering creating an episode pitting "nine Blacks against nine whites, all highly educated, very smart, strong, beautiful people."

In an interview, Jackson said Trump never said the slur to his face. But he said Pruitt's account and the conversation about an alleged Trump recording spotlighted the nation's inability to resolve broader questions of what kind of speech voters will tolerate in 2024.

"The bigger problem for me is none of this really matters because America is entirely comfortable with both overt and covert racism. And whether there is a smoking gun that says Trump called me an N-word and a tape appears tomorrow, what will that change? How will that make a difference?" said Jackson, president of his own brand marketing, diversity and inclusion consulting firm.

POLITICAL PRESSURETrump, the presumptive Republican nominee, argues Biden's immigration and economic policies have deprived Black communities of jobs and resources. He and his allies have suggested he can cut into Biden's margins with Black voters, long a core Democratic constituency.

He has also sought to get a boost from his criminal charges and suggested in February to a mostly Black audience that African Americans related to him more because he had been indicted.

Biden has pointed to several measures benefitting Black Americans, including more funding for historically Black colleges and universities, forgiveness of federal student loan debt and pardons for federal possession

of marijuana charges. His campaign has also sought to draw attention to Trump's past.

On Monday, Biden's campaign posted a TikTok video featuring coverage of Pruitt's allegations, as well as the affirmation of Omarosa Manigault Newman, who went from a show contestant to White House aide to a Trump critic, that she had heard a tape of Trump using the slur.

"Donald Trump is exactly who we all knew he was — a lifelong racist," a woman says in the TikTok. "Black voters kicked Donald Trump out of the White House in 2020, and we're going to do it again this November."

Marshawn Evans Daniels, who was one of two Black contestants competing on the fourth season of "The Apprentice," said she never heard Trump use racist language on set.

"The Apprentice' was a baptism in the highest levels of business and I was always praised," said Evans Daniels, an attorney, author and consultant. "I never had a negative experience but that doesn't usually happen when you are there in the room."

That same season, winner Randal Pinkett was rewarded with a job working for Trump. But Pinkett, who is also Black, said Trump treated him differently than other previous winners and asked him to share his title with a white contestant.

"If I give Donald the benefit of the doubt, then what he did to me was racially insensitive," said Pinkett, now a CEO of an international consulting firm who has also previously criticized Trump. "If I do not give him the benefit of doubt, which I do not, it was racist. And it therefore does not surprise me that he would say the N-word."

Hundreds of asylum-seekers are camped out near Seattle. There's a vacant motel next door

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

KENT, Wash. (AP) — Kabongo Kambila Ringo stood outside the tent where he has been staying with his pregnant wife and ate from a clear plastic tray of Girl Scout cookies melting in the midday sun.

He was one of around 240 asylum-seekers camping in a grassy lot along a highway south of Seattle, wondering if police would follow through on threats to arrest them for trespassing, and hoping officials instead might let them move into the vacant motel next door.

"It's very difficult," the 29-year-old from Congo told The Associated Press in French. "There's not enough to eat. There's not even a way to wash ourselves."

The cluster of tarp-covered tents that have covered the field in Kent, a Seattle suburb, since last weekend highlights the strain facing many communities — even some far from the U.S.-Mexico border — as President Joe Biden attempts to restrict asylum and neutralize immigration as a political liability ahead of this fall's election.

Some Democratic-led northern cities have seen huge influxes of migrants. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has sent more than 40,000 asylum-seekers to Chicago, mostly by bus or plane.

The Seattle area has seen fewer, but with homelessness already an immense challenge — nearly 10,000 people sleep outside in King County every night, officials say — even that has stressed the region's capacity.

More than 2,000 asylum-seekers have come through a suburban church, Riverton Park United Methodist in nearby Tukwila, since 2022 after word got out that it was willing to help. The church has made room for hundreds of migrants to stay every night and has raised money to place families in motels.

Hundreds were moved from tents at the church to hotels or other short-term rentals as extreme cold hit over the winter. But as money ran out, they have faced rolling evictions.

Ringo said war forced him and his wife to flee Congo in 2022. They took a ship to Brazil then spent two years walking to the U.S. border in Arizona, where they arrived March 23. He was detained, while his wife was taken to a hospital.

A man he met in detention gave him the church's address, and when he was released, he said, his brother bought him a plane ticket to Seattle, where he reunited with his wife, now eight months pregnant.

Many of those who have been camping in Kent — primarily migrants from Congo, Angola and Venezuela — previously stayed at the church or were evicted from motels.

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Lacking other options and awaiting permission to work in the U.S., they set up camp outside a disused Econo Lodge. The county purchased the 85-room motel during the COVID-19 pandemic as emergency quarantine housing.

"We want to pressure the county and the city to open the hotel for this group of migrants," said Ian Greer, a volunteer for a coalition of migrant services organizations that has been assisting the asylum-seekers.

Under a legal agreement between the county and the city, the motel can only be used for quarantine housing and other city-approved uses. Officials say they have no immediate plans to open it for the migrants.

"We understand the rationale for the request by asylee seekers to use the hotel in the short term, but the reality of doing so is much more complicated than simply unlocking the doors and turning on the lights," Kristin Elia, a spokesperson for the King County Executive's Office, said in an emailed statement. "Full operations and capital for an emergency shelter, even in the short term, are beyond the County's available resources."

Kent police last weekend posted a 48-hour eviction notice at the encampment, saying the migrants did not have permission to be at the county-controlled property. But as the deadline came and went Tuesday, authorities backtracked, giving the migrants breathing room as they hope for long-term shelter.

Late last year, King County provided \$3 million in grant funding to respond to the migrant influx, helping house more than 350 individuals and families. In April, it awarded four nonprofits \$2 million to provide shelter, food, legal services and other assistance. When some migrants camped in a Seattle park last month, the city moved dozens of families into motels and is paying for them to remain at least until July.

Beginning next month, a flood of new money from the state should help. The county will receive \$5 million to respond to the influx — money officials are still assessing how to use. The state's Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance will begin giving out \$25 million to nonprofits and local governments to develop a statewide network to support recently arrived migrants.

Riverton Park United Methodist is hoping to raise \$200,000 for hotel vouchers by the end of this month, saying that given how long it takes to review spending proposals, the state money might not be available until September.

Children ran around in the steamy grass Wednesday as the sun dried out tents after heavy rains. The facilities consisted of five portable toilets and two hand-sanitizer stations. Larger tents served as kitchen and pantry. Volunteers dropped off food and toiletries. Migrants adjusted tarps and chatted beneath canopies.

Linda Gutiérrez recalled leaving Venezuela: "There is no medicine in Venezuela. Our family is dying of hunger," she said in Spanish. They went first to Colombia, then Chile. When they were forced to leave Chile, she said, they made their way through the perilous Darien jungle — the dense and roadless rainforest that divides South America from Central America — with her children and young grandchildren to the U.S.

They eventually reached Riverton Park United Methodist, where they stayed for five months, she said. They were then placed in a nearby motel, but only for a month.

In the encampment she met Jose Guerrero, from Puerto Cabello — the same area west of Caracas where she lived. Guerrero came to the U.S. with his wife after leaving their three children in the care of grandparents.

"All of us here have been struggling for months," Guerrero said. "My hope is that the mayor, the county, the leaders, open that hotel. As you can see, it's empty and abandoned. All of us, together, we can maintain it and get it ready to house us."

Today in History: June 8, the prophet Muhammad dies in Medina

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 8, the 160th day of 2024. There are 206 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 8, in A.D. 632, the prophet Muhammad died in Medina.

On this date:

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In 1864, Abraham Lincoln was nominated for another term as president during the National Union (Republican) Party's convention in Baltimore.

In 1867, modern American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin.

In 1953, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that restaurants in the District of Columbia could not refuse to serve Blacks.

In 1966, a merger was announced between the National and American Football Leagues, to take effect in 1970.

In 1967, during the six-day Middle East war, 34 American servicemen were killed when Israel attacked the USS Liberty, a Navy intelligence-gathering ship in the Mediterranean Sea. (Israel later said the Liberty had been mistaken for an Egyptian vessel.)

In 1968, authorities announced the capture in London of James Earl Ray, the suspected assassin of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In 1978, a jury in Clark County, Nevada, ruled the so-called "Mormon will," purportedly written by the late billionaire Howard Hughes, was a forgery.

In 1995, U.S. Marines rescued Capt. Scott O'Grady, whose F-16C fighter jet had been shot down by Bosnian Serbs on June 2.

In 2008, the average price of regular gas crept up to \$4 a gallon.

In 2009, North Korea's highest court sentenced American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee to 12 years' hard labor for trespassing and "hostile acts." (The women were pardoned in early August 2009 after a trip to Pyongyang by former President Bill Clinton.)

In 2015, siding with the White House in a foreign-policy power struggle with Congress, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Americans born in the disputed city of Jerusalem could not list Israel as their birthplace on passports.

In 2017, former FBI Director James Comey, testifying before Congress, asserted that President Donald Trump fired him to interfere with his investigation of Russia's ties to the Trump campaign.

In 2018, celebrity chef, author and CNN host Anthony Bourdain was found dead in his hotel room in eastern France in what authorities determined was a suicide.

In 2020, thousands of mourners gathered at a church in Houston for a service for George Floyd, as his death during an arrest in Minneapolis stoked protests in America and beyond over racial injustice.

In 2021, Ratko Mladic (RAHT'-koh MLAH'-dich), the military chief known as the "Butcher of Bosnia" for orchestrating genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Balkan nation's 1992-95 war, lost his final legal battle when U.N. judges affirmed his life sentence.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Millicent Martin is 90. Actor James Darren is 88. Singer Nancy Sinatra is 84. Singer Chuck Negron is 82. Musician Boz Scaggs is 80. Author Sara Paretsky is 77. Actor Sonia Braga is 74. Actor Kathy Baker is 74. Rock singer Bonnie Tyler is 73. Actor Griffin Dunne is 69. "Dilbert" creator Scott Adams is 67. Actor-director Keenen Ivory Wayans is 66. Singer Mick Hucknall (Simply Red) is 64. Musician Nick Rhodes (Duran Duran) is 62. R&B singer Doris Pearson (Five Star) is 58. Actor Julianna Margulies is 57. Actor Dan Futterman is 57. Actor David Sutcliffe is 55. Actor Kent Faulcon is 54. R&B singer Nicci Gilbert is 54. Actor Kelli Williams is 54. Former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., is 54. Actor Mark Feuerstein is 53. Contemporary Christian musician Mike Scheuchzer (MercyMe) is 49. Actor Eion Bailey is 48. Former tennis player Lindsay Davenport is 48. Rapper Ye (YAY) (formerly Kanye (KAHN'-yay) West) is 47. TV personality-actress Maria Menounos is 46. Country singer-songwriter Sturgill Simpson is 46. Blues-rock musician Derek Trucks (The Derek Trucks Band) is 45. Rock singer Alex Band (The Calling) is 43. Folk-bluegrass singer-musician Sara Watkins (Nickel Creek, I'm With Her) is 43. Former tennis player Kim Clijsters is 41. Actor Torrey DeVitto is 40. Tennis player Jelena Ostapenko is 27. U.S. Olympic track gold medalist Athing Mu (uh-THING moh) is 22.