

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
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## Tuesday, June 11

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, rice pilaf, cauliflower and broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

U12 B/W at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8 R at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

SB U10 Gold hosts Frederick, 6 p.m. (1)

T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry at Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council Meeting, 6 p.m.

Olive Grove Ladies League, 6 p.m.

Olive Grove Bridge, Noon

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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# Groton Daily Independent

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# 1440

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## Malawi Plane Missing

A military plane carrying the vice president of the East African nation of Malawi, along with nine other people, is reportedly missing after it went off the radar yesterday and failed to make a scheduled landing. The search for the aircraft and its passengers is underway as of this writing.

The group of people, including Malawi's 51-year-old Vice President Saulos Chilima, were headed to the funeral of the country's former attorney general in Mzuzu, a city roughly 220 miles north of the capital of Lilongwe, where the plane took off. Mzuzu is Malawi's third-largest city and about a 45-minute plane ride from the capital. Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera canceled a separate flight to the Bahamas following the news.

Chilima was arrested in 2022 over corruption charges alleging he received kickbacks in exchange for influencing the awarding of government contracts. He has denied any wrongdoing. The charges were dropped last month without explanation.

## 'Apple Intelligence' Debuts

Apple kicked off its annual Worldwide Developers Conference yesterday, announcing its generative artificial intelligence strategy, dubbed "Apple Intelligence." The latest AI features will be integrated into the newer versions of the iPhone, iPad, and other Apple products, enhancing features such as Siri, photos, music, and messaging—including the ability to create custom AI-generated emojis.

The company will partner with OpenAI to power a ChatGPT-like chatbot, focusing on summarization capabilities. The AI features will utilize both on-device processing and cloud-based computing, which will allow users to control data access. Apple said the new AI capabilities will be optional and emphasized user privacy. Apple also announced updated operating software, enabling satellite messaging when cellular connectivity is unavailable, and a password manager app.

Apple is the third-largest publicly traded US company behind Nvidia and Microsoft and has taken a more cautious approach to integrating AI into its products compared to its competitors.

## Call Me By My Name

A study yesterday revealed wild elephants may address each other by name, becoming one of only a handful of animals known to use unique sounds to address one another.

The study examined 469 low-rumble sounds recorded from female African savanna elephants and their offspring from 1988 to 2022. A machine-learning model analyzing the sounds was able to identify the elephant being addressed 27.5% of the time, a much higher rate than when the model was fed random audio. Researchers playing the audio clips in the wild elicited responses from the elephants in question, including movement toward the speaker as well as ear flapping and trunk movements.

It's not clear which parts of the audio are the "names" or how naming conventions might work. Bottlenose dolphins and orange-fronted parakeets mimic each other's signature noises to get each other's attention, while humans use naming conventions and dogs respond when called.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Florida Panthers top Edmonton Oilers 4-1 in Game Two of the NHL Stanley Cup Final to take 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series. Three soccer fans sentenced to prison in Spain for hurling racial insults at Real Madrid's Vinícius Júnior.

Rev. James Lawson, American civil rights leader instrumental in Nashville sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, dies at 95.

UConn men's basketball coach Dan Hurley turns down six-year, \$70M deal to coach Los Angeles Lakers. NCAA men's College World Series eight-team field set; see bracket.

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

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## Science & Technology

Engineers develop biodegradable 3D-printer floor panels strong enough to replace steel in some construction applications; composite is made from wood flour and corn residue.

Researchers detect frost on the peaks of Mars' tallest volcanoes, challenging current understanding of the planet's climate dynamics; thin layer is estimated to constitute about 150,000 tons of water.

Scientists discover how zebrafish reverse scar tissue that forms on the heart muscles following heart attacks; may lead to treatments to undo permanent heart damage in humans.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq +0.4%) with S&P 500, Nasdaq notching fresh records; investors look to this week's consumer price index report and the Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting.

Nvidia shares begin trading around \$120 after chipmaker executes planned 10-for-1 stock split; Nvidia shares traded near \$1,200 before the split.

OpenAI hires former Nextdoor CEO as its first chief financial officer, appoints a chief product officer. Activist hedge fund Elliott Investment Management amasses \$1.9B stake in Southwest Airlines; firm also seeks to replace Southwest's CEO and chairman.

## Politics & World Affairs

Delaware jury resumes deliberations today in Hunter Biden's federal trial over criminal gun violations; if found guilty, he would be the first son of a sitting president convicted in federal court.

UN Security Council adopts US-led resolution calling on Hamas to accept a cease-fire and hostage-release plan offered by Israel; resolution on ending Israel-Hamas war is first to be endorsed by the Security Council.

Fatal tornado outbreaks across southern and central US last month caused \$4.7B in damages, federal government estimates; over 165 tornadoes were recorded from May 6-9.

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## Groton Transit Fundraiser

Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024

5:00 pm - 7:00pm at

Groton Community Center

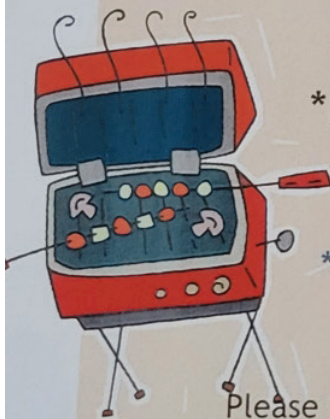
\*\*\*109 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street-One block East of Groton  
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Watermelon, Chips and the  
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\*Food\*Fun\*Door Prizes\*

\*\*\*FREE WILL DONATION\*\*\*



Please join us & Help support Groton Transit!!

## The Life of 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.

Merle was born to Frank and Lois (Christopherson) Harder on August 16th, 1945. He grew up a farm boy with his parents and two brothers.

After graduation from high school, Merle set out for Seattle, Washington where he worked for Boeing aircraft. After two years, he realized he missed his home, so he moved back to Wolsey. He worked at Goodyear Tire in Huron, SD.

In 1974 he met the love of his life, Janet Rohwer. They were united in marriage on December 27th, 1975 at St. John's Lutheran church in Groton. They lived on a farm in Wolsey while Janet finished her classes at NSU and began teaching music in Tulare.

The following year, they moved to Groton to take over farming for Janet's parents, Lawrence and Annabeth Rohwer. Merle farmed, drove school bus, and finally became the Building and Grounds Supervisor for the Groton school system.

Merle loved serving and helping people. He served as a volunteer firefighter for 17 years. He held various positions in the fire department. He was elected to serve on the Groton city council for 11 years. After 26 years working in the Groton school system, he retired to their home on Enemy Swim Lake.

Merle could oftentimes be found in his shop fixing broken and worn-out toys or building something creative. He loved collecting old toys, old fishing gear, and old tools. One of his favorite pastimes was fishing, especially with his buddy, Haden. He liked playing cards. Many hands of pinochle were played with friends! In his younger years, he enjoyed going deer hunting out west with his hunting buddies. And, everyone knew his love for Elvis and his music!!

Merle was a happy soul who loved life! He enjoyed being with people of all ages. He loved to visit and make people smile and laugh. He never met a stranger who didn't become a friend! Merle's biggest joy was his family. He was in his glory when his family could be all around him. He loved playing with his grandchildren and watching them grow up. They were his pride and joy!

Merle is survived by his wife, Janet, and his four sons; Brian and Michelle Harder, Corey and Brenda Harder, TJ and Marcy Harder, and Adam Harder and April Abeln. He is also survived by his nine grandchildren; Courtney Roundtree, Malorie Harder, McKayla Harder and Tony Muesch, Maggie Harder, Rayce Harder and Serenity Johnson, Alexis Harder and Wyatt Lone, Halee Harder, Haden Harder, and Axel Abeln. Merle was also blessed with one great grandchild, Gideon Roundtree. He is also survived by two sisters-in-law, one brother-in-law, two nieces, two nephews, numerous cousins, one uncle, and one aunt.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Frank and Lois Harder; his brothers, Frankie Harder and Keith and Lilly Harder; one sister-in-law and one brother-in-law.

## The Life of Rory McKittrick



Rory Allen McKittrick, 61, unexpectedly passed away in his home on June 1, 2024.

Rory was a devoted son and brother, a loving father, adored uncle to many nieces and nephews, and a gushing grandfather to his granddaughter Brooke and newest grandson, Cooper. While many people gain their identity through work, Rory's identity was truly rooted in these roles and it was here that that he showed what a wonderful and kind man he was.

Rory would describe himself as an introvert, but there was no person he could not hold a riveting conversation with. While Rory had many talents, the gift of conversation and making people feel valued were two of his best. He could hold a conversation with anyone, about anything, and his many life adventures ensured each conversation would be injected with a great story (somehow Bruce Springsteen, baseball, hunting, or fishing would often be part of those stories).

Rory was born September 4, 1962, to Roger & Luetta (Gooding) McKittrick. He grew up with three brothers, Randy, Lonnie, and Wade, whom he loved unconditionally. Over the years, Rory loved watching their families

grow and spending time with each of them. After high school, Rory accepted a scholarship at Northern State University to play baseball and study business administration/computer science. He loved to learn and therefore poured himself into his studies. When not attending class, studying, or supervising the computer lab, he could be found training on and off the baseball field. Rory was a humble but talented pitcher for the Northern State Wolves. He led the Wolves in E.R.A, strikeouts, and was an all-district selection in 1983. Rory's baseball career carried over to a brief stint with the Atlanta Braves single A minor league team. His passion for sports, exercising, and being active continued throughout his life. His family jokes that over the past few years his "coffee group" were the people at the local gym that he exercised with and spent time shooting the bull with in the sauna.

After making the decision to leave baseball, he pursued and received his master's in business administration at the University of South Dakota. His career evolved from a store manager into the world of technology. He began as an entry level programmer and eventually rose into a variety of management positions where he led and motivated members of his teams in the development of complex logistical and coding algorithms. The communicator and leader in Rory truly shined in these positions.

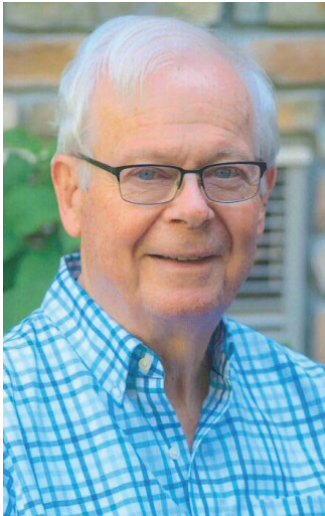
Rory's greatest passions, however, were his family and caring for those around him. After his youngest son Connor left for college, Rory moved to Sartell, Minnesota, to be closer to his brothers and father, Roger. This proved to be one of the best changes in Rory's life. He integrated into the Sartell community, befriending all he met and making large impressions on the lives of those around him. Rory adored spending time with his brother Wade & his family on the water fishing and spending evenings at the cabin. He was known as "Uncle Woory" by his grandnephews, Bennet and Will. Rory looked forward to unprompted visits for burgers and movie nights out with his dad and organizing trips to concerts and shows with his mother Luetta. Many evenings were also spent discussing all aspects of life with his older brother Randy. Of course, in each of these events, countless stories of his granddaughter Brooke were the frequent topic of conversation. Rory truly loved his family!

After Rory's passing, his family saw firsthand how beloved a member of the Sartell community he truly was. One only need to stop at his favorite spot to eat in town, The Blue Line, to hear heartfelt stories of how Rory was always a friendly face and so full of interesting stories he couldn't wait to share. He was equally loved by his neighbors who considered Rory extended family. He made lasting impressions by attending college sporting events, dog sitting, and being a friend for anyone around him. The phrase, "The world would be such a better place if there were more Rory's in it", was something his family was told numerous times in the week since his passing. Rory was a genuine man, with many talents, who displayed unparalleled kindness to all. He will be missed, more than words can describe.

His memory, smile, and laugh will survive through his two sons, Chase (Jordan) and Connor (Amanda), two beloved grandchildren Brooke & Cooper, mother Luetta, father Roger, brothers Randy (Lisa) and Wade (Cindy), sister-in-law Kris (Lonnie), and his many beloved nieces and nephews, Brandi, Megan, Deres, Kayla, Hayden, Morgan, Austin, Parker, and Nick.

Rory is preceded in death by his brother, Lonnie McKittrick, paternal grandparents, Glen and Mildred (Sigdestad) McKittrick, maternal grandparents, William Harold and Geraldine (Smith) Gooding, and step-mother Dorothy McKittrick.

A celebration of life will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel in Groton, South Dakota, on June 29th, at 10:00 am. The family welcomes all of Rory's friends to attend a celebration of his life, to share stories and honor the great man and storyteller he was. The family is establishing a memorial college baseball scholarship at Northern State University in Rory's honor to sustain his legacy.



## The Life of Gary Allen Ruckdaschel

Gary was a longtime member of Messiah Church in Plymouth, MN, and he was Past Exalted Ruler of the Elks Club in Aberdeen, SD.

Survived by wife, Nancy; son, John Ruckdaschel (Jeff LaRoche); sister, Cathy (Richard) Larson; nieces and nephews, Stacey Iwerks, Kristi Fluharty, Lisa Southwick, Steve and Mike Hogg, Jessica Thomas and David Larson, and their many children and grandchildren.

Preceded in death by daughter, Carrie Ruckdaschel; parents, Abe and Dorothy; brother, Dennis; grandparents, Alfred and Lena Larson; uncle, Vernon Larson.

Celebration of Gary's Life will be held from 2-4 PM on Friday, June 21 at Groton United Methodist Church, 906 N. 1st Street, Groton, SD. Gary will be laid to rest in Groton Union Cemetery, Groton, SD.

In lieu of flowers, memorials preferred to Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners (IOCP), 1605 County Rd. 101, Plymouth, MN 55447 ( [iocp.org](http://iocp.org) ).

## Groton Area offers CNA class



**First semester Gateway to CNA students: R to L: Shaela McGannon, Kayleigh McGannon, Karlie McKane, Emma Kutter, Ashley Johnson, Kate Profeta.** (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

Brittany Hubbart, Groton Area School's Science/Health Science teacher, has been teaching a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) class in Groton Area High School. This is the first time such a class has been offered including the option for the students to take the test that would qualify them for work in various health care facilities. All five students taking the class for certification passed and now are qualified to work in nursing homes or similar care facilities.

Two seniors, Shaela McGannon and Camryn Kurtz, and three juniors, Ashley Johnson, Karlie McKane, and Kayleigh McGannon, are the five students that are now certified. There were thirteen students enrolled in the CNA class this semester including those in both the certification and non-certification routes.

The cost for taking the class for certification includes sixteen hours of working in a nursing home plus a tuition fee of \$450. "For many students, there are options to have the cost of the certification coursework and test covered," Hubbart explained.

"Right now we work with Sun Dial in Bristol, and to a lesser degree, Avantara in Groton," she explained. "Any student enrolling in this course can do so free of charge. The added cost is only for those who take the test to become certified CNA's."



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"This is the first time that a CNA class has been taught in Groton," Hubbart added. "All of the information that is taught is good for anyone to know, and the skills that have been learned will be useful their entire lives."

The CNA class in Groton is a one semester class. "We study medical terminology, work on the mannequins, and get to do some procedures on the cadaver," she listed. "We already offer Gateway to CNA, Medical Terminology, and Introduction to Sports Medicine. Next year we plan to add the following health care classes: Introduction to Sports Medicine II and Health Care Career Exploration."

"The students especially like the advantages of learning all of these complicated terms," Hubbart smiled. "Once you learn the meaning of parts of a word, you can apply that knowledge to other words which are similar in spelling."

"Being certified as a CNA makes these students more marketable in the future," she said. "There are very few other high schools in South Dakota who offer programs similar to this one in Groton."

"One of the important advantages of having Toni, a synthetic human, in school is for the students to learn the location and identification of body parts by working on the cadaver," Hubbart stated. "It gives our students real world experience while still in high school."

"Groton is also the only South Dakota school that has Toni, the SynDaver," she said. "Right now Toni is in Florida for refurbishing, an annual necessity for cleaning and repairing. Having Toni available in the classroom for the students to work with is a huge benefit for those going into nursing."



**Four of the five students who passed the CNA exam: R to L: Camryn Kurtz, Karlie McKane, Shaela McGannon, Kayleigh McGannon (missing Ashley Johnson).** (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



**Ashley Johnson taking the mannequins blood pressure.** (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



**Kayleigh McGannon taking Shaela McGannon's blood pressure.** (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

- Dorene Nelson

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## South Dakota State announces spring 2024 dean's list

BROOKINGS, S.D. (06/10/2024)-- More than 3,300 students were recognized for their outstanding academic performance over the spring 2024 semester at South Dakota State University by being named to the dean's list.

To earn dean's list distinctions in SDSU's colleges, students must have completed a minimum of 12 credits and must have earned at least a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Students with F, I, U, RI or RU grades are not eligible regardless of system term GPA attained. Note that this report includes courses that were taken at other South Dakota institutions this term. A minimum of 12 credits within the 100-699 course range must be taken. A student who passes pregeneral education courses may still qualify, if the student has 12 other credits that do fall within the 100-699 range.

Overall, 3,378 students from 40 states and 37 foreign nations are on the list. More than 1,400 students received a 4.0 GPA, and those are indicated with an asterisk.

Congratulations to these distinguished scholars on earning this academic achievement.

Jackson Dinger of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions.

Tessa Erdmann of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

Caleb Hanten of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

Kaycie Hawkins of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's Jerome J. Lohr College of Engineering.

Trista Keith of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions.

Tanae Lipp of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Allyssa Locke of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Nursing.

Hailey Monson of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Nursing.

Sage Mortenson of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

KaSandra Pappas of Groton, South Dakota (57445), a student in SDSU's College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

**GROTON**

# SUBWAY

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

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## 2024 Statewide Homeless Count

PIERRE, S.D. – On Jan. 23, South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium (SDHHC), an affiliate of South Dakota Housing, conducted its annual statewide Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless count and Housing Inventory Count (HIC). The count was conducted within a 24-hour period and includes everybody staying in public and private shelters, including domestic violence shelters, transitional housing or motels paid for by an agency, and unsheltered individuals who are staying in vehicles, on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation.

The PIT count is a crucial source of annual data that can show characteristics of people who are experiencing homelessness. Data from the count is used to measure homelessness on local, state, and national levels. Due to a variety of factors that impact the count, the PIT numbers can change drastically from year to year.

The results of the PIT are significantly impacted by the availability of partners who can conduct these surveys in their communities. Isolating data by geographic regions other than Rapid City or Sioux Falls tends to give an incomplete picture of the state of homelessness in South Dakota. Rural regions of South Dakota are often undercounted because of a lack of service providers and partners to conduct surveys.

Of the 1,338 people who were experiencing homelessness on Jan. 23:

- 801 men and boys were counted compared to 512 women and girls;
- 17% of respondents were in unsheltered situations on the day of the PIT. A decrease from 24% in 2023;
- 11% of respondents were between the ages of 18-24, an increase from 8% in 2023 and 7% in 2020. This mirrors national trends indicating youth becoming one of the fastest growing demographics experiencing homelessness;
- 7% of households surveyed had children in them. A decrease from 8% in 2023 and 11% in 2020. South Dakota continues to make great strides in reducing homelessness among children;
- There were 31 veterans experiencing homelessness in 2024, a decrease from 58 in 2023;
- 38% of respondents were experiencing homelessness for the very first time. 70% of respondents had fewer than 4 instances of homelessness in the past three years; and
- 14.2% of respondents were experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence, compared to a three-year average of 11.3%. This can be attributed to greater inventory to provide shelter to these survivors and more participation in the PIT count among DV agencies.

Additional information and numbers specific to Sioux Falls and Rapid City can be found at [housingforthehomeless.org](https://housingforthehomeless.org).

-30-

About SD Housing for the Homeless Consortium

In 2001 the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium was created to help unify the people who provide services to the homeless. Throughout the years this group has been able to identify gaps, create programs and services that have helped communities address homelessness and keep their citizens safe. Since its initiation the Consortium has received federal funding totaling over \$35 million to provide development, operations and supportive services to a variety of homeless programs across the state.

## That's Life by Tony Bender: No More Nickels

Grandma made dandelion wine. I was no more than seven when I first tasted it. And I have searched in the years since to recapture that bitter-sweet taste. I was immortal then and so was Grandma. She could always make more, I might have thought—if my unformed jellied brain had not been enthralled with living.

Much of what Grandma was came from her mother. I knew her as Grandma Joachim. I would visit my great-grandmother almost daily when the school day was done. She made "Russian Tea" from the chamomile that grew around the tiny trailer house that was her home. She made cookies for me while I paged through picture books filled with somber faces I would never know. Yet their blood runs through my veins.

The highlight of the visit was the nickel that she would pull from her coin purse.

I was a mercenary visitor.

When Grandma Joachim died, it was her daughter who took my hand and led me to the casket. As Grandma Bender and I looked down at the shell of what had been, she squeezed my hand. "No more nickels," she said.

My memories of Grandma Bender are much more vivid. We had more time together. I spent summers there and would have grown fat on the rich German delicacies had Grandpa and Grandma not seen to it that I develop my skills as a bale hauler.

Nobody worked harder than Grandma.

One day, out in the field, we came upon a very young rabbit—its mother was dead. Grandma picked it up, and when I realized she meant to dispatch it, I pleaded for its life. I lost the case and the bunny lost its life. She thought it better to end its life with a quick twist of the neck than have it starve or become a meal for a fox.

But Grandma was far from heartless. If you were quick, you could catch her eyes smiling. She could spot a drinker a mile away, and when Grandpa walked in the door after a social visit at George's Bar, she would chew him out for having "chicken eyes." She ended every argument with Grandpa with a simple statement: "Ach Benny, you're so dumb."

Theirs was not a romantic partnership. Grandpa tells me that when he asked her to marry him, all she did was shrug her shoulders as if to say, "Well, I'm not doing anything else for the rest of my life." With a simple shrug of the shoulders, my father came into existence as did I some years later.

At Christmas, she would get modern kitchen conveniences from her thoughtful children and grandchildren. But at the end of the day the new mixers and toaster ovens would be stowed in the attic with last year's loot. "She was saving it for nice," she told us. We still quote her today.

Today when any Bender gets a gift you can see a glint come to his eye and a grin to his face. "I'm gonna save it for nice," is the punch line that always gets a laugh.

A beautiful crocheted doily lies on my old oak table. Grandma made one for all of us grandkids, I've had it for years, but only lately could I bring myself to put it on display. I guess I was saving it for nice. Grandma left us dozens of crocheted masterpieces. And for two years after her death we dined on her famous kuchen and homemade noodles. The freezer was one of the only modern appliances she ever used.

Her whole life was a service to those she loved and when a stroke took the use of her hands she felt useless. "I wish I could die," she told me. "Well Grandma, I can't say I would wish otherwise if I were you," I replied. "Besides, as stubborn as you are, you'll probably get your way."

She cried.

"But I'm stubborn too, Grandma," I amended.

There was no merciful hand to ease her suffering as she had ended the life of a small rabbit all those years ago. A few months later when Grandma got her wish, no one held my hand as I took my last look. But as we waited for the minister to begin the service, Mom leaned over and whispered in my ear.

"No more nickels," she said.



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— — — — —  
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### Governor Noem Awards Community Development Block Grants

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem recently awarded \$1.96 million in Community Development Block Grant funding to three projects.

“These community development grants will support important projects to ensure our state can keep growing for generations to come,” said Governor Noem. “South Dakota has been growing so fast over the last several years, and we want to help our communities keep up.”

Projects include:

The city of Eureka was awarded \$200,000 to assist in the removal of dilapidated and dangerous buildings.

The city of Madison was awarded \$1,020,000 for the construction of an early learning childcare center.

Moody County was awarded \$740,000 for the construction of an early childcare center.

The CDBG program provides funding to local governments to complete projects that improve living conditions. The program is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and administered by the Governor’s Office of Economic Development.

## Poll shows support for grocery tax repeal, but critics warn of budget crunch

By STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

Two-thirds of South Dakotans support an initiated measure that would prohibit the state from collecting sales tax on "anything sold for human consumption, except alcoholic beverages and prepared food," according to a scientific poll co-sponsored by News Watch.

The statewide survey of 500 registered voters, also sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota, showed that 66% of respondents are for the 2024 ballot measure, with 26% opposed and 7% undecided.

That means public support for Initiated Measure 28, which would eliminate the state's 4.2% sales tax on groceries, has increased since a November 2023 poll that showed 61% of registered voters in favor of it.

Supporters call the measure a long-overdue effort to take the

tax burden off low-income families and individuals. South Dakota is one of just two states, along with Mississippi, that fully taxes food without offering credits or rebates.

Opponents criticize the wording of the measure as broader than just groceries. They said it could cause a budget crunch by preventing the state from collecting sales tax on "consumable" items such as tobacco, toothpaste and toilet paper.

"This is not a food tax repeal – it's a consumables tax repeal," said Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association, which publicly opposes the measure.

**'Should have been done 20 years ago'**

Rick Weiland of Dakotans for Health, the petition group that sponsored IM 28, noted that Gov. Kristi Noem pushed for repealing the grocery tax during her 2022 re-election effort. In announcing the campaign pledge, Noem said the tax cut would "put hundreds of dollars in the pockets of the average South Dakota family."

"This affects people of modest means who are just trying to put food on the table," Weiland told News



**Gov. Kristi Noem meets with members of the media at Sunshine Foods in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Oct. 12, 2022, to discuss a repeal of the food tax. Her bill stalled in the Legislature, but Initiated Measure 28 will repeal the tax if approved by voters on the November 2024 ballot.** (Photo: Argus Leader)

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Watch. "It should have been done 20 years ago, which is why you're seeing a super-majority of South Dakota voters in support of it."

Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy conducted the poll May 10-13. Those interviewed were selected randomly from a telephone-matched state voter registration list that included both landline and cellphone numbers. Quotas were assigned to reflect voter registration by county. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Concerns about budgetary impact are more pronounced since state legislators voted to lower the general sales tax rate from 4.5% to 4.2% during the 2024 legislative session. It sunsets, or expires, in 2027.

Sanderson echoed concerns raised by Attorney General Marty Jackley in his ballot explanation that IM 28, by interrupting collection of sales tax for certain items, could "affect the state's obligations under the tobacco master settlement agreement and the streamlined sales tax agreement."

### Opponent: Plan will trigger income tax

Not taxing "consumables" and losing those revenue streams could result in an annual state budget downturn of at least \$176 million, according to Sanderson, on top of the \$104 million estimated annual revenue loss from the general sales tax cut.

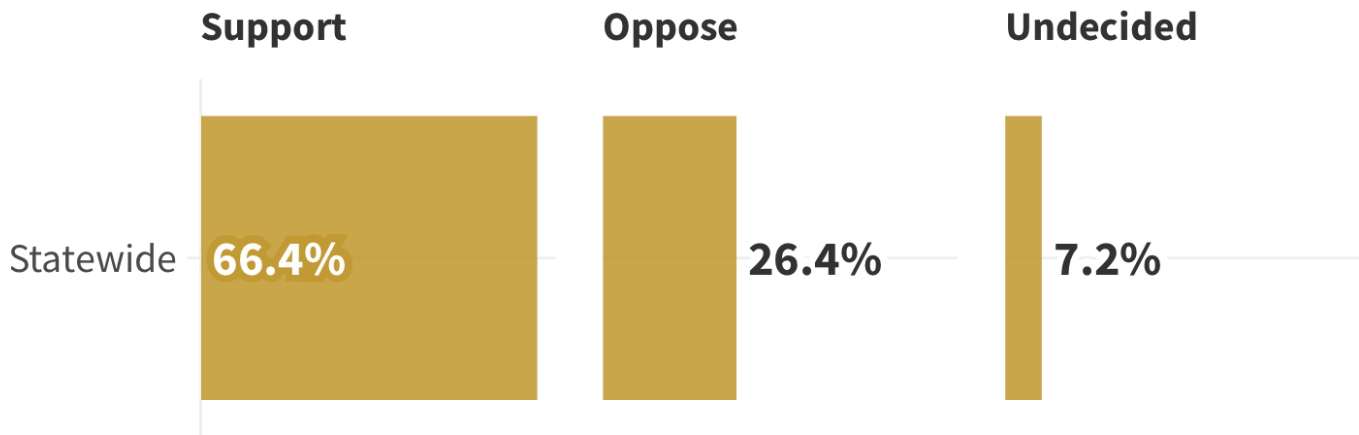
Sales taxes are the largest source of state government revenue in South Dakota, one of seven states without a state income tax.

## Do you support the grocery tax appeal?

Tap or click on tabs to select between respondents groups



Overall Gender Age Party Region President



Source South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD / Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy (Margin of error: +/-4.5%) • **Note 1:** Three people refused to give their age. They all said 'support'. **Note 2:** Three answered 'other' for gender. Two said 'support' and one said 'oppose.'

Graphic: Michael Klinski / South Dakota News Watch



## ABOUT THE POLL

South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota teamed up to enlist Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy to conduct a cell phone and landline poll of 500 random registered South Dakota voters from May 10-13, 2024.

Respondents were representative of all South Dakota counties, ages, gender and political parties, and the margin of error is plus or minus 4.5%.

"I believe this measure was drafted the way it was for one of two reasons," said Sanderson, who served as a policy adviser to former Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "Either it was designed to force South Dakota to implement a state income tax to replace the lost revenue or it was drafted incorrectly. Either way, it's highly problematic."

Weiland pushed back strongly on those assertions, calling them "fear tactics and misinformation" and noting that the Legislative Research Council played a role in changing the measure's language.

As for the notion that Dakotans for Health is surreptitiously trying to trigger a state income tax, Weiland called the theory "ridiculous."

"Mr. Sanderson needs to do his homework before he makes such wild allegations about our secret intentions," said Weiland, a former South Dakota Democratic Party candidate for U.S. House and U.S. Senate. "With 94 Republican and 11 Democratic legislators in Pierre, (Republicans) can do anything they want. I don't think passing a state income tax will ever be part of their legislative agenda."

### **Debate over municipal food tax rates**

It's been an eventful petition process for Dakotans for Health, which had to re-submit language for the measure in November 2022 after then-Attorney General Mark Vargo issued a ballot explanation saying the measure would impact the ability of municipalities, and not just the state, to collect sales tax on groceries.

That interpretation differed from that of then-Legislative Research Council director Reed Holwegner, who noted in a 2022 fiscal summary that "municipalities could continue to tax anything sold for eating or drinking."

Most municipalities collect 2% on groceries on top of the state tax rate. Weiland's group added specific language to the measure after Vargo's explanation to maintain that they could continue to do so.

But opponents cite a state law that states cities and towns can charge a sales tax if the tax "conforms in all respects to the state tax ... with the exception of the rate," which would not be the case if the state food tax is repealed.

"Cities and towns can only tax the same items as the state," said Sanderson. "So despite the language in IM 28, if the state cannot charge a tax on 'anything for human consumption,' neither can a municipality."

Jackley's current ballot explanation notes that "judicial or legislative clarification of the measure will be necessary." Since it's an initiative measure and not a constitutional amendment, it's reasonable to assume that state legislators will address it during the 2025 legislative session if it passes.

### **Language of measure under scrutiny**

Beyond disagreements about municipalities, there were early discussions between Dakotans for Health and the LRC about how to best characterize which items were included in the repeal.

Hollwegner, who resigned as LRC director during a meeting of the Legislature's executive board in October 2023, addressed the potential for differing interpretations of "anything sold for human consumption" in



an updated fiscal summary in January 2023.

"For purposes of this fiscal note," he wrote, "the LRC assumes the phrase only includes food items because of the modifying language 'except alcoholic beverages and prepared food' and does not include personal tangible property and services, both of which can also be sold for human consumption. Other assumptions as to the meaning of this phrase may be just as reasonable, if not more so."

With that qualification, the fiscal note said that the state could see a reduction in sales tax revenue of \$123.9 million annually, much lower than Sanderson's estimate. It also reiterated that municipalities "could continue to tax anything sold for human consumption."

In his ballot explanation, Jackley asserted that human consumption "is not defined by state law, but its common definition includes more than just food and drinks."

### 'Simply the right thing to do'

Weiland points out that IM 28's original draft, which used the phrase "anything sold for eating or drinking by humans," was flagged by the LRC as being too imprecise.

In a letter to Dakotans for Health in December 2022, Holwegner said that the wording "may be overly vague, inviting various interpretations in determining its meaning."

Holwegner added that "the statutory definition of food uses the terms 'ingestion,' 'chewing' and 'consumed.' These terms seem to be more precise than 'eating or drinking,' as they may better capture the various elements of food and beverage consumption."

Following that guidance, Dakotans for Health re-submitted the language as "anything sold for human consumption" and collected signatures for both a constitutional amendment and initiated measure.

Weiland and his team ended up prioritizing the IM effort, and it was certified for the 2024 ballot on May 13 by the Secretary of State's office with 22,315 valid signatures.

In an interview with News Watch, Weiland expressed frustration that concerns about inexact wording and unintended consequences seem to persist regardless of the language put forth in the measure.

"We worked closely with various state offices on the grocery tax repeal measure as we do with all the ballot measures we get involved with," Weiland said. "Repealing this tax is simply the right thing to do."

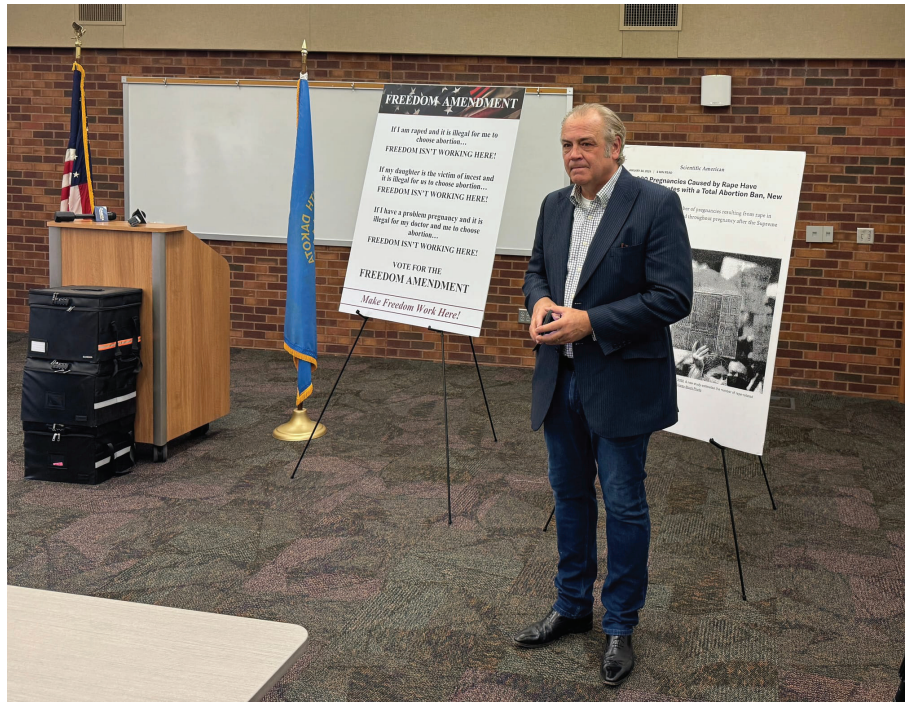
### Noem's grocery tax plan 'changed things'

South Dakota's grocery tax has been a target of legislative reform for decades, mostly by Democrats.

In 2004, the South Dakota Democratic Party gathered enough signatures to put a state food tax repeal on the ballot after legislative attempts to eliminate the tax fell short.

Opponents of the effort, including then-Gov. Mike Rounds, warned that passing the repeal would likely reduce the amount of state aid available for schools and health care.

Voters responded to that message and rejected the measure by a margin of 68% to 32%. Later attempts



**"We worked with various state offices on the grocery tax repeal as we do with all ballot measures we get involved with," said Dakotans for Health co-founder Rick Weiland, shown at an event for the group's abortion amendment at the downtown Sioux Falls, S.D., library on May 1, 2024.**

(Photo: Stu Whitney/ South Dakota News Watch)

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by state legislators to lower the tax on food or exempt groceries from the general sales tax rate also failed. Noem shifted the dynamic in September 2022, six weeks before being reelected with 62% of the vote and mindful of Weiland's plans for a petition drive.

At an event in Rapid City, she unveiled her plan to repeal the grocery tax for the "largest tax cut in South Dakota history." She vouched for its affordability because of double-digit increases in sales tax revenue in 2021 and 2022, a budget surplus in 2022 of \$115 million and \$423 million in reserves.

"That changed things," Weiland told News Watch.

"The Republicans' big argument has always been, 'Oh, we don't have the money to repeal the food tax. It will come on the backs of firefighters and teachers, or we'll have to do a state income tax' – all this crap they kept contending so the issue never got any legs in the Legislature or on the ballot. Well, the governor took all those arguments and threw them in the trash. They don't exist."

## **Noem supports tax repeal, but not IM 28**

But Jim Terwilliger, the governor's budget chief, stressed that the basis of Initiated Measure 28 differs from the bill that Noem and her team brought unsuccessfully during the 2023 legislative session.

Noem's bill, which was killed in committee, would have reduced the state's sales tax on groceries to zero percent rather than eliminating it entirely. The reason was to avoid disrupting South Dakota's participation in the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, a cooperative effort of states, local governments and the business community that standardizes collection of sales tax.

"As drafted, the ballot measure would bring us out of compliance with the agreement," Terwilliger told News Watch in May 2023.

Terwilliger also said that the measure would "prevent the state from taxing tobacco or medical marijuana," a concern also noted by Jackley in his ballot explanation. Not taxing tobacco could impact revenue the state receives from a master settlement agreement reached in 1998 between 46 states and major cigarette manufacturers as part of litigation for health-care costs and deceptive trade practices.

Jackley said South Dakota receives about \$20 million annually from the settlement, which Sanderson factored into his estimated annual loss of state revenue of \$176 million.

## **Grocery tax repeal has bipartisan support**

Weiland disputes those legal interpretations, which could end up being debated during the 2025 legislative session or resolved in a court of law.

He also notes that the South Dakota tax system is rife with sales tax exemptions totaling more than \$1 billion a year that primarily benefit the state's largest industries such as agriculture, medical care and insurance, as previously reported by News Watch.

"There's a whole list of things that these companies are allowed exemptions for to maintain their business in South Dakota," said Weiland. "But we're not going to get rid of a regressive tax on food, something people need to survive? What does that say about our priorities?"

The News Watch/Chiesman poll showed that repealing the grocery tax has bipartisan appeal, with 78% of Independents, 74% of Democrats and 56% of Republicans saying that they support the initiated measure.

Young voters were the most supportive, with 73% of respondents ages 18-34 saying they are for the measure, compared to 21% against.

*This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at [stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org).*

## Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Fall After Strong Showing By Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 had trouble keeping up with Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion in a 12-2 loss on Monday.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion opened the scoring in the first after Cain Everson hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run.

Karsten Flihs walked, which helped Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 tie the game at one in the top of the second.

A single by Carter Buisker gave Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion the lead, 2-1, in the bottom of the third. Nicholas Morris walked, which helped Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 tie the game at two in the top of the fourth.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the fourth, scoring five runs on two hits to take a 7-2 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was an error that drove in three.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion scored five runs on four hits in the bottom of the sixth inning. Buisker doubled, scoring two runs, Everson scored after tagging up, and Carter Simon induced Lincoln Schutt to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

Gavin Englund started on the mound for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher gave up 11 hits and 12 runs (six earned) over five and one-third innings, striking out three and walking two. Buisker led things off on the mound for Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion. The righty allowed four hits and one run over three innings, striking out seven and walking three.

Lincoln Krause and Englund each collected two hits for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Flihs and Morris each drove in one run for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion accumulated 11 hits in the game. Cole Hansen led Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion with three hits in four at bats from the leadoff position. Buisker collected two hits for Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion in four at bats. Hansen stole two bases.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 will travel to Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion for their next game on Monday.

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## Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Stymied By Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 had trouble keeping up with Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion in an 11-2 loss on Monday.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion opened the scoring in the bottom of the second thanks to two errors. Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion first got on the board when an error scored two runs.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion added one run in the third. Max Martenson grounded out, making the score 4-0.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion scored five runs on four hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Carter Buisker singled, scoring one run, an error scored two runs, and Kooper Heiser singled, scoring two runs.

Karsten Flihs pitched three and one-third innings in relief for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. They allowed seven hits and seven runs (three earned) while, striking out two and walking four. Kellen Antonsen opened the game for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. They allowed four hits and four runs (zero earned) over two and two-thirds innings, striking out none and walking one. Ashton Rabine stepped on the mound first for Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion. They allowed five hits and two runs (one earned) over seven innings, striking out eight and walking five.

Leadoff hitter Lincoln Krause led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with two hits in three at bats. Nicholas Morris went 1-for-3 at the plate as the catcher led the team with one run batted in. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 turned two double plays in the game.

Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion collected 11 hits in the game. Heiser, the number seven hitter for Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion, led the way with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 2-for-3 on the day. Leadoff hitter Jackson McClemans led Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion with three hits in five at bats. Jaxon Falak collected two hits for Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion in four at bats. Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion turned one double play in the game.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 welcome Crusaders on Wednesday for their next game.

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## Powerful Pitching Performance From TC Schuster Carries Groton Jr Teeners 14U Past Webster VFW Post 4690

By GameChanger Media

TC Schuster struck out 12 batters as the righty led Groton Jr Teeners 14U past VFW Post 4690 14-1 on Monday. Schuster gave up one hit and one run over five innings while walking four.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U won thanks in part to eight runs in the third inning. Layne Johnson singled, scoring one run, Braeden Flihs tripled, scoring one run, Ethan Kroll hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run, Jordan Schwan tripled, scoring one run, Shaydon Wood drew a walk, scoring one run, Schuster tripled, scoring two runs, and Ryder Schelle doubled, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Schelle drew a walk, scoring one run, and Flihs grounded out, scoring one run.

A ground out by Wood extended the Groton Jr Teeners 14U lead to 4-1 in the bottom of the second inning.

Hudson Lesnar took the loss for VFW Post 4690. They went two innings, giving up four runs on two hits, striking out none and walking four.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U piled up 11 hits in the game. Johnson, Schelle, and Alex Abeln each collected two hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Schuster and Flihs each drove in two runs for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Schuster, Lincoln Shilhanek, Schelle, Abeln, and John Bisbee each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U had a strong eye at the plate, collecting eight walks for the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U stole 15 bases in the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Abeln had the most chances in the field with 12.

Tucker Acree went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead VFW Post 4690 in hits. Nathan Hubsch stole two bases.

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## Jordan Schwan's Clutch Hitting Propels Groton Jr Teeners 14U To Victory Over Webster VFW Post 4690

By GameChanger Media

Jordan Schwan drove in five runs on two hits to lead Groton Jr Teeners 14U past VFW Post 4690 16-6 on Monday. Schwan doubled in the second inning, scoring three runs, and hit a home run to left field in the second inning, scoring three.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U won thanks in part to 13 runs in the second inning. Shaydon Wood drew a walk, scoring one run, Schwan doubled, scoring three runs, Kolton Antonsen singled, scoring one run, Layne Johnson singled, scoring one run, John Bisbee singled, scoring one run, Zach Flihs singled, scoring two runs, Wood singled, scoring one run, and Schwan homered to left field, scoring three runs.

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Groton Jr Teeners 14U got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Bisbee singled, and Sam Crank grounded out, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U added one run in the third. Kason Oswald singled, making the score 16-5.

Bisbee earned the win for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The starting pitcher allowed seven hits and six runs over four innings, striking out two and walking four. Dylan Rasmus took the loss for VFW Post 4690. The right-handed pitcher went two-thirds of an inning, surrendering nine runs on eight hits, striking out none and walking none. Zayden Finch stepped on the mound first for VFW Post 4690. The righty allowed two hits and six runs over one inning, striking out one and walking four.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U piled up 12 hits in the game. Wood, Schwan, Fliehs, and Bisbee each collected two hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Ethan Kroll led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting six walks for the game. Kroll and Antonsen each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Groton Jr Teeners 14U stole six bases in the game. Groton Jr Teeners 14U turned one double play in the game.

Hudson Lesnar drove the middle of the lineup, leading VFW Post 4690 with two runs batted in. The cleanup hitter went 2-for-2 on the day. Lesnar and Tucker Acree each collected two hits for VFW Post 4690.

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **2 - 11** Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 10, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	5	6
WTWR	0	3	1	5	0	2	X	11	11	1

## BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion P	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause (2B)	3	1	2	0	1	1
K Flihs (3B, P)	2	0	0	0	1	1
J Erdmann (LF)	3	0	1	0	0	2
N Morris (C)	3	1	1	1	0	0
C Simon (SS)	3	0	0	0	0	0
B Imrie (DH)	0	0	0	0	1	0
G Englund (3B)	1	0	0	0	1	1
N Groeblinghoff (...)	2	0	1	0	1	0
G Kroll (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	2
T McGannon (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

**TB:** N Groeblinghoff, J Erdmann, L Krause 2, N Morris,  
**CS:** L Krause, **LOB:** 5

## PITCHING

Groton Jr. Le:	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Antonsen	2.2	4	4	0	1	0	0
<b>K Flihs</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Totals	6.0	11	11	3	5	2	0

**P-S:** K Flihs 65-35, K Antonsen 45-29, **WP:** K Flihs,  
**BF:** K Flihs 22, K Antonsen 16

Watertown Post 17	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J McClemans (LF)	5	1	3	1	0	0
C Everson	3	0	1	0	2	1
C Buisker (SS)	4	1	1	1	0	0
L Lessin (1B)	4	1	1	0	0	0
K Nygaard (C)	3	2	0	0	1	0
J Falak (CF)	4	4	2	0	0	0
K Heiser (3B)	3	1	2	2	0	0
M Martenson (2B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
H Halajian (RF)	3	0	0	1	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

**TB:** J Falak 2, K Heiser 2, J McClemans 3, C Everson, C Buisker, M Martenson, L Lessin, **SAC:** K Heiser, **SB:** J Falak, J McClemans, C Buisker, L Lessin, **LOB:** 9

Watertown F	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Rabine	7.0	5	2	1	5	8	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** A Rabine 107-64, **WP:** A Rabine, **BF:** A Rabine 28

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **2 - 12** Watertown Post 17 Junior Legion

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 10, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	R	H	E
GRTN	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	7	5
WTWR	1	0	1	5	0	5	12	11	2

## BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion P	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause (2B)	4	0	2	0	0	0
K Flihs (C)	3	0	0	1	1	2
G Englund (P, 3B)	4	0	2	0	0	2
N Morris (3B, SS)	1	0	1	1	2	0
C Simon (SS, P)	3	0	0	0	0	2
J Erdmann (CF)	3	0	1	0	0	2
N Groeblichhoff (...)	2	1	0	0	1	1
G Kroll (RF)	2	1	0	0	1	1
T McGannon (LF)	3	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>

**TB:** J Erdmann, L Krause 2, N Morris, T McGannon, G Englund 2, **CS:** L Krause, **LOB:** 10

## PITCHING

Groton Jr. Le	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	5.1	11	12	6	2	3	0
C Simon	0.1	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** C Simon 8-2, G Englund 106-70, **WP:** C Simon, **BF:** C Simon 2, G Englund 33

Watertown Post 17	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Hansen (C)	4	4	3	3	0	0
C Everson (2B)	2	1	1	2	0	0
C Buisker (P, SS)	4	1	2	2	0	0
L Lessin (1B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
A Rabine (RF)	4	1	1	1	0	0
J McClemans (SS)	3	1	1	0	1	1
L Schutt (LF)	4	1	1	1	0	1
J Falak (CF)	3	0	0	0	1	1
T Jorgenson (3B)	3	2	1	1	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

**2B:** C Buisker, **TB:** C Everson, L Schutt, L Lessin, T Jorgenson, C Buisker 3, C Hansen 3, J McClemans, A Rabine, **SF:** C Everson 2, **SB:** C Hansen 2, **LOB:** 4

Watertown P	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Buisker	3.0	4	1	1	3	7	0
K Heiser	3.0	3	1	0	2	4	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** K Heiser 57-38, C Buisker 65-37, **WP:** K Heiser, **BF:** K Heiser 14, C Buisker 16



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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### Abortion-rights activists sell bumper stickers to capitalize on Noem dog controversy

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 10, 2024 6:15 PM

Abortion-rights activists are capitalizing on the backlash against South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem's dog-killing revelation in her new book.

In "No Going Back," Noem disclosed that she shot and killed her 14-month-old dog Cricket in a gravel pit after the dog attacked chickens and performed poorly during a pheasant hunt. The admission has sparked widespread criticism from across the political spectrum.

Supporters of an abortion-rights ballot question in South Dakota have since begun selling bumper stickers with a drawing of a dog's head and the question, "Where's Cricket?"

Proceeds from the sales go to Dakotans for Health. That's the ballot question

committee supporting the Nov. 5 ballot measure that would insert abortion rights into the state constitution.

Adam Weiland, of Dakotans for Health, said the bumper stickers are "definitely popular" — about 450 people have made the two-for-\$8 purchase.

"It's for a good cause," he said. "Where's Cricket? Where's the freedom the women of South Dakota once had to make their own choices?"

From January through May 20, Dakotans for Health reported taking in about \$39,000 in donations, after reporting \$185,000 in contributions during 2023.

South Dakota's abortion ban went into effect immediately after Roe v. Wade was overturned in 2022. The ban permits abortions only to save "the life of the pregnant female."



**Abortion-rights activists sell "Where's Cricket?" bumper stickers during the Sioux Falls Pride Parade on June 8, 2024.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



Noem's spokesperson, Ian Fury, did not immediately reply to a request for comment. The Republican governor supports the state's abortion ban.

*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.*

## Rep. Johnson joins Kansas Democrat to start sustainable aviation fuel caucus

### Lake Preston jet fuel project tied to future of carbon pipeline

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 10, 2024 2:11 PM

South Dakota's lone U.S. representative has partnered with a Kansas Democrat to create a congressional caucus focused on sustainable aviation fuel.

Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, announced the formation of the Congressional Sustainable Aviation Caucus in a Monday press release, saying "Congress should advance legislative priorities that support innovation through biofuels, national security, and passenger safety."

Rep. Sharice Davids, D-Kansas, will co-chair the caucus with Johnson.

"Adopting these sustainable practices is critical for our national security and economic resilience," Davids said in the press release. "I'm glad to join forces with Representative Johnson to ensure America's aviation industry continues to be resilient and reliable for years to come."

South Dakota may have a role in the formation of a sustainable aviation fuel industry. Currently, the fuel represents a tiny fraction of the aviation fuel used in the U.S., but federal financial incentives have spurred the formation of new companies and projects that could expand its reach. Current federal subsidies offer \$1.25 for every gallon of the fuel mixed into traditional jet fuel. The fuel must reduce "lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions" by at least 50% to qualify, and producers are eligible for another cent in subsidies for every percentage point drop after that.

Colorado-based Gevo aims to build its Net-Zero 1 sustainable aviation fuel plant near Lake Preston, South Dakota. It announced the \$1 billion-plus project in 2022, but has yet to begin construction.

The company aims to produce its own corn-based ethanol, then convert that to sustainable aviation fuel. The company hopes to minimize its greenhouse gas emissions through a combination of low-carbon farming practices by its contracted corn farmers, and the sequestration of carbon emitted in the production process.



**U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, speaks to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on June 14, 2023, in Washington, D.C.** (Courtesy of Rep. Johnson's Office)

Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden appeared at the Net-Zero 1 groundbreaking, Gov. Kristi Noem lauded the project in her 2023 State of the State speech, and Noem's son-in-law, Kyle Peters, lobbies for the company.

Gevo CEO Patrick Gruber has said the project is dependent on a separate Summit Carbon Solutions project that would capture carbon dioxide emissions from ethanol plants and pump them via underground pipe to North Dakota for sequestration.

Attaching the Net-Zero 1 facility to the carbon pipeline is necessary to maximize the company's carbon reduction score and make it economically feasible, Gruber said.

The pipeline proposal has angered property rights activists and played a role in the primary election losses of 14 legislative incumbents, some of them to anti-pipeline candidates. Ethanol lobbyists, however, are among the groups who see carbon sequestration as critical to the future of the industry, and as a major economic driver in South Dakota and elsewhere in the Midwest.

A lobbyist for the airline industry lauded the creation of the Washington, D.C.-based sustainable aviation fuel caucus in Johnson's press release.

"General aviation is steadfast in our commitment to mitigate the industry's impact on the environment through technological and operational improvements as well as the use of sustainable aviation fuel," said Paul Feldman, vice president of government affairs, General Aviation Manufacturers Association.

According to Johnson's office, the new caucus will help keep voters and other congressional leaders informed of efforts to encourage the production of sustainable aviation fuels that are "needed to further environmental gains, enhance fuel supply resiliency, and strengthen national security."

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

## Helicopter tour companies lose early battle in fight against Rushmore and Badlands restrictions

BY: SETH TUPPER - JUNE 10, 2024 12:34 PM

New restrictions on air tours at Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Badlands National Park will stay in effect while a lawsuit against them proceeds, a federal court has ruled.

Three South Dakota helicopter operators want to overturn the restrictions: Badger Helicopters, Black Hills Aerial Adventures and Rushmore Helicopters. In court documents, they allege the new restrictions will cause "irreparable harm in the form of



**Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the Black Hills of South Dakota.**

(Courtesy of EcoFlight)

unrecoverable economic loss that threatens their existence.”

They asked the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals to pause enforcement of the new rules while the lawsuit proceeds. The court denied that request Friday.

The litigation targets the Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Department of Interior and National Park Service. Two groups, the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, have intervened to help defend the rules.

The public employees’ group issued a news release celebrating the court’s decision. The group’s lawyer called it an indicator of the litigation’s potential outcome.

“Given Friday’s ruling, we have every reason to be optimistic about our chances of success in defending the air tour management plans,” said attorney Colleen Teubner.

The air management plans took effect in May. They require air tours to stay at least a half-mile from the boundaries of each site.

Last year, when the plans were being finalized, the top officials at each site issued news releases explaining their rationale. Mount Rushmore Superintendent Michelle Wheatley said the Rushmore plan would “provide a peaceful setting for visitors to enjoy and experience.” Eric Veach, superintendent at Badlands National Park, said the Badlands plan was “reflective of the experience desired by visitors.”

The plans are rooted in a decades-long controversy.

Noise and other complaints about air tours over National Park Service sites led Congress to adopt the National Parks Air Tour Management Act in 2000. The law requires tour operators to seek permission for flights, and mandates the formulation of air tour management plans or similar agreements to regulate tours and mitigate their negative impacts.

Bureaucratic difficulties and delays stalled compliance. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility sued in 2018 to force the adoption of air tour management plans. The group won an order that was upheld by an appeals court in 2020, which led to a wave of plan adoptions at National Park Service sites across the country.

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

## Trump says he’ll work ‘side by side’ with group that wants abortion ‘eradicated’

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 10, 2024 4:36 PM

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump said Monday that if reelected he plans to work “side by side” with a newly formed religious organization that says abortion is the “greatest atrocity facing” the United States and should be “eradicated entirely.”

During two-minute recorded remarks played at The Danbury Institute’s inaugural Life & Liberty Forum in Indianapolis, Trump avoided using the word “abortion,” but said he hopes to protect “innocent life” if reelected in November.

“We have to defend religious liberty, free speech, innocent life, and the heritage and tradition that built America into the greatest nation in the history of the world,” Trump said. “But now we are, as you know, a declining nation.”

Trump, the Republican Party’s presumptive presidential nominee, said that he hopes to work alongside the institute to defend those values.

“These are going to be your years because you’re going to make a comeback like just about no other group,” Trump said. “I know what’s happening. I know where you’re coming from and where you’re going. And I’ll be with you side by side.”

Trump also called on The Danbury Institute and church members to vote for him during the November

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**Former President Donald Trump on Monday, June 10, 2024, in a pre-recorded message told The Danbury Institute, a group opposed to abortion, that he hopes to protect “innocent life” if elected in November. In this photo, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference at the Gaylord National Resort Hotel And Convention Center on Feb. 24, 2024, in National Harbor, Maryland.** (Photo by Anna

MoneyMaker/Getty Images)

“The intentional, pre-meditated killing of a pre-born child should be addressed with laws already in place concerning homicide,” its website states. “We also support bolstering the foster care system and encouraging Christian adoption and are working with churches around the country to help them become equipped to care for children in need of loving families.”

Another section of the Danbury Institute’s website states the organization believes, “the greatest atrocity facing our generation today is the practice of abortion—child sacrifice on the altar of self.”

“Abortion must be ended,” the website states. “We will not rest until it is eradicated entirely.”

The website doesn’t mention if the organization supports exceptions in cases of rape, incest or the woman’s life, nor does it say if women who receive abortions should be protected from criminal prosecution. The institute did not return a request from States Newsroom seeking to clarify if it supports any or all of those three exceptions.

The institute writes on its website that it “does not endorse any candidate for public office nor participate in political campaign activities. Contributions to The Danbury Institute are not used for political campaigning and are conducted in accordance with IRS regulations for nonprofit organizations.”

## **Florida minister takes issue with abortion letter**

Tom Ascol, president of Founders Ministries in Florida, spoke on a panel discussion about the “Sanctity of Life” at Monday’s event, during which he said “abortion is the greatest evil of this nation in our day.”

Ascol also appeared frustrated with a public letter released by dozens of anti-abortion organizations in

presidential election, saying that President Joe Biden and Democrats are “against religion.”

Biden-Harris 2024 spokesperson Sarafina Chitika said in a written statement released before Trump’s message was played that a second term for him “is sure to bring more extreme abortion bans with no exceptions, women punished for seeking the care they need, and doctors criminalized for providing care.”

“Women can and will stop him by reelecting President Biden and Vice President Harris this November,” Chitika wrote.

## **Abortion position**

The Danbury Institute writes on its website that it opposes abortion from “the moment of conception, meaning that each pre-born baby would be treated with the same protection under the law as born people.”

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May 2022, arguing that no laws should criminalize women who have abortions. He took particular exception to the acting president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission signing his name to the document.

"It grieves me that when there was legislation before the Louisiana legislature that had a real opportunity to be passed, because there were lawmakers that were willing to go forward ... that 75 pro-life organizations penned an open letter, including the leader of our Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission Brent Leatherwood, who attached his name to that letter, saying, 'We do not think that any legislature should criminalize abortion to the degree that those who offer their bodies up to be given over to abortion would be held liable,'" Ascol said during the conference.

That letter was released the same day in 2022 that state lawmakers in Louisiana were debating House Bill 813, which had been on track to criminalize women who receive abortions in addition to the doctors who provide them. Prosecutors would have been able to charge the women with murder.

Louisiana lawmakers instead opted to rework the language of the original bill to replace it with another anti-abortion measure that didn't include criminal penalties for women who receive abortions.

Ascol said he believed the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission must say publicly if "the goal (is) the abolition of abortion. And if it is and they're sincere, then okay, let's work together."

"If we can do that, I think we can have some opportunity for coalition building," Ascol said. "If we get more of these open letters by so-called pro-life organizations helping to spike legitimate legislation, then I think we're going to continue to see the fragmentation and understandably so."

National Right to Life, Susan B. Anthony List and Americans United for Life were among the organizations that signed the May 2022 letter.

## Trump and abortion, contraception

Trump's comments to The Danbury Institute on Monday didn't clear up the confusion stemming from his comments to news organizations during the past few months.

Trump said during an interview with TIME Magazine published in April that his campaign would be releasing a policy in the weeks that followed on access to medication abortion, a two-drug regimen approved for up to 10 weeks gestation.

"Well, I have an opinion on that, but I'm not going to explain," Trump said, according to the transcript of the interview. "I'm not gonna say it yet. But I have pretty strong views on that. And I'll be releasing it probably over the next week."

That policy had not been released as of Monday.

Medication abortion, which include mifepristone and misoprostol, makes up about 63% of pregnancy terminations within the United States, according to data from the Guttmacher Institute.

U.S. Supreme Court justices heard oral arguments in a case about mifepristone's use in late March and are expected to publish their ruling before the Fourth of July.

During an interview with a Pittsburgh TV news station in May, Trump hinted that he might be open to states limiting or banning access to contraception, though he walked back his remarks the same day in a social media post.

"We're looking at that and I'm going to have a policy on that very shortly and I think it's something that you'll find interesting," Trump said on KDKA after being asked if he could support any restrictions on a person's right to contraception. "It's another issue that's very interesting. But you will find it very smart. I think it's a smart decision, but we'll be releasing it very soon."

Trump later posted on social media that he never had and never would "ADVOCATE IMPOSING RESTRICTIONS ON BIRTH CONTROL, or other contraceptives."

Trump's campaign had not released a policy on contraception as of Monday.

## U.S. Senate vote on IVF set this week

Access to reproductive health care, including contraception and IVF, has become a recurring issue in the U.S. Senate ahead of November's elections, with Democrats seeking to put GOP members on the record.

The Senate tried to pass legislation last week that would have provided protections for access to contraception, but the vast majority of the chamber's Republicans voted against advancing that bill.

Access to contraception is currently protected by two U.S. Supreme Court cases — *Griswold v. Connecticut* and *Eisenstadt v. Baird* — where the justices ruled that Americans' privacy rights allow them to make those decisions for themselves.

Democrats and reproductive rights advocates are concerned that the justices could eventually overturn those two cases the same way the court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

The Senate is set to vote this week on legislation guaranteeing access to in vitro fertilization, though GOP senators are expected to block that bill as well.

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

## Easing federal marijuana rules: There's still a long way to go

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 10, 2024 6:00 AM

Nearly three weeks after the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration proposed loosening a federal prohibition on marijuana, the next phases of policy fights over the drug's status are starting to take shape.

Public comments, which the DEA is accepting on the proposal until mid-July, will likely include an analysis of the economic impact of more lenient federal rules.

Administrative law hearings, a venue for opponents to challenge executive branch decisions, will likely follow, with marijuana's potential for abuse a possible issue.

Congress, meanwhile, could act on multiple related issues, including banking access for state-legal marijuana businesses and proposals to help communities harmed by the decades of federal prohibition.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a Democrat from Oregon and longtime advocate for legalizing marijuana who's retiring at the end of the year, is encouraging his colleagues to build on the administration's action by taking up bills on those related issues.

The politics of the issue should favor action, even in the face of an upcoming campaign season that typically slows legislative action, Blumenauer said in a May 17 interview, noting the popularity of a more permissive approach to the drug.

"Congress may not do a lot between now and November, but they should," the 14-term House member said. "Because it's an election year, there's no downside to being more aggressive."



**In this photo illustration, marijuana joints and buds, also known as "flower," are viewed on May 24, 2024, in Los Angeles.** (Photo Illustration by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

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## Economic impact

In a proposed rule published in the Federal Register last month, the DEA specifically asked commenters to weigh in on the economic impacts of moving the drug from Schedule I to the less-restrictive Schedule III list under the federal Controlled Substances Act.

That will likely mean the agency will consider the impact of allowing state-legal marijuana businesses to deduct business expenses from their federal taxes, Mason Tvert, a partner at Denver-based cannabis policy and public affairs firm Strategies 64, said in an interview. Under current law, no deductions are allowed.

That issue is seen by advocates, including Blumenauer and fellow Oregon Democrat Ron Wyden, who chairs the tax-writing U.S. Senate Finance Committee, as paramount for the industry.

Thousands of state-legal businesses struggle to earn a profit or operate at a loss under the current system, Blumenauer said.

## Potential for abuse

The DEA typically looks at three factors when assessing how strictly to regulate a drug: its medicinal value, potential for abuse relative to other drugs and ability to cause physical addiction.

A 2023 analysis by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that looked at data from states where medicinal marijuana is legal showed that "there exists some credible scientific support for the medical use of marijuana."

That finding could lead DEA to look at other factors, Tvert said.

"The battleground that we'll see will be around how we define potential for abuse," he said.

## Agencies split?

But the DEA proposed rule revealed a divided view among government agencies about the drug's potential harms, Paul Armentano, the deputy director for the longtime leading advocacy group National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, told States Newsroom.

The text of the proposed rule shows "a lack of consensus" among HHS, the Attorney General's Office and the Drug Enforcement Administration, he said.

"There are several points in the DEA's proposed rule where they express a desire to see additional evidence specific to concerns that the agency has about the potential effects of cannabis, particularly as they pertain to abuse potential and potential harms," Armentano said.

"The HHS addresses those issues, but the DEA essentially says, 'We'd like to see more information on it.'"

Kevin Sabat, the president and CEO of the anti-legalization group Smart Approaches to Marijuana, agreed that the DEA did not appear to agree with the HHS conclusion that medical uses exist.

The proposed rule "just brings up all these issues with the HHS's determination and it basically invites comment on all those issues," he said.

## Administrative law hearing

Sabat's group will also be petitioning for a DEA administrative hearing, he said. An administrative law judge could rule that the proposal should not go through or that it should be amended to remain stricter than the initial proposal described.

"We're going to highlight the fact that, first of all, this does not have approved or accepted medical use," he said.

Tvert said the accepted medical value question is likely not to be a major factor in an administrative law hearing. Several medical organizations and states that allow medicinal use have already endorsed its medicinal value, he said.

Instead, the focus will turn to the drug's potential for abuse, he said.

"What will be critical is looking at cannabis relative to other substances that are currently II or III or not on the schedule, and determining whether cannabis should be on Schedule I when alcohol is not even on the schedules and ketamine is Schedule III."

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As of June 6, nearly 12,000 people had commented on the proposal in the 18 days since its publication. While opinion polls show that most Americans favor liberalizing cannabis laws — a Pew Research Center survey in March found 57% of U.S. adults favor full legalization while only 11% say it should be entirely illegal — the public comments so far represent a full spectrum of views on the topic.

"This rule is a horrible idea, this should remain in Schedule I," one comment read. "Marijuana is a gateway drug and ruins lives."

"There are no negative side effects to its use," another commenter, who favored "fully" legalizing the substance, wrote. "Its not harmful. The only harm is what the government has done to me and America. Shame on the people that continue to oppose this. Seriously shame on anyone that would stand in the way of this change."

## Congressional action?

Blumenauer authored a memo last month on "the path forward" for reform as the rescheduling process plays out.

He listed four bills for Congress to consider this year.

One, sponsored by House Democrats, would remove cannabis from the Controlled Substance Act schedule entirely and expunge prior offenses.

A bipartisan bill would make changes to the banking laws to allow state-legal businesses greater access to loans and other financial services.

Another, cosponsored with Florida Republican Brian Mast, would allow Veterans Administration health providers to discuss state-legal medicinal marijuana with veteran patients.

Blumenauer has also co-written language for appropriations bills that would prevent the Department of Justice from prosecuting marijuana businesses that are legal under state or tribal law.

"All of these things are overwhelmingly popular, they're important, we have legislative vehicles and supporters," he said.

Still, there may be disagreements about what to pursue next.

Recent years have seen disagreements among Democratic supporters of legalization over whether to prioritize banking or criminal justice reforms.

A banking overhaul has much greater bipartisan support, and advocates on all sides of the issue agree it's the most likely to see congressional action.

But some who support changes to banking laws in principle object to focusing on improving the business environment without first addressing the harms they say prohibition has caused to largely non-white and disadvantaged communities.

As recently as 2021, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer described banking reform legislation as too narrow. Sen. Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat, called it a "common-sense policy" but said that he favored a more comprehensive approach.

"I've gone around with Cory on that," Blumenauer said. "More than anybody in Congress, I'm in favor of the major reforms, and we've been fighting for racial justice and equity ... but (racial justice and banking reforms) are not mutually exclusive."

In September, Booker agreed to co-sponsor the banking reform bill after winning a promise from Schumer that a separate bill to help expunge criminal records would also receive a vote. Neither measure has actually received a floor vote.

In a statement following the administration's announcement on rescheduling, Booker praised the move, but called for further action from Congress.

That includes passing a bill he's sponsored that would decriminalize the drug at the federal level, expunge the records of people convicted of federal marijuana crimes and direct federal funding to communities "most harmed by the failed War on Drugs," according to a summary from Booker's office.

"We still have a long way to go," Booker said in the statement on rescheduling. "Thousands of people remain in prisons around the country for marijuana-related crimes. They continue to bear the devastating



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consequences that come with a criminal history.”

Blumenauer said Congress should act on the proposals that have widespread support from voters.

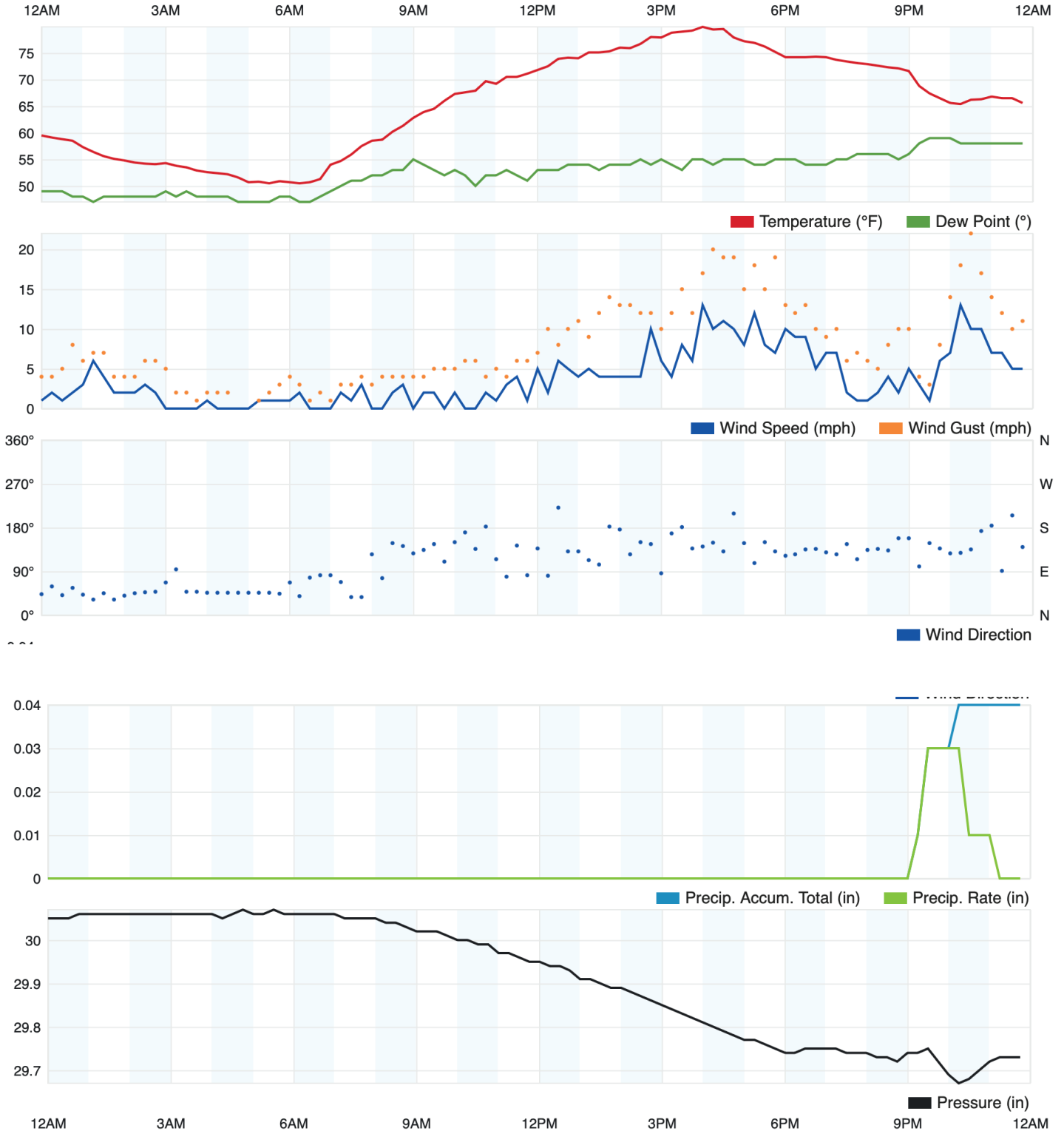
“This not low-hanging fruit, this is having them pick it up off the ground,” he said. “There is no other controversial issue that has as much bipartisan support that’s awaiting action.”

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 84 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 59 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 92 °F

Hot

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 56 °F

Mostly Clear  
then Slight  
Chance  
T-storms

Thursday



High: 83 °F

Sunny

Today



Highs: 77-87°F  
Northwest winds with gusts of 15-25 mph

Wednesday



Highs: 86-94°F

**Strong to perhaps severe storms in the afternoon, mainly along and west of I-29**

NWS Aberdeen, SD

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

Today will feature a mostly sunny sky with highs in the upper 70s to the upper 80s. Warmer temperatures can be expected on Wednesday, with highs reaching the 80s and 90s. A front passing through will bring a 20-40% chance of storms, mainly along and east of I-29. Some storms may become strong to severe.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:07 PM

Low Temp: 50 °F at 6:14 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 10:21 PM

Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 15 hours, 41 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1893

Record Low: 31 in 1938

Average High: 79

Average Low: 54

Average Precip in June.: 1.27

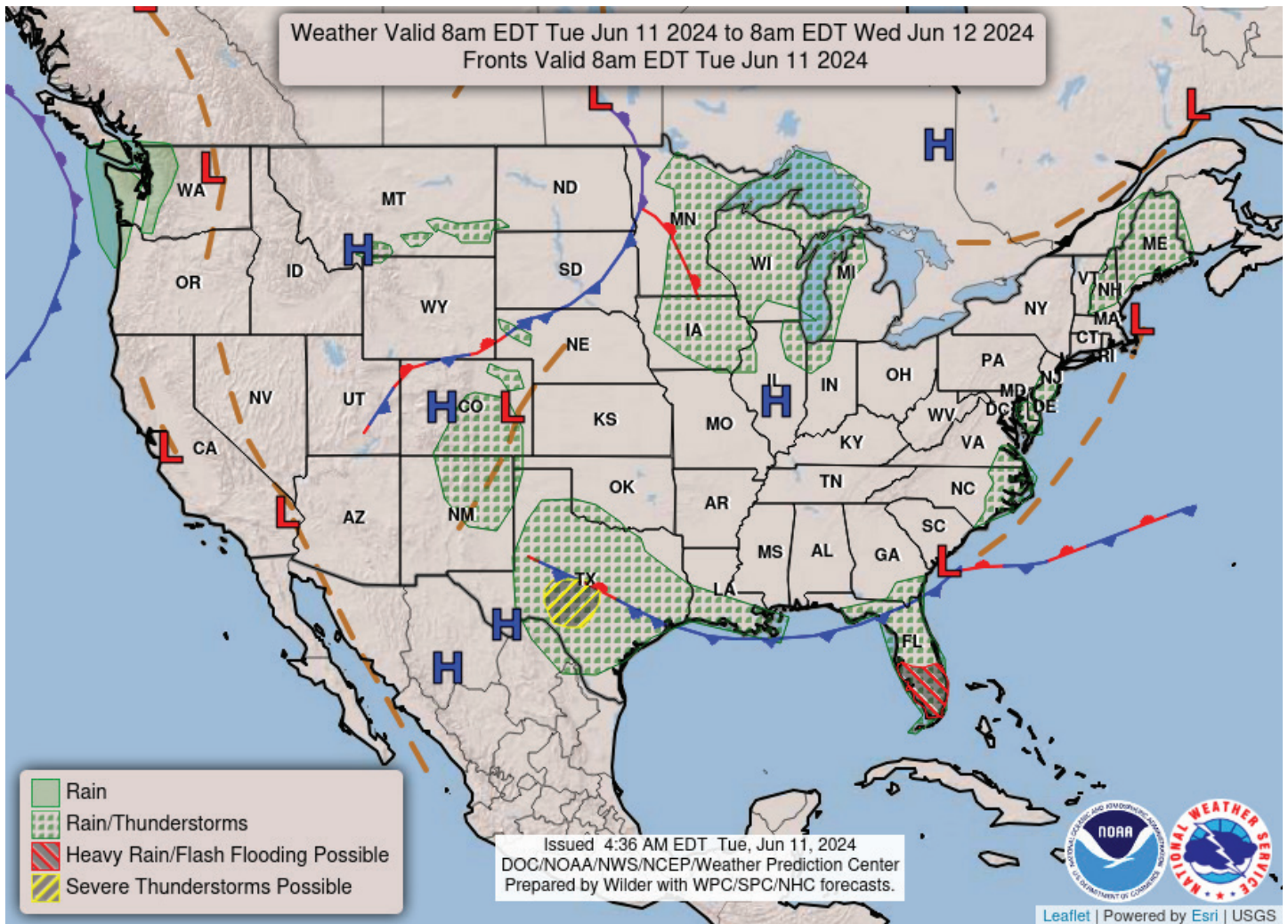
Precip to date in June: 0.12

Average Precip to date: 8.52

Precip Year to Date: 7.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:22:48 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:32 am



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## Today in Weather History

June 11, 1982: Golf ball size hail fell in Hayti, in Hamlin County, creating three-foot drifts of hail.

June 11, 1990: Hail, up to golf ball size, cut a swath 1.5 miles wide and 50 miles in length from the Missouri River east of the Hyde County line. Thunderstorm winds destroyed a granary roof and downed numerous trees. Damage from large hail was considerable to crops with entire fields being wiped out. The County Agent placed crop damage estimates at 1.8 million dollars in Sully County. Hail also produced window damage to cars and homes.

June 11, 2008: A strong inflow of moist and unstable air into and over a warm surface front resulted in training thunderstorms and very heavy rain across parts of northeast South Dakota. Rainfall amounts of 2 to 6 inches occurred across much of the area resulting in widespread flash flooding. The flooding damaged many roads, bridges, and cropland. In Milbank, many basements were flooded and received sewer backup.

June 11, 2010: Thunderstorms produced damaging winds over a large part of southeast South Dakota beginning just before midnight on June 10th and continuing well into the predawn hours of June 11th. The storms also produced heavy rain, which caused flash flooding at several locations. Heavy rainfall of at least 3 inches caused Enemy Creek to overflow and flood nearby roads. The expensive also caused flooding of roads and basements in Mitchell. A motorcycle business was flooded, resulting in damage to merchandise, although little damage to the motorcycles was reported. Thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage in the Sioux Falls area. Wood and siding were blown off a new house, and a nearby fence was blown over. The winds caused tree damage, including 2 to 3-foot diameter trees blown down. Debris from the tree damage blocked several roads. Garages were blown off three homes which were next to each other, and other nearby homes suffered significant damage in an area on West Eli Court which was subjected to the strongest winds, estimated at 100 mph. Windows were blown out in several of these homes, and a large camper was overturned in the same area. A wind gust of 74 mph was measured elsewhere in the city. The winds blew down out power lines in parts of the city. Heavy rain caused flash flooding of several streets in the southern part of Sioux Falls, with water up to two feet deep. Basement flooding was also reported.

1842: A late-season snowstorm struck New England. Snow fell during the morning and early afternoon, accumulating to a depth of ten to twelve inches at Irasburg, Vermont. Berlin, New Hampshire was blanketed with eleven inches of snow during the day. Snow whitened the higher peaks of the Appalachians as far south as Maryland. The latest date for the occurrence of a general snowstorm in our period over northern New England and northern New York came in 1842 on the morning of 11 June. Zadock Thompson, a professor of natural history and the Queen City's longtime weatherman, commented: "Snow during the forenoon's boards whitened and the mountains as white as in winter."

1877 - The temperature at Los Angeles, CA, reached 112 degrees during a heatwave. It would have been the all-time record for Los Angeles but official records did not begin until twenty days later. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - Heavy showers brought 1.64 inches of rain to Phoenix AZ, a record for the month of June. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - South Texas endured another day of torrential rains. Up to twelve inches of rain drenched Harris County, and nearly ten inches soaked Luce Bayou, mainly during the afternoon hours. Thunderstorm rains left seven feet of water over Highway 189 in northern Val Verde County. Flooding caused nine million dollars damage in Real County. A thunderstorm at Perryton, TX, produced golf ball size hail and 70 mph winds, and spawned a tornado which struck a mobile killing one person and injuring the other four occupants. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including El Dorado, AR, with a reading of 48 degrees. Canaan Valley WV and Thomas WV dipped to 30 degrees. Flagstaff AZ was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 30 degrees. Coolidge, just 180 miles away, was the hot spot in the nation with an afternoon high of 105 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the south central and southeastern U.S. during the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, including one which tore the roof off a restaurant at Bee Branch, AR, injuring six persons. The tornado tossed one car into the restaurant, and another car over it. Temperatures soared into the 90s across much of Florida. Lakeland reported a record high of 99 degrees for the second day in a row. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### GIVING AND RECEIVING

Little Amy was pleased that her teacher came to visit her farm. Taking her through the barn and out into the pasture, she pointed with pride to a cow that was quietly chewing its cud.

Filled with pride she said to her teacher, "That's my cow!"

"Oh, how wonderful, Amy," she commented. "Does she give milk?"

"Not really," replied Amy. "We have to take it from her."

Some Christians are like Amy's cow - there is good in them, but it has to be taken from them. This may be true because of the influence of the world rather than the influence of the Word.

All of us are encouraged to hold on to whatever we possess as tightly as possible. We are constantly advised to invest our money wisely or when we advance in age, we will not have enough to survive.

But the writer of Proverbs says, "It is possible to give freely and become more wealthy." What did he mean?

God always blesses those who give freely of their time, treasures and talents in service to others. When we give, we are simply sharing with others what God has given us and providing space for more of His blessings.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to believe in Your Word and trust in Your ways. Open our hearts to share the blessings You have given us with those in need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. Proverbs 11:24-25



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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.07.24

3 5 12 22 66 7

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$30,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 17 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.10.24

5 11 14 25 26 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$3,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 32  
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.10.24

7 9 14 23 47 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.08.24

11 16 17 19 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 47  
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.10.24

9 15 27 32 65 10

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 16  
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.10.24

3 10 33 58 59 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 16  
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



## News from the Associated Press

### What to know about Indigenous activist Leonard Peltier's first hearing in more than a decade

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and JACK DURA Associated Press

A parole hearing was held Monday for Indigenous activist Leonard Peltier, who has spent most of his life in prison since his conviction in the 1975 killings of two FBI agents in South Dakota.

At 79, Peltier's health is failing, and if this parole request is denied, it might be a decade or more before it is considered again, said his attorney Kevin Sharp, a former federal judge. Sharp and other supporters have long argued that Peltier was wrongly convicted and say now that this effort may be his last chance at freedom.

It's been about 15 years since Peltier's last parole hearing. A decision on Monday's hearing is expected within 21 days.

"This whole entire hearing is a battle for his life," said Nick Tilsen, president and CEO of the NDN Collective, an Indigenous-led advocacy group. "It's time for him to come home."

The FBI and its current and former agents dispute the claims of innocence. The fight for Peltier's freedom, which is embroiled in the Indigenous rights movements, remains so robust nearly half a century later that "Free Peltier" T-shirts and caps are still hawked online.

"It may be kind of cultish to take his side as some kind of a hero. But he's certainly not that; he's a cold blooded murderer," said Mike Clark, president of the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, which wrote a letter arguing that Peltier should remain incarcerated.

Here are some things to know about the case.

What happened in the '70s? An enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribe, Peltier was active in the American Indian Movement, which began in the 1960s as a local organization in Minneapolis that grappled with issues of police brutality and discrimination against Native Americans. It quickly became a national force.

AIM grabbed headlines in 1973 when it took over the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation, leading to a 71-day standoff with federal agents. Tensions between AIM and the government remained high for years.

The FBI considered AIM an extremist organization and planted spies and snitches in the group. Sharp blamed the government for creating what he described as a "powder keg" that exploded on June 26, 1975.

That's the day agents came to Pine Ridge to serve arrest warrants amid ongoing battles over Native treaty rights and self-determination.

After being injured in a shootout, agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams were shot in the head at close range, according to a letter from FBI Director Christopher Wray. Also killed in the shootout was AIM member Joseph Stuntz. The Justice Department concluded that a law enforcement sniper killed Stuntz.

Two other AIM members, Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, were acquitted of killing Coler and Williams.

After fleeing to Canada and being extradited to the United States, Peltier was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder and sentenced in 1977 to life in prison, despite defense claims that evidence against him had been falsified.

"You've got a conviction that was riddled with misconduct by the prosecutors, the U.S. Attorney's office, by the FBI who investigated this case and, frankly the jury," Sharp said. "If they tried this today, he does not get convicted."

How has the FBI responded? Wray said in a statement that the agency was resolute in its opposition to Peltier's latest application for parole.

"We must never forget or put aside that Peltier intentionally murdered these two young men and has never expressed remorse for his ruthless actions," he wrote, adding that the case has been repeatedly upheld on appeal.

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The FBI Agents Association, a professional group that represents mostly active agents, sent a letter to the parole commission opposing parole. The group said any early release of Peltier would be a "cruel act of betrayal."

What is the legacy of the American Indian Movement? Tilsen, a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation, credits AIM and others for most of the rights Native Americans have today, including religious freedom, the ability to operate casinos and tribal colleges, and enter into contracts with the federal government to oversee schools and other services.

"Leonard has been a part of creating that, but he hasn't been available to be a beneficiary because he has been incarcerated for almost 50 years," Tilsen said. "So he hasn't been able to enjoy the result of those wins and see how they have changed and transformed Indian country."

What's next? Monday's hearing was held at a high-security lockup in Florida that is part of the Federal Correctional Complex Coleman. The hearing was not open to the public and details about what happened were not immediately available.

Sharp, Peltier's attorney, said beforehand that witnesses for and against parole were expected to testify. Family members of the two FBI agents who were killed will be there. For decades, the agents' loved ones have opposed clemency for Peltier.

In a 2022 letter to Wray, Coler's son Paul Coler, who was less than 2 years old when his father died, said he was "left to witness the continuous struggle and suffering my Mother had to endure after losing her husband. She was alone, dealing with the biggest tragedy of her life, all while trying to navigate her two young sons through life."

The decision on whether to grant parole is required within 21 days, Sharp said. If parole is granted, there's a process for release which shouldn't take long. If denied, Peltier can look at his options for filing an appeal to a federal district court, Sharp said.

Parole was rejected at Peltier's last hearing in 2009, and then-President Barack Obama denied a clemency request in 2017. Another clemency request is pending before President Joe Biden.

## Man pleads not-guilty in Sioux Falls' first triple homicide in a half-century

The Associated Press undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 30-year-old man pleaded not guilty to murder on Monday after a shooting at a house party left three people dead and two wounded in Sioux Falls' first triple-fatal in more than 50 years.

Justin Cody Rackley is charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of Daniel Carl Kemnitz, 43; Kellie Elizabeth Reaves, 43; and Michael Andrew Thompson 34. All are from Sioux Falls.

Rackley is being held at the Minnehaha County Jail pending a preliminary hearing on June 25. His attorney did not immediately respond to a phone message.

Lt. Aaron Nyberg said it's too early to speak to a motive or any relationships involved, although he said it doesn't appear to be a crime of passion or robbery.

Police were called around 3 a.m. Saturday to the home in a residential neighborhood and found a chaotic scene where perhaps a dozen people had been gathering around a bonfire. Officers found a handgun on the scene. Two people with non-life-threatening injuries were taken to a hospital.

Sioux Falls' last homicide case with three or more victims was an apparent murder-suicide in 1973, Nyberg said.

## Malawi's vice president and 9 others have died in a plane crash, the president says

By GREGORY GONDWE and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP) — Malawi's vice president and nine others were killed in a plane crash, the country's president said Tuesday.

The wreckage of the military plane carrying Vice President Saulos Chilima was located in a mountainous

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area in the north of the country after a search that lasted more than a day. There were no survivors of the crash, Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera said.

Chakwera made the announcement in a live address on state television.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP) — Hundreds of soldiers, police officers and forest rangers continued to search Tuesday for a missing military plane carrying Malawi's vice president, a former first lady and eight others that is suspected to have crashed in a mountainous region of thick forests in the north of the country.

The plane carrying 51-year-old Vice President Saulos Chilima and former first lady Shanil Dzimbiri went missing Monday morning while making the 45-minute flight from the southern African nation's capital, Lilongwe, to the city of Mzuzu, around 370 kilometers (230 miles) to the north.

Air traffic controllers told the plane not to attempt a landing at Mzuzu's airport because of bad weather and poor visibility and asked it to turn back to Lilongwe, President Lazarus Chakwera said. Air traffic control then lost contact with the aircraft and it disappeared from radar, he said.

Seven passengers and three military crew members were on board. The president described the aircraft as a small, propeller driven plane operated by the Malawian armed forces. The tail number he provided shows it is a Dornier 228-type twin propeller plane that was delivered to the Malawian army in 1988, according to the ch-aviation website that tracks aircraft information.

Around 600 personnel were involved in the search in a vast forest plantation in the Viphya Mountains near Mzuzu, authorities said. They said 300 police officers had been mobilized to join around 200 soldiers and also local forest rangers in the search operation. Malawi Red Cross spokesperson Felix Washoni said his organization also had team members involved in the search and they were using a drone to help with efforts to find the plane.

Gen. Valentino Phiri, the commander of the Malawian armed forces, said Tuesday that the thick forest and hilly terrain were making the search operation extremely difficult. The area has large manmade forests used for lumber.

In a live television address to the nation late on Monday night, the president vowed that search operations would continue through the night and until the plane was found. He said authorities had used telecommunications towers to track the last known position of the plane to a 10-kilometer (6-mile) radius in one of the plantations. That area was the focus of the search and rescue operation, he said.

"I have given strict orders that the operation should continue until the plane is found," Chakwera said.

"I know this is a heartbreaking situation. I know we are all frightened and concerned. I too am concerned," he said in a speech after 11 p.m. that was broadcast on state TV. "But I want to assure you that I am sparing no available resource to find that plane. And I am holding onto every fiber of hope that we will find survivors."

Chakwera said the U.S., the U.K., Norway and Israel offered assistance in the search operation and had provided "specialized technologies" that the president hoped would help find the plane sooner.

The U.S. Embassy in Malawi said it was assisting and had offered the use of a Department of Defense small C-12 plane. Gen. Phiri said Malawi had also asked for help from neighboring Zambia and Tanzania and helicopters and more drones were on their way.

Malawi is a country of around 21 million people and was ranked as the fourth poorest nation in the world by the World Bank in 2019.

Officials with Chilima's United Transformation Movement political party — a different party to the president — criticized the government response as slow and said there was no transponder on the plane, and that was concerning for an aircraft carrying a high-level delegation.

Chakwera said Dzimbiri, the ex-wife of former President Bakili Muluzi, was also one of the passengers. The group was traveling to attend the funeral of a former government minister. Chilima had just returned from an official visit to South Korea on Sunday.

Chakwera asked Malawians to pray for all those onboard and their families.

Chilima is serving his second term as vice president. He was also in the role from 2014-2019 under former

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President Peter Mutharika. He was a candidate in the 2019 Malawian presidential election and finished third, behind the incumbent, Mutharika, and Chakwera. The vote was later annulled by Malawi's Constitutional Court because of irregularities.

Chilima then joined Chakwera's campaign as his running mate in an historic election rerun in 2020, when Chakwera was elected president. It was the first time in Africa that an election result that was overturned by a court resulted in a defeat for the sitting president.

Chilima had previously been facing corruption charges over allegations that he received money in return for influencing the awarding of government procurement contracts for the Malawi armed forces and the police, but prosecutors dropped the charges last month. He had denied the allegations, but the case led to criticism that Chakwera's administration was not taking a hard enough stance against graft.

## **Bizarre psychological warfare using K-pop and trash balloons raises tensions between the 2 Koreas**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Mammoth South Korean loudspeakers blaring BTS music. Large North Korean balloons carrying manure, cigarette butts and waste batteries. Small South Korean civilian leaflets slamming North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Day after day, the Cold War-style yet bizarre campaigns continue at the heavily fortified border of the rivals who haven't had any serious talks for years.

"At this point, both Koreas are trying to pressure and deter each other with politically symbolic actions," Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said. "The problem is that neither side wants to be seen as backing down, and tensions at the border could escalate to unintended conflict."

Here is a look at the latest flare-up of tensions between the two Koreas.

Is the battle of the loudspeakers restarting? On Sunday, South Korea redeployed its gigantic loudspeakers along the border for the first time in six years and resumed anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts. The broadcasts reportedly included K-pop sensation BTS's mega-hits like "Butter" and "Dynamite," weather forecasts and news on Samsung, the biggest South Korean company, as well as outside criticism of the North's missile program and its crackdown on foreign video.

South Korean officials say the ear-piercing broadcasts were retaliation against North Korea's recent series of balloon launches that dumped trash into South Korea, though it suffered no major damages. The North says its balloon campaign was a tit-for-tat action against South Korean activists flying political leaflets critical of its leadership across the border.

North Korea views frontline South Korean broadcasts and civilian leafleting campaigns as a grave provocation as it bans access to foreign news for most of its 26 million people.

According to South Korean officials, North Korea has also reinstalled its own propaganda loudspeakers near the border, but as of Tuesday morning, it hasn't switched them on. North Korean broadcasts in the past revolved mainly around praising its system and harsh censoring of South Korea.

Balloon activities and loudspeaker broadcasts were among the psychological warfare that the two Koreas agreed to halt in 2018. During the Cold War, South Korea also used towering electronic billboards, reminiscent of the "Hollywood" sign near Los Angeles, while North Korea set up signboards with a message that read: "Let's Establish a Confederate Nation!"

Whose loudspeakers are better? South Korean officials have previously said broadcasts from their loudspeakers can travel about 10 kilometers (6 miles) during the day and 24 kilometers (15 miles) at night. They said past North Korean broadcasts from its loudspeakers were not clearly audible in South Korean areas.

Some frontline North Korean soldiers testified after their defections to South Korea that they had enjoyed South Korean broadcasts that contained pop songs and accurate weather forecasts that warned of potential rain and advised them to gather up laundry hung on outdoor clotheslines.

In 2015, when South Korea restarted loudspeaker broadcasts for the first time in 11 years, North Korea fired artillery rounds across the border, prompting the South to return fire, according to South Korean

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officials. No casualties were reported.

Can K-pop songs rock the boat in North Korea? Experts and defectors say K-pop and other South Korean pop culture products like movies and TV dramas have emerged as a challenge to the North's leadership as it steadily gained popularity among the public.

Kim since the pandemic has been intensifying a campaign to eliminate the influence of South Korean pop culture and language amongst his population in a bid to strengthen his family's dynastic rule.

The playlists of South Korean loudspeaker broadcasts in 2016 included songs by a young female singer, IU, whose soft, soothing voice was believed meant to demoralize frontline North Korean male soldiers.

North Korea was more tolerant of South Korean pop culture when ties warmed in the past. During a short-lived period of rapprochement in 2018, North Korea let some of the South's biggest pop stars visit its capital, Pyongyang, and hold a rare performance.

South Korean TV footage showed that the North Korean audience seemed to enjoy classic ballads by crooners but was less enthusiastic about Red Velvet, a K-pop girl group known for their playful, high-pitched vocals and sexy choreography. Kim applauded the concert, reportedly calling it a "gift to Pyongyang citizens."

Can a military clash happen? There are concerns that the old-fashioned psychological warfare is increasing the risks of direct military clashes between the Koreas, both of whom have already made it clear that they are no longer bound by their landmark 2018 tension-reduction agreements.

Diplomacy between the two countries remains derailed since a broader U.S.-North Korea nuclear diplomacy collapsed in 2019. So it could be difficult for the rivals to set up talks as an off-ramp to get off the cycle of tit-for-tat tensions.

"South Korea has clear advantages in terms of information operations and conventional military capabilities, yet it also has more to lose in the event of a physical clash," Easley, the professor, said. "While the Kim regime is vulnerable to outside information, its self-proclaimed nuclear status may give it overconfidence in its ability to coerce."

North Korea could retaliate in a way where it could avoid a direct counterattack, employing so-called "gray zone" tactics where its involvement isn't swiftly confirmed, said Wang Son-taek, a professor at Seoul's Sogang University, wrote in a recent newspaper column.

The South Korean loudspeaker broadcasts reportedly lasted two hours on Sunday, and the country didn't turn on its speakers again on Monday and Tuesday. South Korean military said it's ready to launch immediate, strong retaliation if attacked.

## US gas prices are falling. Experts point to mild demand at the pump ahead of summer travel

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Gas prices are once again on the decline across the U.S., bringing some relief to drivers now paying a little less to fill up their tanks.

The national average for gas prices on Monday stood around \$3.44, according to AAA. That's down about 9 cents from a week ago — marking the largest one-week drop recorded by the motor club so far in 2024. Monday's average was also more than 19 cents less than it was a month ago and over 14 cents below the level seen this time last year.

Why the recent fall in prices at the pump? Industry analysts point to a blend of lackluster demand and strong supply — as well as relatively mild oil prices worldwide.

Here's a rundown of what you need to know.

Why are gas prices falling? There are a few factors contributing to today's falling gas prices. For starters, fewer people may be hitting the road.

"Demand is just kind of shallow," AAA spokesperson Andrew Gross said, pointing to trends seen last year and potential lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Traditionally — pre-pandemic — after Memorial Day, demand would start to pick up in the summertime. And we just don't see it anymore."

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Last week, data from the Energy Information Administration showed that U.S. gasoline demand slipped to about 8.94 billion barrels a day. That might still sound like a lot — but before the pandemic, consumption was closer to the 10 billion barrel-a-day range at this time of year, Gross noted.

Beyond pandemic-specific impacts, experts note that high gas prices seen following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and persistent inflation may have led many Americans to modify their driving habits. Other contributing factors could be the increased number of fuel-efficient cars, as well as electric vehicles, on the road today, Gross said.

Some of this is still seasonal. Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, noted that gas prices typically ease in early summer because of refinery capacity. At this time of year, he said, many factors boosting prices in late winter and early spring — particularly refinery maintenance — are no longer present.

"Once refinery maintenance is done, output or utilization of the nation's refineries goes up — and that contributes to rising supply," De Haan said. And that stronger supply, paired with weaker consumption, has led to a "bit more noticeable" decline in prices this year. He added that U.S. refinery utilization is at some of its highest levels since the pandemic.

Separately, the Biden administration announced last month that it would be releasing 1 million gasoline barrels, or about 42 million gallons, from a Northeast reserve with an aim of lowering prices at the pump this summer. But De Haan noted that such action has little impact nationally — 42 million gallons equals less than three hours of U.S. daily gas consumption.

"Really, what we're seeing right now with (declining) gasoline prices ... has been driven primarily by seasonal and predictable economics," he said.

What about oil prices? Experts also point to cooling oil costs. Prices at the pump are highly dependent on crude oil, which is the main ingredient in gasoline.

West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, has stayed in the mid \$70s a barrel over recent weeks — closing at under \$78 a barrel Monday. That's "not a bad place for it to be," Gross said, noting that the cost of crude typically needs to go above \$80 to put more pressure on pump prices.

Oil prices can be volatile and hard to predict because they're subject to many global forces. That includes production cuts from OPEC and allied oil producing countries, which have previously contributed to rising energy prices.

OPEC+ recently announced plans to extend three different sets of cuts totaling 5.8 million barrels a day — but the alliance also put a timetable on restoring some production, "which is likely why the price of oil had somewhat of a bearish reaction," De Haan said.

Could prices go back up? The future is never promised. But, if there are no major unexpected interruptions, both Gross and De Haan say that prices could keep working their way down.

At this time of year, experts keep a particular eye out for hurricane risks — which can cause significant damage and lead refineries to power down.

"Prices move on fear," Gross said. In the U.S., he added, concern particularly rises once a hurricane enters the Gulf of Mexico — and even if it doesn't eventually make landfall, refineries may pull back on operations out of caution. Impacts can also range by region.

But barring the unexpected, analysts like De Haan expect the national average to stay in the range of \$3.35 to \$3.70 per gallon. Gas prices typically drop even more in the fall, and it's possible that we could see the national average below \$3 in late October or early November, he said.

What states have the lowest gas prices today? While gas prices nationwide are collectively falling, some states, of course, always have cheaper averages than others, due to factors ranging from nearby refinery supply to local fuel requirements.

As of Monday, per AAA data, Mississippi had the lowest average gas price at about \$2.94 per gallon — followed by \$2.95 Oklahoma and just under \$2.97 in Arkansas.

Meanwhile, California, Hawaii and Washington had the highest average prices on Monday — at about \$4.93, \$4.75 and \$4.41 per gallon, respectively.

## **Blinken welcomes UN vote in favor of Gaza cease-fire plan and again calls on Hamas to accept it**

By MATTHEW LEE and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that the U.N. Security Council's vote in favor of a U.S.-backed proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza made it "as clear as it possibly could be" that the world supports the plan, as he again called on Hamas to accept it.

"Everyone's vote is in, except for one vote, and that's Hamas," Blinken told reporters in Tel Aviv after meeting with Israeli officials. Blinken said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "reaffirmed his commitment to the proposal" when they met late Monday.

Blinken's latest visit to the region — his eighth since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war — is focused on rallying support for the cease-fire proposal, boosting the entry of humanitarian aid and advancing postwar plans for Gaza's governance. He is traveling on to Jordan as well as Qatar, which along with Egypt has served as a key mediator with Hamas.

The proposal, announced by President Joe Biden last month, calls for a three-phased plan in which Hamas would release the rest of the hostages in exchange for a lasting cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The group is still holding around 120 hostages, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Biden presented it as an Israeli proposal, but Netanyahu has publicly disputed key aspects of it, saying Israel won't end the war without destroying Hamas and returning all the hostages.

Hamas has not yet formally responded to the proposal. The militant group welcomed the U.N. resolution and supports the broad outline of the agreement but has demanded assurances it will be implemented. The militant group embraced a similar proposal last month that was rejected by Israel.

"Efforts are continuing to study and clarify some matters to ensure implementation by the Israeli side," Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said Tuesday. Israel "has not given clear approval or commitments to implementation that would lead to ending the aggression," he said.

On Monday, the U.N. Security Council voted overwhelmingly to approve the proposal, with 14 of the 15 members voting in favor and Russia abstaining. The resolution calls on Israel and Hamas "to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition."

The proposal has raised hopes of ending an 8-month war that has killed over 37,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, and driven some 80% of the population of 2.3 million from their homes. Israeli restrictions and ongoing fighting have hindered efforts to bring humanitarian aid to the isolated coastal enclave, fueling widespread hunger.

The war began when Hamas and other militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Over 100 hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire last year in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Biden's May 31 announcement of the new proposal said it would begin with an initial six-week cease-fire and the release of some hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Israeli forces would withdraw from populated areas and Palestinian civilians would be allowed to return to their homes.

Phase one also requires the safe distribution of humanitarian assistance "at scale throughout the Gaza Strip," which Biden said would lead to 600 trucks with aid entering Gaza every day.

In phase two, the resolution says that with the agreement of Israel and Hamas, "a permanent end to hostilities, in exchange for the release of all other hostages still in Gaza, and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza" will take place.

Phase three would launch "a major multi-year reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of the remains of any deceased hostages still in Gaza to their families."

The conflicting signals from Netanyahu appear to reflect his political dilemma. His far-right coalition allies have rejected the proposal and have threatened to bring down his government if he ends the war without destroying Hamas. A lasting cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza would likely allow Hamas to retain control of the territory and rebuild its military capabilities.

But Netanyahu is also under mounting pressure to accept a deal to bring the hostages back. Thousands

of Israelis, including families of the hostages, have demonstrated in favor of the U.S.-backed plan.

The transition from the first to the second phase appears to be a sticking point. Hamas wants assurances that Israel will not resume the war, and Israel wants to ensure that protracted negotiations over the second phase do not prolong the cease-fire indefinitely while leaving hostages in captivity.

Blinken said the proposal would bring an immediate cease-fire and commit the parties to negotiate an enduring one. "The cease-fire that would take place immediately would remain in place, which is manifestly good for for everyone. And then we'll have to see," Blinken said.

## UN says Israeli forces, Palestinian armed groups may have committed war crimes in deadly raid

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The U.N. human rights office is citing possible war crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in connection with a deadly raid by Israeli forces that freed four hostages over the weekend and killed hundreds of Palestinians.

Office spokesman Jeremy Laurence expressed concerns about possible violations of rules of proportionality, distinction and precaution by the Israeli forces in Saturday's raid at the urban Nuseirat refugee camp.

Palestinian health officials say at least 274 Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, were killed in the operation.

Laurence said Palestinian armed groups who are holding hostages in densely populated areas are putting the lives of nearby civilians and the hostages at "added risks" from the hostilities.

"All these actions by both parties may amount to war crimes," he told a regular U.N. briefing in Geneva.

"It was catastrophic, the way that this was carried out in that civilians — again — were caught smack bang in the middle of this," Laurence added.

Alluding to the "ordeal" faced by hostages and their families, he said: "The fact that four hostages are now free is clearly very good news. These hostages should never have been taken in the first place. That's a breach of international humanitarian law. They must be freed. All of them. Promptly."

Israel launched its war against Hamas after the group's Oct. 7 attack, in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 36,730 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Palestinians are facing widespread hunger because the war has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies. U.N. agencies say over 1 million in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by mid-July.

## The Latest | Hamas commander killed in West Bank clash

By The Associated Press undefined

Hamas said that one of its commanders in the occupied West Bank was killed in a clash with Israeli forces, while Israel said four soldiers were killed in an explosion in Rafah.

In a statement released late Monday, Hamas said Mohammed Jaber Abdo was killed along with three other fighters in a village near Ramallah, where the Western-backed Palestinian Authority is headquartered.

A joint statement by the Israeli army and police earlier on Monday said undercover forces had tracked down a suspect wanted in an attack on a nearby Jewish settlement.

Violence has surged in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza, which was ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel.

Over 530 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since then, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most were killed during violent protests or Israeli arrest raids, which often trigger gunbattles.

Israeli media, citing unnamed security officials, reported that four soldiers were killed Monday when explosives they were using to clear the building were triggered prematurely, causing it to collapse, kill-



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ing four soldiers and wounding 11. Hamas said that it had booby trapped the building and attacked the soldiers with mortars after the explosion.

On Tuesday, the U.N. human rights office said both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups may have committed war crimes in connection with a deadly raid by Israeli forces that freed four hostages and killed at least 274 Palestinians over the weekend.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 36,730 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Palestinians are facing widespread hunger because the war has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies. U.N. agencies say over 1 million in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by mid-July.

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Currently:

- The U.N. human rights office says Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups may have committed war crimes during the Nuseirat raid that freed four hostages and killed at least 274 Palestinians
- Blinken returns to Mideast as Israel-Hamas cease-fire proposal hangs in balance after hostage rescue
- How an Israeli raid freed 4 hostages and killed at least 274 Palestinians in Gaza
- What does Israel's rescue of 4 captives, and the killing of 274 Palestinians, mean for truce talks?
- Centrist Benny Gantz is quitting Israel's war Cabinet, citing frustrations with Netanyahu

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

Here's the latest:

U.N. cites possible war crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups  
The U.N. human rights office is citing possible war crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in connection with a deadly raid by Israeli forces that freed four hostages over the weekend and killed hundreds of Palestinians.

Office spokesman Jeremy Laurence expressed concerns about possible violations of rules of proportionality, distinction and precaution by the Israeli forces in Saturday's raid at the urban Nuseirat refugee camp.

Palestinian health officials say at least 274 Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, were killed in the operation.

Laurence said Palestinian armed groups who are holding hostages in densely populated areas are putting the lives of nearby civilians and the hostages at "added risks" from the hostilities.

"All these actions by both parties may amount to war crimes," he told a regular U.N. briefing in Geneva.

Blinken says world supports U.S. ceasefire plan  
TEL AVIV, Israel — Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the U.N. Security Council's vote in favor of a Gaza cease-fire plan made it "as clear as it possibly could be" that the world supports the U.S.-backed proposal to end the fighting.

He spoke to reporters in Tel Aviv on Tuesday after meeting with Israeli officials. Blinken said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "reaffirmed his commitment to the proposal" when they met late Monday.

"Everyone's vote is in, except for one vote, and that's Hamas," Blinken said.

The proposal, announced by President Joe Biden last month, calls for a three-phase plan in which Hamas would release the rest of the hostages in exchange for a lasting cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The group is still holding around 120 hostages, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Biden presented it as an Israeli proposal and urged Hamas to accept it. But Netanyahu has publicly disputed key aspects of it, saying Israel won't end the war without destroying Hamas and returning all the hostages.

Hamas has not yet formally responded to the proposal. The militant group welcomed the U.N. resolution and supports the broad outline of the agreement but has demanded assurances it will be implemented.

Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said Tuesday that "efforts are continuing to study and clarify some matters to ensure implementation by the Israeli side." He says Israel is "stalling and procrastinating and creating obstacles in order to continue the aggression."

On Monday, the U.N. Security Council voted overwhelmingly to approve the proposal, with 14 of the 15

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members voting in favor and Russia abstaining. The resolution calls on Israel and Hamas "to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition."

4 Israeli soldiers killed in explosion in RafahTEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military says four soldiers died in an explosion in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israeli media, citing unnamed security officials, reported that the soldiers were killed Monday when explosives they were using to clear the building were triggered prematurely, causing it to collapse, killing four soldiers and wounding 11.

The Hamas militant group said it had booby-trapped the building and attacked the soldiers with mortar rounds after the explosion.

The military targeted the building because they believed there was a Hamas operative inside who was involved in the 2006 kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who was held in Gaza for five years, according to Israeli media.

Israel launched what it says is a limited ground operation in parts of Rafah in early May. Some 1 million Palestinians, most of them already displaced from other parts of Gaza, have fled the offensive in Rafah. The United Nations estimates as few as 200,000 to 300,000 people still remain in the city.

The military says at least 298 soldiers have been killed since the start of the Gaza ground operation following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel that triggered the war.

Hamas commander killed in West Bank clashRAMALLAH, West Bank — Hamas says one of its commanders in the occupied West Bank was killed in a clash with Israeli forces.

In a statement released late Monday, Hamas said Mohammed Jaber Abdo was killed along with three other fighters in a village near Ramallah, where the Western-backed Palestinian Authority is headquartered. It said Abdo had spent 20 years in Israeli prisons.

A joint statement by the Israeli army and police earlier on Monday said undercover forces had tracked down a suspect wanted in an attack on a nearby Jewish settlement.

It said that the man was hiding in a compound with three other suspects and that forces opened fire when they tried to run them over with a car and flee. It said weapons were found in the car.

Violence has surged in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza, which was ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel.

Over 530 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since then, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most were killed during violent protests or Israeli arrest raids, which often trigger gunbattles.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

## UN Security Council adopts a cease-fire resolution aimed at ending Israel-Hamas war in Gaza

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council on Monday overwhelmingly approved its first resolution endorsing a cease-fire plan aimed at ending the eight-month war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

The U.S.-sponsored resolution welcomes a cease-fire proposal announced by President Joe Biden that the United States says Israel has accepted. It calls on the militant Palestinian group Hamas to accept the three-phase plan.

The resolution — which was approved with 14 of the 15 Security Council members voting in favor and Russia abstaining — calls on Israel and Hamas "to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition."

Whether Israel and Hamas agree to go forward with the plan remains in question, but the resolution's strong support in the U.N.'s most powerful body puts added pressure on both parties to approve the proposal.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Israel on Monday, where he urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept the plan for postwar Gaza as he pushed for more international pressure on Hamas

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to agree to the cease-fire proposal. Netanyahu has been skeptical of the deal, saying that Israel is still committed to destroying Hamas.

Hamas said it welcomed the adoption of the resolution and was ready to work with mediators in indirect negotiations with Israel to implement it. The statement was among the strongest from Hamas to date, but it stressed the group would continue its struggle against Israeli occupation and work on setting up a "fully sovereign" Palestinian state.

"Efforts are continuing to study and clarify some matters to ensure implementation by the Israeli side," Hamas spokesperson Jihad Taha said Tuesday. He said Israel was "stalling and procrastinating and creating obstacles in order to continue the aggression."

A senior Israeli diplomat did not directly mention the resolution, telling the council Israel's position is unwavering: "We will continue until all of the hostages are returned and until Hamas' military and governing capabilities are dismantled."

"This also means that Israel will not engage in meaningless and endless negotiations, which can be exploited by Hamas as a means to stall for time," Minister Counsellor Reut Shapir Ben Naftaly said.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield reiterated, however, that Israel has accepted the cease-fire deal, which is supported by countries around the world.

The resolution's adoption, she said, "sent a clear message to Hamas to accept the cease-fire deal on the table."

"The fighting could stop today, if Hamas would do the same," Thomas-Greenfield told the council. "I repeat, this fighting could stop today."

U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood told reporters earlier on Monday that the United States sees the deal as "the best, most realistic opportunity to bring at least a temporary halt to this war."

Earlier Monday, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders met in Qatar to discuss the proposed cease-fire deal and said later that any deal must lead to a permanent cease-fire, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, reconstruction and "a serious exchange deal" between hostages in Gaza and Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow abstained because details of the three-phase plan haven't been disclosed and "we have a whole host of questions."

"Hamas is called upon to accept this so-called deal, but still there is no clear clarity regarding official agreement from Israel," Nebenzia said. "Given the many statements from Israel on the extension of the war until Hamas is completely defeated ... what specifically has Israel agreed to?"

Algeria's U.N. Ambassador Amar Bendjama, the Arab representative on the council, said that while the text isn't perfect, "it offers a glimmer of hope to the Palestinians, as the alternative is (the) continuing killing and suffering of the Palestinian people."

"We voted for this text to give diplomacy a chance to reach an agreement that will end the aggression against the Palestinian people that has lasted far too long," Bendjama said.

The war was sparked by Hamas' surprise Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mainly Israeli civilians, and took about 250 others hostage. About 120 hostages remain, with 43 pronounced dead.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 36,700 Palestinians and wounded more than 83,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It has also destroyed about 80% of Gaza's buildings, according to the U.N.

The Security Council adopted a resolution on March 25 demanding a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, with the U.S. abstaining, but there was no halt to the war.

Monday's resolution underscores "the importance of the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States aimed at reaching a comprehensive cease-fire deal, consisting of three phases" and says the three countries are ready "to work to ensure negotiations keep going until all the agreements are reached."

Biden's May 31 announcement of the new proposal said it would begin with an initial six-week cease-fire

and the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas in Gaza and the return of Palestinian civilians to all areas in the territory.

Phase one also requires the safe distribution of humanitarian assistance "at scale throughout the Gaza Strip," which Biden said would lead to 600 trucks with aid entering Gaza every day.

In phase two, the resolution says that with the agreement of Israel and Hamas, "a permanent end to hostilities, in exchange for the release of all other hostages still in Gaza, and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza" will take place.

Phase three would launch "a major multi-year reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of the remains of any deceased hostages still in Gaza to their families."

The resolution reiterates the Security Council's "unwavering commitment to achieving the vision of a negotiated two-state solution where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders."

It also stresses "the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority," something Netanyahu's right-wing government has not agreed to.

## **UK's glum Conservatives try to shift the mood with election promises as polling day nears**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Rishi Sunak doesn't know whether he'll still be Britain's prime minister the day after next month's election. There's nothing unusual about that.

What is unusual is that he's been forced to deny rumors he could quit even before polling day, amid alarm inside the governing Conservative Party over Sunak's lackluster campaign.

Sunak gets a chance — maybe one of his last — to change the narrative on Tuesday when he releases the Conservatives' manifesto, a handbook of policies that forms each U.K. party's blueprint for power.

Despite gloomy polls and bruising headlines, Sunak insists the election is not a "foregone conclusion" and says resigning has not crossed his mind.

"People are going to say what they're going to say," he told reporters on Monday. "The reality is I'm not going to stop going, I'm not going to stop fighting for people's votes, I'm not going to stop fighting for the future of our country."

The Conservative manifesto is a chance for Sunak to repeat his claim that a government led by Labour's Keir Starmer would raise taxes, while a Conservative one would lower them.

Sunak said before the official launch that the manifesto would include financial help for first-time homebuyers and a cut to employees' income tax. Evoking the party's most iconic leader, Sunak said the Tories were "the party of Margaret Thatcher ... a party, unlike Labour, that believes in sound money."

The Labour Party points out that the tax burden has risen to its highest level in decades during 14 years of Tory rule. Labour campaign chairman Pat McFadden called the Conservative manifesto a "desperate series of unfunded commitments" and "the most expensive panic attack in history."

On July 4, British voters will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons, and the leader of the party that can command a majority — either alone or in coalition — will become prime minister.

Sunak's surprise decision to call a summer election, several months earlier than most people expected, was intended partly to catch the opposition unprepared.

But it's the Conservatives who have seemed off-balance from the moment Sunak stood outside 10 Downing St. in the rain on May 22 to announce the start of the campaign.

The Conservatives were already on the defensive after jettisoning two prime ministers without an election in quick succession in 2022: first Boris Johnson, felled by scandals, then Liz Truss, who rocked the economy with drastic tax-slashing plans and lasted just seven weeks in office.

The party's prospects worsened last week when populist firebrand Nigel Farage announced that he would run for Parliament at the helm of the right-wing party Reform U.K., vowing to be a "bloody nuisance" to the established parties.

While Reform, with its anti-establishment and anti-immigration rhetoric, is aiming to attract disaffected voters from both Conservatives and Labour, it's likely to take more votes from Sunak's party.

"The intervention of Farage has made it even less likely that Rishi Sunak will remain in Downing Street than was already the case — minimal though those prospects were," said John Curtice, professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde.

Sunak then flew home early from commemorations in France of the 80th anniversary of D-Day so he could resume campaigning. The photos of centenarian World War II veterans and an array of world leaders including U.S. President Joe Biden attending the solemn ceremony on Omaha Beach without him were a publicity nightmare.

Sunak quickly realized his error and apologized.

Paul Goodman, a former Conservative lawmaker who is now a member of the House of Lords, said the irony is that apart from the D-Day gaffe, "the Conservatives have run a perfectly decent, conventional campaign," but have little to show for it.

"They've launched lots of policies, they've had some hits on Labour," he said. "Rishi Sunak actually did pretty well in the debate (against Starmer) last week. ... All of this appears to have made no difference at all."

Labour, eyeing a return to power after 14 years in opposition, is running a cautious campaign centered on the single word "change." Starmer's core message — which dismays some in his left-of-center party — is that he has transformed Labour from its high-taxing, big-spending days into a party of the stable center.

"Politics is a relative business," said Philip Cowley, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London. "You don't have to be liked, you just have to be more popular than the other guy. And that's what the Labour Party by and large are managing to pull off."

While opinion polls giving Labour a double-digit lead may change, Curtice, one of Britain's leading polling experts, said Sunak was facing a steep mountain to climb even before he called the election.

"Arguably the Tories' days were numbered the moment that Liz Truss fouled up," he said. "Because no government that has presided over a market crisis has survived at the ballot box."

## **South Korean troops fired warning shots after North Korean soldiers briefly crossed land border**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean soldiers fired warning shots after North Korean troops briefly violated the tense border earlier this week, South Korea's military said Tuesday, as the rivals are embroiled in Cold War-style campaigns like balloon launches and propaganda broadcasts.

Bloodshed and violent confrontations have occasionally occurred at the Koreas' heavily fortified border, called the Demilitarized Zone. While Sunday's incident happened amid simmering tensions between the two Koreas, observers say it won't likely develop into another source of animosity as South Korea believes the North Koreans didn't deliberately commit the border intrusion and North Korea also didn't return fire.

At 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, some North Korean soldiers who were engaged in unspecified work on the northern side of the border crossed the military demarcation line that bisects the two countries, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

Those North Korean soldiers carrying construction tools — some of them armed — immediately returned to their territory after South Korea's military fired warning shots and issued warning broadcasts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. It said North Korea had not conducted any other suspicious activities.

South Korea's military has assessed that the North Korean soldiers didn't appear to have intentionally crossed the border because the site is a wooded area and MDL signs there weren't clearly visible, Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesperson Lee Sung Joon told reporters.

Lee gave no further details. But South Korean media reports said that about 20-30 North Korean soldiers had entered South Korean territory about 50 meters (165 feet) after they likely lost their way. The reports

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said most of the North Korean soldiers were carrying pickaxes and other construction tools.

The 248-kilometer (155-mile) -long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) -wide DMZ is the world's most heavily armed border. An estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the border, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides. It's a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

On Sunday, South Korea resumed anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts from its border loudspeakers in response to the North's recent launches of balloons carrying manure and rubbish across the border. South Korea said North Korea has installed its own border loudspeakers in response but hasn't turned them on yet.

North Korea has said its balloon campaign was in response to South Korean activists' launches of their own balloons to drop propaganda leaflets critical of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule, USB sticks with K-pop songs and South Korean drama shows, and other items in North Korea.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its political system as most of its 26 million people have no official access to foreign news. On Sunday night, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, warned of "a new response" if South Korea continued its loudspeaker broadcasts and refused to stop civilian leafletting campaigns.

The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons — both Cold War-style psychological warfare — have deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions have remained stalled for years.

## These candidates who won seats in the European Parliament this week aren't who you might expect

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — He has no political experience. No high-profile endorsements. No party affiliation.

What Fidias Panayiotou does have are 2.6 million followers on YouTube and more on TikTok. And now he has won a seat in the European Parliament representing Cyprus, one of several unusual candidates who launched improbable campaigns only to snag membership in the 720-seat legislature.

"I wasn't planning on voting, but since I've been seeing you on TikTok, I'll vote for you," said a driver Panayiotou stops, interviews and posts about.

Social media played an outsized role in the victories of a few candidates, prompting chatter in the political classes about its apparent role as an equalizer for unknown hopefuls as voters in dozens of democracies go to the polls this year, including in Britain, France and the United States.

Voters in the parliament's 27 countries in recent days also elected candidates who are in prison, have been kicked out of their delegation and withdrew from the election only to win seats, anyway.

Here's a closer look at unusual candidates-turned-MEPs — members of the European Parliament, representing some 400 million eligible voters.

CyprusPanayiotou's initial claim to fame was a hug he gave to billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, plus an assortment of humorous videos. His election, fueled only by his popularity on social media posts, shook up the island nation's political class in what many saw as a snub to deep-rooted party culture.

The 24-year-old who goes only by his first name, Fidias, won almost a fifth of the votes in Sunday's election, placing him third behind traditional party candidates of the center-right DISY party and the communist-rooted AKEL. It's a first in a country where the mighty political parties have long earned iron-clad loyalty by meting out favors.

AKEL Secretary-General Stefanos Stefanou lamented the outcome, which he called a "new reality in which citizens opt for non-politics as a political choice" to register their disenchantment with the country's political culture.

SpainArmed with a pair of social media accounts and staunch anti-immigrant discourse, a social media influencer rocked Spain's far right by snatching up three of the country's 61 seats in the European Parliament.

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The driver was a national-populist figure known by the pen name of Alvisé Pérez, 34, founder of the "Party is Over" party. The 34-year-old was completely unknown to Spaniards outside the tight internet circles of the country's far-right until election eve.

Now he'll take along two allies to fill the seats he has won in the powerful European legislature that meets in Strasbourg, France and Brussels.

Pérez celebrated with some loud supporters in front of a backdrop covered with his party's unorthodox logo: a cartoon drawing of a squirrel wearing a Guy Fawkes mask popularized by the 2005 movie "V for Vendetta." Fawkes is the best-known member of the foiled 1605 plot to blow up the British Parliament and has since been associated with protest movements.

"The party is over because, I am sad to say, Spain has become a party for criminals. Spain has become a party for the corrupt, mercenaries, pedophiles and rapists," Alvisé told the hooting crowd.

"The Party Is Over" won over 4% of the ballots cast in Spain and pulled in 800,000 votes. It matched the three seats won by other established parties, including the junior member of Spain's leftist coalition government. Spain's far-right Vox party scored six seats on Monday, doubling its 2019 share, but it would have likely done better if Alvisé had not launched his rogue effort.

Germany Maximilian Krah, the top candidate for Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany, was kicked out of his delegation for a series of campaign scandals — and was elected anyway.

The 47-year-old MEP since 2019 announced Monday on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the newly elected lawmakers from his party voted to exclude him from their group.

"I think this is wrong and sends a devastating signal to our voters, especially our young voters," Krah said.

The Alternative for Germany, or AfD, finished second in Germany with 15.9% of the votes. That's better than its showing of 11% in 2019, but still some way short of its poll ratings at the beginning of the year. The party has seen a string of setbacks since then, including scandals surrounding Krah and the party's other top candidate for the European Parliament, Petr Bystron.

Krah, who works at a law firm and lives in the eastern German city of Dresden, was under scrutiny after authorities in Brussels searched his offices at the European Parliament in connection with an assistant who was arrested last month on suspicion of spying for China. German media have also alleged that he, as well as Bystron, has close links to Russia.

Last month, Krah raised the ire of his party and beyond when he told an Italian newspaper that not all members of the Nazis' elite SS unit, which was involved in major war crimes during World War II, were war criminals. The party said at the time that his missteps had led to "massive damage" and that he would resign from its board. Krah tried to downplay the decision.

"It's not the end of the world," he said.

Greece A jailed politician won one of seven European Parliament seats earned by Greece's governing conservative New Democracy party.

Fredi Beleris, a member of Albania's ethnic Greek minority who has dual citizenship, had been elected mayor of the Albanian town of Himare last year. But he was never sworn in because he was arrested on charges and sentenced to two years beginning in March.

Beleris has denied the charges, and allies have described his detention as politically motivated.

Italy Italian activist Ilaria Salis, 40, was elected to the European Parliament as a candidate from the Green and Left Alliance (Italian acronym AVS) from house arrest in Hungary, where she is on trial and charged with assaulting far-right demonstrators.

More than 170,000 voters wrote Salis' name in on the ballot in a bid to bring her home from Hungary, where she has been detained for a year and four months.

"She can't believe it. We need to complete the job, and do everything possible to bring her home as soon as possible," said Angelo Bonelli, spokesman for the European Greens and lawmaker for the AVS party.

Salis became a cause célèbre in Italy after images emerged of her handcuffed and chained in a Hungarian courtroom.

Poland Two candidates from the opposition Law and Justice party won seats despite their previous convictions on abuse of power charges.

Former Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski, 54, and his former deputy, Maciej Wasik, 58, were briefly imprisoned earlier this year before being pardoned by President Andrzej Duda, who is aligned with the conservative party.

A third, Grzegorz Braun of the far-right, anti-Ukraine Confederation party, won a seat after extinguishing candles on a menorah that were lit for the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah in the halls of the Polish Parliament in December.

## **A growing Filipino diaspora means plenty of celebration worldwide for Philippine Independence Day**

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

In the Philippines — where Spanish and later U.S. colonial rule persisted for nearly four centuries — June 12 is the real Independence Day. That date in 1898 was the pivotal moment when the island nation first made a bold move for autonomy.

Ahead of this year's holiday in Manila, the nation's capital, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called on Filipinos in a video message to display the country's flag everywhere "as we continue to fight for independence. Independence in different aspects of our being Filipinos, but more than this independence in our territory, our sovereignty."

Since 2023, the Philippines has faced increasingly tense territorial confrontations with Beijing in the South China Sea.

The much-awaited annual celebration would be festive with an array of activities, which started Monday at the capital's historic Rizal Park, Marcos said. There's a bazaar along with government stalls offering services to the public. The festivities include a cooking competition, a chili pepper-eating contest, free showing of movies about Filipino heroes, free nightly concerts and an obstacle-course race. A parade of 22 floats representing different provinces will be staged on Independence Day to be capped by a musical concert, he said.

The revelry surrounding Philippine Independence Day stretches far beyond the Southeast Asia archipelago, from the United Kingdom to the United Arab Emirates. Millions of Filipinos across cities in the U.S., Europe and Australia will be able to find parades, street fairs, galas and other gatherings close to home. Some are even flying in well-known talent from the Philippines. The occasion's growing reach and inclusive ethos demonstrate how much the Filipino diaspora continues to assert cultural pride and flourish around the globe.

HistoricalThe fight for independence dates back to 1565 when Spain colonized the Philippines, naming it for King Philip II. It wasn't until 1896 though that talk of revolution catalyzed action. Andrés Bonifacio, a leader of the Katipunan, a brotherhood of anti-Spain revolutionaries, and others tore up their "cedulas," residential tax certificates for people considered Spanish subjects.

"It's like tearing your passport or whatever identifies you as a citizen of a nation," said Richard Chu, a history professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst who was born in the Philippines. "So, they tore that up symbolically as a break and declared independence — or at least (were) fighting for independence from Spain."

Emilio Aguinaldo, also a member of the Katipunan, saw an opportunity for liberation when the U.S. declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898, over its treatment of Cuba. On June 12, he proclaimed independence and a year later, even became the first president of the Philippine Republic. But, the U.S. refused to recognize the country as a stand-alone territory, igniting the Philippine-American War, which lasted until April 1902.

78 years of independenceThe Philippines finally became independent on July 4, 1946. So, the Fourth of July was the traditional holiday until President Diosdado Macapagal changed it in 1964 to June 12.

As a child in the '70s, Chu remembers watching preparations in Rizal Park. Festivities started in the morning with the senior Marcos raising the flag as cabinet and military officers looked on. The parade was more of a "military parade followed by people from different government agencies."



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"It's supposed to be a festive celebration and every other city or major town would have its own Independence Day celebrations," Chu said.

Independence Day may evoke mixed feelings for some who don't have the same nationalist fervor or agree with its government's policies. This is one reason Chu doesn't feel an urgent need to mark the holiday. At the same time, he likes being with other Filipinos in his community.

"If I lived in Boston, I probably would participate just because of the festivities, like the food vendors and maybe some popular Filipino American scenery," Chu said. "I am proud to be Filipino for sure."

Festivities in the U.S. New York City held a parade and a street fair along Madison Avenue on June 2. The same weekend in Seattle there was a two-day Pagdiriwang Philippine Festival. There have been large fiestas and smaller picnics in Texas, California and Colorado, among other states.

In Phoenix, the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team is holding its first-ever Filipino Heritage Celebration at Tuesday's game against the Los Angeles Angels.

Amilyn Pierce, who is part Filipino and the Diamondbacks' vice-president of government affairs, credits a team business consultant who is also Filipino, Hunter Fitton, with pitching the Independence Day event. He pointed out high presence of Filipinos in the state. He also recruited local Filipino dance groups and food trucks. Diamondbacks caps with the Philippines flag also sold out.

"I was surprised to find that out that there was such a huge Filipino community," Pierce said. "I just really love that the team has made it a priority to reach outside of maybe what someone might think is the normal or the stereotypical demographic."

Celebrations in Europe Across countries in Europe, there are large gatherings with longstanding reputations. Given that the Filipino diaspora is one of the largest diaspora populations in the world, it's not surprising how many celebrations there are, said Chu, the Amherst professor.

In the Netherlands, the Kalayann Fiesta Foundation Netherlands held an Independence Day Picnic over the weekend. Ice Seguerra, a popular Filipino actor and singer-songwriter who is a transgender man, was the guest performer.

Journey Torres, who immigrated to the Netherlands from the Philippines in 1999 when he was 8, recalls going to a Philippine Independence Day event in Amsterdam two years later. He described it as having the atmosphere of a small "family barbecue party." There weren't many other Filipinos then. But by the 2010s, jobs and cultural exchange programs brought more. The event gained more notoriety with Filipinos coming from Germany and Belgium.

"Now there are also busses that goes from Belgium to the Netherlands," Torres said. "I believe it's one of the first Philippine Independence Day celebrations that was organized here in mainland Europe."

The Philippine Independence Day Association in Rome has been organizing events for over 15 years in hotels, parks and piazzas. They seem to keep getting bigger and drawing Filipinos from all over Italy, said Jaiane Morales, the event's programming deputy.

This year's daylong fete, which was Sunday, took place inside a concert hall but with Pinoy food stalls outside that, among other fare, served the traditional Filipino ice cream dessert of halo halo as well as the Italian classic gelato. The goal is to have a feast of food and "Filipiniana costumes," Morales said.

The theme of the event's talent show, "Balik Saya" or "returning joy," is meant to foster meaningful connection abroad. Millions of Filipinos have departed the Philippines, a leading source of global labor, in search of jobs and better opportunities to earn and provide for loved ones they've left behind.

"If they are missing their families at home, then this is one way of easing that loneliness," Morales said.

## Attraction starring Disney's first Black princess replaces ride based on film many viewed as racist

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A new attraction starring the first Black Disney princess is opening at the company's U.S. theme park resorts, and some Disney followers see it as a fitting replacement to a former ride based on a movie that contained racist tropes.

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The new theme park attraction updates Tiana's storyline from the 2009 animated film, "The Princess and the Frog" and is opening this year in the space previously occupied by Splash Mountain. The water ride had been themed to "Song of the South," a 1946 Disney movie filled with racist clichés about African Americans and plantation life.

Tiana's Bayou Adventure keeps Splash Mountain's DNA as a log-flume ride, but it's infused with music, scenery and animatronic characters inspired by the film set in 1920s New Orleans. It opens to the public later this month at Walt Disney World in Florida and at Disneyland in California later this year.

"For little Black girls, Tiana has meant a lot. When a little child can see somebody who looks like them, that matters," said Neal Lester, an English professor at Arizona State University, who has written about Tiana.

Disney's announcement that it would transform its longstanding Splash Mountain ride into Tiana's Bayou Adventure was made in June 2020 following the social justice protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody. At the time, Disney said the change had already been in the works. But it came as companies across the U.S. were reconsidering or renaming decades-old brands amid worldwide protests.

The "Song of the South" film is a mix of live action, cartoons and music featuring an older Black man who works at a plantation and tells fables about talking animals to a white city boy. The film has been criticized for its racist stereotypes, and hasn't been released in theaters in decades and isn't available on the company's streaming service Disney+.

Disney has been criticized for racist tropes in films made in earlier decades. The crow characters from the 1941 film, "Dumbo" and the King Louie character from 1967's "The Jungle Book" were viewed as African American caricatures. The depiction of Native Americans in the 1953 movie, "Peter Pan," and the Siamese cats — often deemed as Asian stereotypes — from the 1955 film, "Lady and the Tramp," also have been derided.

Not everyone is sold on the belief that opening a ride based on Tiana's story solves Disney's past problematic racial depictions.

By refurbishing Splash Mountain into Tiana's Bayou Adventure instead of dismantling the attraction completely, Disney has linked "Song of the South" with "The Princess and the Frog." Both are fantasies that are silent, for the most part, on the racial realities of the segregated eras they depict, said Katie Kapurch, an English professor at Texas State University who has written widely about Disney.

"We might see the impulse to replace rather than dismantle or build anew as a metaphor for structural racism, too," Kapurch said. "Again, this is unintentional on Disney's part, but the observation gets to the heart of how Disney reflects America back to itself."

Imagineers who design the Disney rides are always attempting to look at the attractions with fresh eyes and ways to tell new stories "so that everybody feels included," said Carmen Smith, a senior vice president for Disney Parks, Experiences and Products.

"We never want to perpetuate stereotypes or misconceptions," Smith said Monday. "Our intention is to tell great stories."

It's also important for the Imagineers to tell a variety of stories for its global audience, said Charita Carter, a senior creative producer at Walt Disney Imagineering.

"Society does change, and we develop different sensibilities," Carter said. "We focus our stories differently depending what our society needs."

The transformation from Splash Mountain to Tiana's Bayou Adventure is one of several recalibrations at the entertainment giant's theme parks for rides whose storylines are considered antiquated or offensive.

In 2021, Disney announced it would remodel Jungle Cruise, one of the original Disney parks' rides, which had been criticized in years past for being racially insensitive because of its depiction of animatronic Indigenous people as savages or headhunters. Three years before that, Disney eliminated a "Bride Auction" scene, deemed offensive since it depicted women lining up for auction, from its "Pirates of the Caribbean" ride.

It's a positive step for Disney to have a ride based on a character from a background not seen in previ-

ous versions of Disney princesses replacing an attraction from a film steeped in racist tropes since “representation matters,” Lester said.

“Disney is first and foremost about money and getting people into the park, and you can make money, still have representation and be aware of social justice history and make everyone feel like they belong there,” Lester said.

## **A brew of ancient coca is Bolivia’s buzzy new beer. But it’s unclear if the world will buy in**

By PAOLA FLORES Associated Press

TRINIDAD PAMPA, Bolivia (AP) — If it were anywhere else in South America, the nondescript house with buckets of coca leaves soaking in liquid could be mistaken for a clandestine cocaine lab.

But this is La Paz, Bolivia, and the fruity aroma of coca steeping in barrels signals that you’ve arrived at the government-authorized El Viejo Roble distillery, which for years has been making liquor from coca leaves and is now gearing up to launch a new coca-infused beer.

It remains questionable whether Bolivia can persuade the world to accept the hardy green leaf best known beyond its borders as the main ingredient of cocaine. But a recent landmark decision by the World Health Organization to study coca’s non-narcotic benefits has rekindled the old hopes of Bolivian farmers, makers and sellers.

“Exporting is a desire that my people and I have had since I was a child,” said Lizzette Torrez, leader of one of Bolivia’s main coca-grower unions.

Within Bolivia, the world’s third-biggest producer of the coca leaf, and of cocaine, the ancient leaf has inspired spiritual rituals among Indigenous communities for generations — and more recently, among the well-heeled, a deluge of coca-related products, including El Viejo Roble’s new star \$2 brew.

“Beer can be bitter, but with the sweet touch that we give it with coca makes it is more palatable,” manager Adrián Álvarez said from the distillery, where workers bottled the brew that will soon join El Viejo Roble’s coca-flavored vodka and rum, old classics they sell to the government and visitors.

The reach of Álvarez’s beverages, along with other coca-infused products, remains limited to artisanal fairs in Bolivia and Peru, countries where the leaf is legal — so as long as it is not used to make cocaine. As for the rest of the world, a United Nations convention classifies coca leaf as a narcotic and imposes a blanket prohibition on drugs.

Bolivia’s government is reviving its decadeslong push not only to destigmatize the plant and make it legal to export but also to create a global market for coca liquor, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, baking flour and more. Its efforts received a major boost last fall when WHO announced it would launch a scientific review of the coca leaf, the first step in a lengthy process to decriminalize the leaf worldwide.

“The procedures have been initiated for the first time in history,” Juan Carlos Alurralde, general secretary of Bolivia’s vice presidency, told the AP. “The leaf will be seriously investigated.”

The last time that WHO undertook a study of the coca leaf was in 1992, but detailed findings were never made public.

Officials from Colombia and Bolivia unveiled the research proposal alongside WHO representatives in Vienna earlier this spring. They have until October, when a committee meeting on the study will kick off in Geneva, to submit research about coca’s medicinal and nutritional properties.

The study will also consider Bolivia’s efforts to commercialize coca, determining the maximum amount of the cocaine alkaloid that coca products could contain on the world market.

“Experts have to evaluate whether it results in dependency,” Alurralde said.

Nearly 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of La Paz, where the high-altitude bush paints the hills of Trinidad Pampa green, coca growers, known as “cocaleros,” welcomed news of the WHO review. For them, chewing coca leaves is a daily habit likened to drinking coffee.

“It helps me to harvest without fatigue and support my family,” said farmer Juan de Dios Cocarico, stuffing a wad of coca into his mouth as he ripped leaves off the stalk.

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Global decriminalization, coccaleros say, would bring more export revenues as an economic crisis looms due to the rapid depletion of Bolivia's foreign-exchange reserves.

"This is a coca-growing town that lives off coca," said Frido Duran, a leader of coca growers in Yungas, a region northeast of La Paz. "We are convinced that this (WHO) study will vindicate all that our grandparents taught us."

Across Bolivia, the leaf sustains 70,000 coccaleros and generates some \$279 million each year as the farmers sell the foliage in bulk to be chewed as a mild stimulant, incorporated into religious ceremonies or transformed into goods marketed as a modern-day miracle cure that relieves altitude sickness, boosts stamina and dulls hunger.

For Bolivia, coccaleros are largely subsistence farmers farmers who say they have few viable crop options.

For the United States and other Western countries that long have blocked Bolivia's attempts to decriminalize the leaf, coccaleros are maligned as the cause of many of the world's drug problems.

"With each iteration of U.S. policy the coca cultivators of Bolivia were forced into whatever policy guideline was good for U.S. bureaucracy," said Kathryn Ledebur, director of the Andean Information Network, a Bolivia-based research group. "During the war on drugs, coca farmers were drug traffickers, then narco-terrorists."

Bolivia's focus on removing the leaf from the U.N. blacklist stems from its skepticism about coca-eradication schemes, which authorities say have brought little more than violence since then-U.S. President Richard Nixon launched his "war on drugs" in 1971.

Unable to force coccaleros to sacrifice their meager livelihoods by planting substitute crops, Bolivian authorities started licensing farmers to grow coca instead.

In requesting the study of the coca plant at the U.N., President Luis Arce urged nations to seize "a new opportunity to correct this grave historical error."

Washington said it was open to WHO's study, but signaled it wasn't supporting legalization.

A legal coca leaf market, said the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy, doesn't keep illegal ones from sprouting up. In a statement responding to questions from The Associated Press, the agency cited U.S. government figures showing that as coca cultivation in Bolivia doubled from 2006 to 2021, illicit cocaine production also surged by 175%.

As of 2022, the U.N. said Bolivia had 29,900 hectares (115 square miles) of coca crop, of which only 22,000 were legal.

Former President Evo Morales, a longtime leader of coca growers' unions who famously threw the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency out of Bolivia in 2009, used his office to develop Bolivia's state-regulated coca market and lobby the U.N. to lift its ban.

The leftist icon clinched a diplomatic victory in 2013 when the U.N. agreed to let Bolivia rejoin its global narcotic drug treaty with a carve-out for traditional uses of coca leaves.

But Morales' push for a WHO study ended when violent protests rocked Bolivia in 2019, leading to his resignation and exile after 14 years in power.

## **Panthers now 2 wins from the Stanley Cup, top Oilers 4-1 for 2-0 lead in title series**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writer

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl knocked Florida's Aleksander Barkov out of the game. The Panthers made sure they responded by landing the bigger blow.

And the Stanley Cup Final took a heated turn Monday night.

Evan Rodrigues had a pair of third-period goals, Niko Mikkola and Aaron Ekblad also scored and the Panthers used yet another airtight finishing kick to pull away and beat the Oilers 4-1 for a 2-0 lead in the Stanley Cup Final.

Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 18 shots for Florida, which was 1-8 all-time in Cup final games before this

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series started — and now is two wins away from capturing its first championship. Score through two games: Florida 7, Edmonton 1.

"A six-man job against the best players in the world," Ekblad said.

But the win came with a price for Florida as the Panthers lost Barkov, their captain when Edmonton forward Draisaitl launched toward him midway through the third period and hit him in the head. Barkov remained down for some time, needed help getting to the bench and went down the tunnel for the Florida locker room for further evaluation.

Florida coach Paul Maurice offered no update on Barkov's condition, and was far more tight-lipped than he tends to be after wins.

"This isn't The Oprah Winfrey Show," Maurice said of the Barkov hit. "My feelings don't matter."

Mattias Ekholm scored and Stuart Skinner stopped 25 shots for the Oilers, who now have to buck some serious history.

Edmonton has only successfully rallied from a 2-0 deficit in a best-of-seven series once — against San Jose in Round 2 of the 2006 playoffs. And teams that start the Stanley Cup Final down 2-0 have come back to win only five times in 54 previous situations.

"I think we feel that we came here and played well enough that we should have a split," Oilers coach Kris Knoblauch said. "It doesn't always happen."

The series resumes with Game 3 in Edmonton on Thursday night.

"We can certainly be better," Draisaitl said. "It starts with me. ... I certainly have a lot more to give. Not my best tonight. Obviously, owning that."

Draisaitl was given only a minor penalty for roughing on the hit that knocked Barkov from the game. Rodrigues got a tip-in goal to make it 3-1, the first power-play score Edmonton allowed in its last 34 times being down a man.

Connor McDavid had a chance to get Edmonton within one on a breakaway with about 6 minutes left. He got stopped by Bobrovsky, and then he and Matthew Tkachuk tussled a bit along the boards after the play — the Panthers still steaming over the hit on Barkov.

"I have no response or comment on that," Tkachuk said when asked what he thought of Draisaitl's hit on Barkov, and if he had a level of concern that Florida's captain could miss time.

Said McDavid of the hit: "I thought it was part of the game."

And added Ekblad: "We're hoping he'll be fine."

Emotions were high all night. Edmonton's Warren Foegele was ejected in the first period for a knee-on-knee hit that knocked Florida's Eetu Luostarinen from the game briefly; that ejection, plus an injury to Oilers defenseman Darnell Nurse left them with only 11 forwards and five defensemen for much of the game.

Rodrigues scored early in the third off a turnover for a 2-1 lead, setting the tone for yet another Florida comeback. The Panthers — who trailed 1-0 after 20 minutes — are now an NHL-best 5-2 when trailing after one period in these playoffs.

Ekblad sealed it with an empty-netter with 2:28 left.

"It's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to be difficult," McDavid said. "I'm excited to see what our group's made of."

Just like Game 1, one team cashed in on its first shot. It was Florida on Saturday, and Edmonton this time.

There wasn't much to it: Ekholm skated nearly the full length of the ice with the teams playing 4-on-4, taking a harmless-looking shot that got between Bobrovsky's leg pads and squirted into the back of the net. McDavid — playing in the building where he got drafted in 2015 — got one of the assists on the goal, his 27th assist of this postseason.

Midway through the second, the Panthers knotted it up. Mikkola had two shots on a shift; one was at the wrong net, and the other more than atoned for that near-blunder.

Moments after he inadvertently wheeled a backhand toward Bobrovsky — who was alert enough to save his teammate from the embarrassment of an own goal — Mikkola handled a delivery from Anton Lundell and blasted it past Skinner to pull Florida into a 1-1 tie.

"Bob was awake," Mikkola said.

Shots were 22-7 Florida after 40 minutes, the Oilers — who led the league in shots on goal this season — being held to a season-low entering the third. Bobrovsky was tested a ton more in the third than he was in the first two periods, but was up to the task again and yielded two goals or fewer for the 12th time in his last 13 games.

And Florida, for the first time, is two wins from the Cup.

"It's special," Rodrigues said. "Trying to embrace it. Trying to stay in the moment. That's two big wins for our team, but I think we've already turned the page and are getting ready for Game 3."

## **With 100M birds dead, poultry industry could serve as example as dairy farmers confront bird flu**

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — As the U.S. dairy industry confronts a bird flu outbreak, with cases reported at dozens of farms and the disease spreading to people, the egg industry could serve as an example of how to slow the disease but also shows how difficult it can be to eradicate the virus.

There have been earlier bird flu outbreaks in the U.S., but the current one started in February 2022 and has forced the slaughter of nearly 100 million chickens and turkeys. Hot spots still occur, but their frequency has dropped in part because of biosecurity efforts at farms and a coordinated approach between companies and agricultural officials, experts say.

Dairy farmers could try to implement similar safeguards, but the vast differences between the animals and the industries limit what lessons can be learned and applied.

How can a 1,500-pound cow and a 5-pound chicken have the same illness? It's commonly called bird flu because the disease is largely spread by wild birds that can survive infections. Many mammals have caught the illness too, including sea lions and skunks.

Animals can be infected by eating an infected bird or by being exposed to environments where the virus is present. That said, there are big differences in how cows and chickens have fared after getting infected.

Bird flu is typically fatal to chickens and turkeys within days of an infection, leading to immediate mass killings of birds. That's not true for cows.

Dairies in several states have reported having to kill infected animals because symptoms continued to linger and their milk production didn't recover, but that's not the norm, said Russ Daly, an extension veterinarian at South Dakota State University.

He said it appears that bird flu isn't usually fatal to cows but that an infected animal can be more vulnerable to other ailments typically found in dairies, such as bacterial pneumonia and udder infections.

What has the egg industry done to protect chickens? Egg operators have become clean freaks.

To prevent disease from spreading, egg producers require workers to shower and change into clean clothes before they enter a barn and shower again when they leave. They also frequently wash trucks and spray tires with solutions to kill off virus remnants.

Many egg operations even use lasers and install special fencing to discourage wild birds from stopping by for a visit.

"Gone is the day of the scarecrow," said Emily Metz, president of the American Egg Board.

Without these efforts, the current outbreak would be much worse, said Jada Thompson, a University of Arkansas agriculture business professor. Still, maintaining such vigilance is difficult, even if the cost of allowing disease into an operation is so high, she said.

Chickens raised for meat, known as broilers, also have been infected with bird flu but such cases are less common. In part, that's because broiler chickens are killed when they're only 6 to 8 weeks old, so they have less time to get infected.

Can the same be done to protect cows and dairy workers? Yes and no.

Dairies can certainly reduce the spread of disease by limiting access to barns, so people and equipment don't bring in the virus from elsewhere. Workers could also wear eye protection, aprons and gloves to try

to protect themselves, but there's no way around it: Big animals are messy.

"The parlor is a warm, humid place with lots of liquid flying around, whether it's urine, feces, water because they're spraying off areas. Cows might kick off a milk machine so you get milk splatter," said Keith Poulsen, director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Laboratory.

Dairies also don't have time or staff to disinfect milking equipment between animals, so equipment could become contaminated. Pasteurization kills bacteria and viruses in milk, making it safe for people to drink.

Poulsen said the dairy industry could follow a path laid by the poultry and pork industries and establish more formal, better funded research organizations so it could respond more quickly to problems like bird flu — or avoid them altogether.

The dairy industry also could tamp down disease spread by limiting the movement of lactating cows between states, Poulsen said.

Are there new efforts to fight the virus? The U.S. Department of Agriculture will soon begin testing a vaccine that could be given to calves, offering the animals protection and also reducing the chance of worker illnesses.

The egg industry also is hopeful researchers can develop vaccines for poultry that could be quick, inexpensive and effective. Workers can't give shots to the millions of hens that might need a vaccine, but industry officials hope a vaccine could be distributed in the water the birds drink, in the pellets they eat or even before birds hatch from their eggs.

Efforts to develop vaccines have become even more important now that the disease has spread to dairy cows and even a few people, Thompson said.

"Part of what is being developed right now is, what way can we vaccinate them that is cost-effective and disease resistant?" Thompson said.

## **Biden and gun-control advocates want to flip an issue long dominated by the NRA**

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Groups pushing tighter gun laws have been building political muscle through multiple elections, boosted by the outcry following mass shootings at schools and other public places, to say nothing of the nation's daily gun violence.

Now, gun-control advocates and many Democrats see additional openings created by hardline positions of the gun lobby and their most influential champion, former President Donald Trump. They also point to controversies surrounding the National Rifle Association, which has undergone leadership shuffles and membership declines after a key former executive was found to have expensed private jet flights and accepted vacations from group vendors.

"It is a false choice to suggest that you have to be in favor of the Second Amendment or you want to take everyone's guns away," Vice President Kamala Harris said Friday in Maryland, where she spoke as part of a series of White House and campaign events focused on gun violence. President Joe Biden will speak Tuesday at a conference hosted by Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund.

Biden's campaign says gun control could be a motivating issue for suburban college-educated women who may be decisive in several key battlegrounds this fall. The campaign and its allies have already circulated clips of Trump saying, "We have to get over it," after an Iowa school shooting in January and then telling NRA members in May that he "did nothing" on guns during his presidency.

There have been 15 mass killings so far in 2024, according to data tracked by The Associated Press. A mass killing is defined as an attack in which four or more people have died, not including the perpetrator, within a 24-hour period.

Asked for comment, the Trump campaign pointed to the former president's previous statements promising no new gun regulations if he returns to the White House.

Trump has spoken twice this year at NRA events and was endorsed by the group in May. He alleged that Biden "has a 40-year record of trying to rip firearms out of the hands of law-abiding citizens." His campaign

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and the Republican National Committee also announced the creation of a new "Gun Owners for Trump" coalition that includes gun-rights activists and those who work in the firearms industry.

About 7 in 10 college-educated women who voted in the 2022 midterm elections supported stricter gun control laws, although less than 1 in 10 named it as the top problem facing the country, according to AP VoteCast, a wide-ranging survey of voters.

An AP-NORC poll conducted in August 2023 found that about 6 in 10 independent voters said they wanted stricter gun laws. Only about one-third of Republicans wanted more expansive gun legislation while about 9 in 10 Democrats were in support.

Biden White House gets high marks from gun-control advocates Biden and Harris highlight their action on gun policy, notably the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022, a compromise brokered after a mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. The law expanded background checks for the youngest gun buyers, tried to make it harder for domestic abusers to obtain weapons and allocated billions of dollars to programs intended to curb gun violence.

It is the most sweeping federal gun legislation since a ban on certain semi-automatic weapons was signed in 1994; that ban expired a decade later.

Biden also reenergized the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and he's the first president to establish a White House office devoted to preventing gun violence.

Angela Ferrell-Zabala, executive director of Moms Demand Action, called the Biden White House "the strongest administration we've ever seen on this issue."

Going beyond the 2022 law to enforce background checks on all potential gun buyers earned bipartisan support, according to AP VoteCast data, with about 9 in 10 Democrats and about 7 in 10 Republicans in favor. A majority of U.S. adults wanted a nationwide ban on the sale of AR-15-style rifles, which can rapidly fire many rounds and are routinely used in mass shootings.

On Thursday, Harris helped lead a gathering of health care leaders that West Wing aides highlighted as the first such White House summit to discuss guns as a public health crisis. On Friday, she discussed guns with Students for Biden, continuing a theme of her recent speeches on college campuses around the country.

Gun-control advocates cite potentially wider reach that extends across several parts of Democrats' coalition in recent elections: parents of schoolchildren, younger voters who grew up in an era of school shootings and safety drills, and Black and Hispanic voters. Biden's approval among some of these groups has fallen during his term in the White House.

"The political calculus has changed so dramatically on this issue in a relatively short period of time," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety. Legislating on guns, he said, was "an issue that elected officials once ran away from and now they run toward."

A still-powerful NRA The NRA did not respond to a request for comment. It still remains a force in Republican politics despite a series of headwinds. Wayne LaPierre, once one of the nation's most powerful lobbyists, was found liable in a New York court for spending NRA funds on himself, ultimately stepping down. NRA membership and income dropped.

Ferrell-Zabala of Moms Demand Action labeled the group as "failing." She said the disarray has pushed some of the most conservative activists to burgeoning groups like Gun Owners of America. Self-described as "the only no-compromise gun lobby in Washington," the group opposes essentially any restriction on gun ownership and possession.

Matthew Lacombe, a Case Western Reserve University professor who studies gun politics, said the NRA's advocacy was a factor in Trump's 2016 victory over Hillary Clinton. Lacombe cautioned that the NRA remains a force and "represents an established base" for Trump.

"It's part of a broader cultural identity" that goes beyond guns, he said, though he added that dynamics in the wider electorate have shifted.

"There was a time when the NRA successfully branded gun-control advocates as the extremists in this debate," Lacombe said. "I don't think most Americans see that idea of gun control as extreme anymore. They see the other side that way."



## Jurors will resume deliberations in federal gun case against President Joe Biden's son Hunter

By RANDALL CHASE, CLAUDIA LAUER, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Jurors will resume deliberations Tuesday in the criminal case against President Joe Biden's son over a gun Hunter Biden bought in 2018 when prosecutors say he was in the throes of a crack cocaine addiction.

Jurors deliberated for less than an hour before leaving the federal courthouse in Delaware Monday afternoon. They are weighing whether Hunter Biden is guilty of three felonies in the case pitting the younger Biden against his father's Justice Department in the middle of the president's reelection campaign.

Prosecutors spent last week using testimony from his ex-wife and former girlfriends, photos of Hunter Biden with drug paraphernalia and other tawdry evidence to make the case that he lied when he checked "no" on the form at the gun shop that asked whether he was "an unlawful user of, or addicted to" drugs.

"He knew he was using drugs. That's what the evidence shows. And he knew he was addicted to drugs. That's what the evidence shows," prosecutor Leo Wise told jurors in his closing argument Monday.

Hunter Biden's substance abuse struggles after the 2015 death of his brother Beau are well-documented. But the defense has argued that he did not consider himself an "addict" when he bought the gun and checked "no" on the form that asked whether he was "an unlawful user" of drugs or addicted to them.

Hunter Biden's lawyers have sought to show he was trying to turn his life around at the time of the gun purchase, having completed a rehabilitation program at the end of August 2018. The defense called three witnesses, including Hunter's daughter Naomi, who told jurors that her father seemed to be improving in the weeks before he bought the gun.

And the defense told jurors that no one actually witnessed Hunter Biden using drugs during the 11 days he had the gun before Beau's widow, Hallie, found it in Hunter's truck and threw it in a trash can. Defense attorney Abbe Lowell suggested that prosecutors were presenting circumstantial evidence like a magician might present a card trick, trying to get jurors to focus on one hand and ignore the other.

"With my last breath in this case, I ask for the only verdict that will hold the prosecutors to what the law requires of them" — a verdict of not guilty, Lowell said in his final pitch to jurors.

But prosecutors have shown jurors text messages sent in the days after the gun purchase in which Hunter Biden told Hallie he was waiting for a dealer and smoking crack. Hallie and Hunter briefly dated after Beau's death. Prosecutors have also said they found cocaine residue on the pouch in which Hallie put the gun before tossing it in a trash can outside an upscale grocery store.

First lady Jill Biden, the president's brother James and other family members watched from the first row of the courtroom as the defense rested its case on Monday without calling Hunter Biden to the witness stand. The first lady has been in court almost every day since the trial began last week.

Before the case went to the jury, the prosecutor urged jurors to focus on the "overwhelming" evidence against Hunter Biden and pay no mind to members of the president's family sitting in the courtroom.

"All of this is not evidence," Wise said, extending his hand and directing the jury to look at the gallery. "People sitting in the gallery are not evidence."

The defense has tried to poke holes in the case by pressing the prosecution's witnesses on their recollection of certain events. Hunter Biden's lawyer told jurors they should consider testimony from Hallie and another ex-girlfriend "with great care and caution," noting their immunity agreements with prosecutors in exchange for their testimony.

The proceedings have played out in the president's home state, where Hunter Biden grew up and where the family is deeply established. Joe Biden spent 36 years as a senator in Delaware, commuting daily to Washington, and Beau Biden was the state's attorney general.

Hunter Biden did not testify but jurors repeatedly heard his voice when prosecutors played audio excerpts of his 2021 memoir "Beautiful Things," in which he talks about hitting bottom after Beau's death, and descending into drugs and alcohol before his eventual sobriety in 2019.

Hunter Biden had hoped last year to resolve a long-running federal investigation into his business dealings under a deal with prosecutors that would have avoided the spectacle of a trial so close to the 2024 election. Under the deal, he would have pleaded guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses and avoided prosecution in the gun case if he stayed out of trouble for two years.

But the deal fell apart after District Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated by Trump, questioned unusual aspects of the proposed agreement, and the lawyers could not resolve the matter.

Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed top investigator David Weiss, Delaware's U.S. attorney, as a special counsel last August, and a month later Hunter Biden was indicted.

Hunter Biden has said he was charged because the Justice Department bowed to pressure from Republicans who argued the Democratic president's son was getting special treatment.

Under that deal, prosecutors would have recommended two years of probation. In the gun case, the three counts carry up to 25 years in prison, though the sentence would ultimately be up to the judge and it's unclear whether she would put him behind bars if he's convicted.

## Americans are split on Biden's student loan work, even those with debt, new AP-NORC poll finds

By COLLIN BINKLEY and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As he campaigns for reelection, President Joe Biden frequently touts his work on student debt, pointing to the millions of people who received cancellation under his watch. Yet relatively few Americans say they're fans of his work on the issue, even among those who have student loans.

Three in 10 U.S. adults say they approve of how Biden has handled the issue of student loan debt, while 4 in 10 disapprove, according to a new poll from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The others are neutral or don't know enough to say.

The outlook wasn't much better for the Democratic president among those responsible for unpaid student loan debt, either for themselves or for a family member: 36% approve, while 34% disapprove.

The poll reveals a deep divide over the issue of student debt relief even as Biden makes it a campaign priority. The president is pressing ahead with a new cancellation plan while he strives to energize young adults and Black and Hispanic Americans — groups that are more likely to prioritize student loan relief but have flagging approval for the president.

After Biden's first attempt at widespread student loan cancellation was struck down by the Supreme Court last year, he proposed a more targeted plan offering relief to certain categories of borrowers. The Biden administration has separately erased student debt for about 4 million people through existing programs.

Asher Marshall was rooting for Biden's first cancellation plan. It would have chipped away at his \$52,000 in student loans. But in hindsight, Marshall says it's clear Biden made a promise he couldn't deliver without going through Congress.

"He suggested something that sounded good to a lot of individuals in this country, but there was no way for it to move forward from the onset," said Marshall, 33, of Jacksonville, Illinois.

Marshall, an independent, still plans to vote for Biden as the "lesser of two evils," but he questions whether cancellation will energize other Black voters, especially since Biden's latest plan helps fewer borrowers than the first one.

Melissa Mata feels let down by the president. The Houston resident has \$14,000 in student loans from a program she never finished, and she could have used the help that Biden promised.

Now she plans to sit out the November election or vote independent.

"They make these promises to get votes, but they don't deliver. So I think for me, I wouldn't trust it," said Mata, 34, a bookkeeper.

Some others say Biden isn't to blame.

Samantha Kempf, a social worker in Howell, Michigan, has \$78,000 in federal student loans from her bachelor's and master's degrees. Kempf, a Democrat, was upset when Biden's initial plan failed, but she

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doesn't hold it against him.

"It was the Supreme Court that shut him down," said Kempf, 32. "I don't blame him for it, because he at least made an attempt to get something approved."

Americans overall had a dimmer view on the Supreme Court's handling of the issue, the poll found: 15% approve of its work on the issue and around one-quarter disapprove.

About 4 in 10 adults think it is extremely or very important for the federal government to provide student debt relief. A similar share say it's not too important or not important at all, with about one-quarter in the middle, saying they believe it's somewhat important.

Younger adults are more likely to prioritize government action on student debt, with about half under 45 saying it's extremely or very important, compared to 3 in 10 older adults who said the same.

Political divisions are even wider, with 15% of Republicans saying it's extremely or very important, compared to 58% of Democrats. The issue has become a rallying point for Republicans, who often say taxpayers shouldn't get burdened with repaying other people's college debt.

Neil Wolf, 49, repaid his student loans for two associate degrees, including a \$23,000 loan he repaid in the 1990s. No one forces students to take out loans, and taxpayers shouldn't be on the hook to repay them, said Wolf, a Republican.

"We give too much away. You give everything away, nobody appreciates what they have," said Wolf, of Denton, North Carolina. "Why should I pay for somebody else's loans?"

Steve Lesyk, a Republican in Gap, Pennsylvania, said he could support cancellation in some cases. It makes sense for people who have racked up big sums of interest or have been paying off loans for decades, he said — two categories targeted in Biden's new plan.

But in general, he opposes cancellation, saying it doesn't do anything to prevent students from getting buried in debt in the first place.

"They're asking people who've never had loans to pay back their loans," said Lesyk, 58, who never had student loans. "This money doesn't just appear out of the sky, it comes from somewhere, and there's so many other things that people need right now."

Biden's new plan would erase some or all debt for several groups: those with so much accrued interest that they owe more than they originally borrowed, those who have been repaying undergraduate loans for at least 20 years, borrowers who went to low-value college programs that leave graduates with large sums of debt compared to their earnings and those who face other kinds of financial hardship.

None of those categories have support from a majority of Americans, the poll found. Just under half support relief for those who have made on-time payments for 20 years, and 44% support it for people who now owe more on their loan than they originally borrowed. About 4 in 10 support it for those who went to an institution that left borrowers with large amounts of debt compared to their incomes or those facing other forms of financial hardship.

For each category, majorities of Democrats approved forgiveness.

Support was also higher among those who are now repaying student debt compared to those who already paid it off. Almost 7 in 10 current borrowers support relief for people who have older loans, compared to half of Americans who previously paid student loans.

The highest support among previous loan holders was for those defrauded by their educational institution at 56%.

## Baltimore shipping channel fully reopens after bridge collapse

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — The main shipping channel into Baltimore's port has fully reopened to its original depth and width following the March 26 collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, which blocked most maritime traffic into the harbor.

Officials announced the full reopening in a news release Monday evening. It comes after a massive cleanup effort as crews removed an estimated 50,000 tons of steel and concrete from the Patapsco River.

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The channel was blocked by wreckage of the fallen bridge, which collapsed after a container ship lost power and crashed into one of its supporting columns, sending six members of a roadwork crew plunging to their deaths. All of the victims were Latino immigrants working an overnight shift to fill potholes on the bridge.

The Port of Baltimore, which processes more cars and farm equipment than any other in the country, was effectively closed for several weeks while the wreckage was removed. Crews were able to reopen portions of the deep-draft channel in phases, restoring some commercial traffic in recent weeks.

On May 20, the wayward cargo ship Dali was refloated and guided back to port. The vessel had been stuck amid the wreckage for almost two months, with a massive steel truss draped across its damaged bow.

After the Dali was moved, crews opened a channel that was 50 feet (15 meters) deep and 400 feet (122 meters) wide. The full federal shipping channel is 700 feet (213 meters) wide, which means two-way traffic can resume, officials said. They said other additional safety requirements have also been lifted because of the increased width.

Thousands of longshoremen, truckers and small business owners have seen their jobs impacted by the collapse, prompting local and state officials to prioritize reopening the port and restoring its traffic to normal capacity in hopes of easing the economic ripple effects.

The announcement Monday means the commerce that depends on the busy port can begin ramping back up.

Officials said a total of 56 federal, state and local agencies participated in the salvage operations, including about 500 specialists from around the world who operated a fleet of 18 barges, 22 tugboats, 13 floating cranes, 10 excavators and four survey boats.

"I cannot overstate how proud I am of our team," said Col. Estee Pinchasin, Baltimore district commander for the Army Corps of Engineers. "It was incredible seeing so many people from different parts of our government, from around our country and all over the world, come together in the Unified Command and accomplish so much in this amount of time."

In a statement Monday, Pinchasin also acknowledged the loss of the victims' families.

"Not a day went by that we didn't think about all of them, and that kept us going," she said.

The Dali lost power shortly after leaving Baltimore for Sri Lanka in the early hours of March 26. A National Transportation Safety Board investigation found it experienced power outages before starting its voyage, but the exact causes of the electrical issues have yet to be determined. The FBI is also conducting a criminal investigation into the circumstances leading up to the collapse.

Officials have said they hope to rebuild the bridge by 2028.

## Apple leaps into AI with an array of upcoming iPhone features and a ChatGPT deal to smarten up

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP) — Apple has jumped into the race to bring generative artificial intelligence to the masses, spotlighting a slew of features Monday designed to soup up the iPhone, iPad and Mac.

And in a move befitting a company known for its marketing prowess, the AI technology coming as part of free software updates later this year is being billed as "Apple Intelligence."

Even as it tried to put its own stamp on technology's hottest area, Apple tacitly acknowledged during its World Wide Developers Conference that it needs help catching up with companies like Microsoft and Google, which have emerged as the early leaders in AI. Apple is leaning on ChatGPT, made by the San Francisco startup OpenAI, to make its often-bumbling virtual assistant Siri smarter and more helpful.

"All of this goes beyond artificial intelligence, it's personal intelligence, and it is the next big step for Apple," CEO Tim Cook said.

Siri's optional gateway to ChatGPT will be free to all iPhone users and made available on other Apple products once the option is baked into the next generation of Apple's operating systems. ChatGPT subscribers are supposed to be able to easily sync their existing accounts when using the iPhone, and should

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get more advanced features than free users would.

To herald the alliance with Apple, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman sat in the front row of the packed conference, which was attended by developers from more than 60 countries.

"Together with Apple, we're making it easier for people to benefit from what AI can offer," Altman said in a statement.

Beyond allowing Siri to tap into ChatGPT's storehouse of knowledge, Apple is giving its 13-year-old virtual assistant an extensive makeover designed to make it more personable and versatile, even as it currently fields about 1.5 billion queries a day.

When Apple releases free updates to the software powering the iPhone and its other products this fall, Siri will signal its presence with flashing lights along the edges of the display screen. It will be able to handle hundreds of more tasks — including chores that may require tapping into third-party devices — than it can now, based on Monday's presentations.

Apple's full suite of upcoming features will only work on more recent models of the iPhone, iPad and Mac because the devices require advanced processors. For instance, consumers will need last year's iPhone 15 Pro or buy the next model coming out later this year to take full advantage of Apple's AI package, although all the tools will work on Macs dating back to 2020 after that computer's next operating system is installed.

The AI-packed updates coming to the next versions of Apple software are meant to enable the billions of people who use the company's devices to get more done in less time, while also giving them access to creative tools that could liven things up. For instance, Apple will deploy AI to allow people to create emojis, dubbed "Genmojis" on the fly to fit the vibe they are trying to convey.

Apple's goal with AI "is not to replace users, but empower them," Craig Federighi, Apple's senior vice president of software engineering, told reporters. Users will also have the option of going into the device settings to turn off any AI tools they don't want.

Monday's showcase seemed aimed at allaying concerns Apple might be losing its edge with the advent of AI, a technology expected to be as revolutionary as the 2007 introduction of the iPhone. Both Google and Samsung have already released smartphone models touting AI features as their main attractions, while Apple has been stuck in an uncharacteristically extended sales slump.

AI mania is the main reason that Nvidia, the dominant maker of the chips underlying the technology, has seen its market value rocket from about \$300 billion at the end of 2022 to about \$3 trillion. The meteoric rise allowed Nvidia to surpass Apple as the second most valuable company in the U.S. Earlier this year, Microsoft also eclipsed the iPhone maker on the strength of its so-far successful push into AI.

Investors didn't seem as impressed with Apple's AI presentation as the crowd that came to the company's Cupertino, California, headquarters to see it. Apple's stock price dipped nearly 2% Monday.

Despite that negative reaction, Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives asserted in a research note that Apple is "taking the right path." He hailed the presentation as a "historical" day for a company that already has reshaped the tech industry and society.

Besides pulling AI tricks out of its bag, Apple also used the conference to confirm that it will be rolling out a technology called Rich Communications Service, or RCS, to its iMessage app. The technology should improve the quality and security of texting between iPhones and devices powered by Android software, such as the Samsung Galaxy and Google Pixel.

The change, due out with the next version of iPhone's operating software, won't eliminate the blue bubbles denoting texts originating from iPhones and the green bubbles marking text sent from Android devices — a distinction that has become a source of social stigma.

In another upcoming twist to the iPhone's messaging app, users will be able to write a text (or have an AI tool compose it) in advance and schedule a specific time to automatically send it.

Monday's presentation marked the second straight year that Apple has created a stir at its developers conference by using it to usher in a trendy form of technology that other companies already had employed.

Last year, Apple provided an early look at its mixed-reality headset, the Vision Pro, which wasn't released until early 2024. Nevertheless, Apple's push into mixed reality — with a twist that it bills as "spatial com-

puting” — has raised hopes that there will be more consumer interest in this niche technology.

Part of that optimism stems from Apple’s history of releasing technology later than others, then using sleek designs and slick marketing campaigns to overcome its tardy start.

Bringing more AI to the iPhone will likely raise privacy concerns — a topic that Apple has gone to great lengths to assure its loyal customers it can be trusted not to peer too deeply into their personal lives. Apple did talk extensively Monday about its efforts to build strong privacy protections and controls around its AI technology.

One way Apple is trying to convince consumers that the iPhone won’t be used to spy on them is harnessing its chip technology so most of its AI-powered features are handled on the device itself instead of at remote data centers, often called “the cloud.” Going down this route would also help protect Apple’s profit margins because AI processing through the cloud is far more expensive than when it is run solely on a device.

When Apple users make AI demands that requiring computing power beyond what’s available on the device, the tasks will be handled by what the company is calling a “private cloud” that is supposed to shield their personal data.

Apple’s AI “will be aware of your personal data without collecting your personal data,” Federighi said.

## **Dan Hurley turns down offer from Lakers, will stay at UConn to seek 3rd straight NCAA title**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The Los Angeles Lakers offered Dan Hurley what would have seemed like a basketball coach’s dream: a chance to coach one of the world’s most popular franchises, possibly an opportunity to work with LeBron James and a salary that would have doubled his current one.

Hurley passed.

He’s staying at Connecticut, he said Monday, turning down the Lakers and ending several days of speculation about his future. The lure of trying to win a third consecutive NCAA championship with the Huskies, evidently, was just too strong.

“Our MVP Coach is staying in CT,” Gov. Ned Lamont posted on social media.

ESPN first reported Hurley’s decision, plus was first to report last week that he was a serious candidate for the Lakers job. Hurley met with Lakers officials — owner Jeanie Buss and general manager Rob Pelinka among them — in Los Angeles on Friday, then spent the weekend weighing his options.

The word came Monday. The Huskies had practice Monday afternoon, and before that session in Storrs, Connecticut, Hurley gave the word that the players — and probably every basketball fan in the state — wanted to hear. The NBA can wait.

“I am humbled by this entire experience,” Hurley said in a statement distributed by UConn. “At the end of the day, I am extremely proud of the championship culture we have built at Connecticut. We met as a team before today’s workout and our focus right now is getting better this summer and connecting as a team as we continue to pursue championships.”

It seems likely that Hurley will soon be richly rewarded for staying at UConn. Lamont, who was in contact with Hurley throughout the weekend, told reporters Monday that the state will “make sure he’s the top-paid college coach.” Hurley got a six-year, \$32.1 million deal a year ago after the Huskies won the 2023 NCAA title; another new deal seems certain now.

“We are thrilled that Dan Hurley has made the decision to stay at UConn and continue building upon our championship tradition,” UConn athletic director David Benedict said. “He has helped return our men’s basketball program back to the pinnacle of the sport, including back-to-back NCAA Championships, and we’re grateful for his loyalty to UConn.”

“We look forward to Dan’s continued leadership on and off the court at UConn. He will continue to bring great pride to Husky fans everywhere as we work toward a three-peat.”

Reaction from UConn was as expected — people were thrilled. Assistant coach Luke Murray, who has

worked with Hurley at Wagner, Rhode Island and UConn, posted a video of Hurley lifting his arms in the air in celebration of the national title. There was no caption; the post's meaning was clear enough.

"Now let's get ready for a #3peat, because Connecticut knows champions are built here!" Lamont wrote.

Hurley had the option of taking over one of the most famed franchises in pro sports, not to mention perhaps the chance to coach James, the NBA's all-time scoring leader. But in the end, his stay in the coaching version of the transfer portal was brief — and he will remain at UConn, where he has gone 68-11 over the last two title-winning seasons.

On the way to those two titles, the fiery Hurley and the tough-as-nails Huskies have left no doubt — 12-0 in NCAA tournament games, winning by a staggering average of 21.7 points per contest. UConn will try to become the second program to win three straight men's national titles; UCLA, the only men's program to do better than going back-to-back, won seven in a row from 1967 through 1973.

Hurley will chase something rare by turning down the opportunity to something just as rare: leaving the reigning NCAA champions for the NBA.

The last time a coach made such a move was after the 1987-88 season, when Kansas won the NCAA title and Larry Brown decided to leave for the NBA. He took over the San Antonio Spurs, and Roy Williams became coach of the Jayhawks.

The Spurs gave Brown \$3.5 million for five years, which was enormous money at the time yet nothing compared to what Hurley would have commanded from the Lakers — likely more than \$10 million per season, or about double what he currently makes at UConn. And Brown went on to become the only coach to win both an NCAA title and an NBA championship; he got that title with Detroit in 2004.

Hurley had the chance to try to follow that same path. Hurley is 141-58 in his six seasons at UConn and 292-163 overall in 14 seasons as a collegiate coach — adding in his years at Wagner and Rhode Island.

He's gone through four losing seasons in that span; his first year at Wagner, his first two at Rhode Island and his first year at UConn. Once he gets it rolling, the wins just pile up: take away how those stops started, and Hurley's record is 241-90 — a .728 winning percentage.

So, he remains in Storrs, just like women's coach Geno Auriemma. UConn signed Auriemma last week to a five-year extension worth nearly \$19 million.

"We're going to try to replicate it again," Hurley said in April after winning the second straight national title. "We're going to maintain a championship culture. We're bringing in some very talented high school freshmen. Our returning players, through player development, will take a big jump. We'll strategically add through the portal. I don't think that we're going anywhere."

The Lakers almost got him to change his mind.

## **The Rev. James Lawson Jr., civil rights leader who preached nonviolent protest, dies at 95**

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, TRAVIS LOLLER and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Rev. James Lawson Jr., an apostle of nonviolent protest who schooled activists to withstand brutal reactions from white authorities as the Civil Rights Movement gained traction, has died, his family said Monday. He was 95.

His family said Lawson died on Sunday after a short illness in Los Angeles, where he spent decades working as a pastor, labor movement organizer and university professor.

Lawson was a close adviser to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who called him "the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world."

Lawson met King in 1957, after spending three years in India soaking up knowledge about Mohandas K. Gandhi's independence movement. King would travel to India himself two years later, but at the time, he had only read about Gandhi in books.

The two Black pastors -- both 28 years old -- quickly bonded over their enthusiasm for the Indian leader's ideas, and King urged Lawson to put them into action in the American South.

Lawson soon led workshops in church basements in Nashville, Tennessee, that prepared John Lewis,

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Diane Nash, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Barry, the Freedom Riders and many others to peacefully withstand vicious responses to their challenges of racist laws and policies.

Lawson's lessons led Nashville to become the first major city in the South to desegregate its downtown, on May 10, 1960, after hundreds of well-organized students staged lunch-counter sit-ins and boycotts of discriminatory businesses.

Lawson's particular contribution was to introduce Gandhian principles to people more familiar with biblical teachings, showing how direct action could expose the immorality and fragility of racist white power structures.

Gandhi said "that we persons have the power to resist the racism in our own lives and souls," Lawson told the AP. "We have the power to make choices and to say no to that wrong. That's also Jesus."

Years later, in 1968, it was Lawson who organized the sanitation workers strike that fatefully drew King to Memphis. Lawson said he was at first paralyzed and forever saddened by King's assassination.

"I thought I would not live beyond 40, myself," Lawson said. "The imminence of death was a part of the discipline we lived with, but no one as much as King."

Still, Lawson made it his life's mission to preach the power of nonviolent direct action.

"I'm still anxious and frustrated," Lawson said as he marked the 50th anniversary of King's death with a march in Memphis. "The task is unfinished."

Civil rights activist Diane Nash was a 21-year-old college student when she began attending Lawson's Nashville workshops, which she called life-changing.

"His passing constitutes a very great loss," Nash said. "He bears, I think, more responsibility than any other single person for the civil rights movement of Blacks being nonviolent in this country."

James Morris Lawson Jr., was born on Sept. 22, 1928, the son and grandson of ministers, and grew up in Massillon, Ohio, where he became ordained himself as a high school senior.

He told The Tennessean that his commitment to nonviolence began in elementary school, when he told his mother that he had slapped a boy who had used a racial slur against him.

"What good did that do, Jimmy?" his mother asked.

That simple question forever changed his life, Lawson said. He became a pacifist, refusing to serve when drafted for the Korean War, and spent a year in prison as a conscientious objector. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist group, sponsored his trip to India after he finished a sociology degree.

Gandhi had been assassinated by then, but Lawson met people who had worked with him and explained Gandhi's concept of "satyagraha," a relentless pursuit of Truth, which encouraged Indians to peacefully reject British rule. Lawson then saw how the Christian concept of turning the other cheek could be applied in collective actions to challenge morally indefensible laws.

Lawson was a divinity student at Oberlin College in Ohio when King spoke on campus about the Montgomery bus boycott. King told him, "You can't wait, you need to come on South now," Lawson recalled in an Associated Press interview.

Lawson soon enrolled in theology classes at Vanderbilt University, while leading younger activists through mock protests in which they practiced taking insults without reacting.

The technique swiftly proved its power at lunch counters and movie theaters in Nashville, where on May 10, 1960, businesses agreed to take down the "No Colored" signs that enforced white supremacy.

"It was the first major successful campaign to pull the signs down," and it created a template for the sit-ins that began spreading across the South, Lawson said.

Lawson was called on to organize what became the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which sought to organize the spontaneous efforts of tens of thousands of students who began challenging Jim Crow laws across the South.

Angry segregationists got Lawson expelled from Vanderbilt, but he said he never harbored hard feelings about the university, where he returned as a distinguished visiting professor in 2006, and eventually donated a significant portion of his papers.

Lawson earned that theology degree at Boston University and became a Methodist pastor in Memphis,



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where his wife Dorothy Wood Lawson worked as an NAACP organizer. They moved several years later to Los Angeles, where Lawson led the Holman United Methodist Church and taught at California State University, Northridge and the University of California, Los Angeles. They raised three sons, John, Morris and Seth.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said Lawson taught Southern California activists and organizers "and helped shape the civil rights and labor movement locally just as he did nationally."

"Today Los Angeles joins the state, country and world in mourning the loss of a civil rights leader whose critical leadership, teachings, and mentorship confronted and crippled centuries of systemic oppression, racism and injustice," Bass said in a statement.

Lawson remained active into his 90s, urging younger generations to leverage their power.

Civil rights leader Rev. Al Sharpton, founder and president of the National Action Network, called Lawson "the ultimate preacher, prophet, and activist."

"In his senior years, I was privileged to spend time with him at his church in Los Angeles," Sharpton said. "He would sit in his office and tell me inside stories of the battles of the 1950's and 1960's that he Dr. King and others engaged in. Lawson helped to change this nation — thank God the nation never changed him."

Eulogizing the late Rep. John Lewis last year, he recalled how the young man he trained in Nashville grew lonely marches into multitudes, paving the way for major civil rights legislation.

"If we would honor and celebrate John Lewis' life, let us then re-commit our souls, our hearts, our minds, our bodies and our strength to the continuing journey to dismantle the wrong in our midst," Lawson said.

## **Soldiers in Malawi search for missing military plane carrying vice president and former first lady**

By GREGORY GONDWE and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

BLANTYRE, Malawi (AP) — Soldiers are searching mountainous forests near a city in northern Malawi after a military plane carrying the country's vice president and a former first lady went missing in the area Monday, President Lazarus Chakwera said.

The plane carrying 51-year-old Vice President Saulos Chilima, former first lady Shanil Dzimbiri and eight others left the southern African nation's capital, Lilongwe, at 9:17 a.m. and had been expected to land 45 minutes later at Mzuzu International Airport, about 370 kilometers (230 miles) to the north.

But air traffic control told it to not attempt a landing and to turn around because of bad weather and poor visibility, Chakwera said in an address broadcast live on state TV channel MBC.

Air traffic control lost contact with the aircraft and it disappeared from radar a short time later, he said.

"I know this is a heartbreaking situation. I know we are all frightened and concerned. I too am concerned," Chakwera said. "But I want to assure you that I am sparing no available resource to find that plane. And I am holding onto every fiber of hope that we will find survivors."

Mzuzu is Malawi's third biggest city and the capital of the northern region. It lies in a hilly, forested area dominated by the Viphya mountain range, which has vast plantations of pine trees.

The president vowed that search operations would continue through the night and said authorities using telecommunications towers tracked the last known position of the plane to a 10-kilometer (6-mile) radius in one of the plantations. That area was the focus of the Malawi Defense Force search and rescue operation, he said.

"I have given strict orders that the operation should continue until the plane is found," Chakwera said.

Chakwera said the U.S., the U.K., Norway and Israel offered assistance in the search operation and had provided "specialized technologies" that the president hoped would help find the plane sooner.

Chakwera said Dzimbiri, the ex-wife of former President Bakili Muluzi, was also one of the passengers. The group was traveling to attend the funeral of a former government minister. Three of those onboard were the military crew flying the plane, the president said.

Chakwera asked Malawians to pray for all those onboard and their families.

Chilima has been vice president since 2020.

He was a candidate in the 2019 Malawian presidential election and finished third. That vote was won by incumbent Peter Mutharika but was annulled by Malawi's Constitutional Court because of irregularities. Chakwera finished second in that election.

Chilima then joined Chakwera's campaign as his running mate in an historic election rerun in 2020, when Chakwera was elected president. It was the first time in Africa that an election result that was overturned by a court resulted in a defeat for the sitting president.

The vice president had been facing corruption charges over allegations that he received money in return for influencing the awarding of government contracts, but prosecutors dropped the charges last month. That led to criticism that Chakwera's administration was not taking a hard enough stance against graft.

Chilima was arrested in late 2022 and made several court appearances, but the trial has yet to start. He has denied the allegations.

## **Jurors in Hunter Biden's gun trial begin deliberating whether he's guilty of federal firearm charges**

By CLAUDIA LAUER, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, RANDALL CHASE and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Jurors in Hunter Biden's gun trial began deliberating Monday whether the president's son is guilty of federal firearms charges over a revolver he bought in 2018 when prosecutors say he was addicted to crack cocaine.

Hunter Biden is charged with three felonies in the case that has laid bare some of the darkest moments of his drug-fueled past. Prosecutors have used testimony from former romantic partners, personal text messages and photos of Hunter Biden with drug paraphernalia or partially clothed to make the case that he broke the law.

"No one is above the law," prosecutor Leo Wise told jurors in his closing argument as first lady Jill Biden watched from the front row of the Wilmington, Delaware, courtroom.

Jurors deliberated for less than an hour before leaving the courthouse for the day. Deliberations were to resume Tuesday morning.

President Joe Biden's son has publicly detailed his struggle with a crack cocaine addiction before getting sober more than five years ago. But the defense sought to show that that he did not consider himself an "addict" when he bought the gun and checked "no" on the form that asked whether he was "an unlawful user" of drugs or addicted to them.

The case has pitted Hunter Biden against his father's Justice Department in the midst of the Democratic president's reelection campaign. The charges were brought by special counsel David Weiss, who was nominated by Republican former President Donald Trump to be U.S. attorney for Delaware and led the yearslong investigation.

Before the case went to the jury, the prosecutor urged jurors to focus on the "overwhelming" evidence against Hunter Biden and pay no mind to members of the president's family sitting in the courtroom.

"All of this is not evidence," Wise said, extending his hand and directing the jury to look at the gallery. "People sitting in the gallery are not evidence."

First lady Jill Biden and other family members left the courthouse shortly after deliberations began. The first lady sat through most of the trial, missing only one day last week to attend D-Day anniversary events with the president in France. At one point Monday, Hunter Biden leaned over a railing to whisper in Jill Biden's ear.

Defense attorney Abbe Lowell told jurors in his closing argument that prosecutors had failed to prove their case. Lowell said the his client may have a famous last name, but he is still presumed innocent until proven guilty like any other defendant.

"With my last breath in this case, I ask for the only verdict that will hold the prosecutors to what the law requires of them" — a verdict of not guilty, Lowell said.

Hunter Biden's lawyers have suggested he was trying to turn his life around at the time of the gun

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purchase, having completed a detoxification and rehabilitation program at the end of August 2018. The defense called three witnesses, including Hunter's daughter Naomi, who told jurors that her father seemed to be improving in the weeks before he bought the gun.

Closing arguments came shortly after the defense rested its case without calling Hunter Biden to the witness stand. He didn't elaborate on his decision when he told U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika that he was waiving his right to testify, according to a transcript of the sidebar discussion at the bench.

Hunter Biden smiled as he chatted with members of his defense team and flashed a thumbs-up sign to a supporter in the gallery after the final witness — an FBI agent called by prosecutors in their rebuttal case.

The trial has put a spotlight on a turbulent time in Hunter Biden's life after the 2015 death of his brother, Beau, from brain cancer. The proceedings have played out in the president's home state, where Hunter Biden grew up and where the family is deeply established. Joe Biden spent 36 years as a senator in Delaware, commuting daily to Washington, and Beau Biden was the state's attorney general.

Hunter Biden's ex-wife and two former girlfriends testified for prosecutors about his habitual crack use and their failed efforts to help him get clean. One woman, who met Hunter Biden in 2017 at a strip club where she worked, described him smoking crack every 20 minutes or so while she stayed with him at a hotel.

Jurors have also heard him describe at length his descent into addiction through audio excerpts played in court of his 2021 memoir, "Beautiful Things." The book, written after he got sober, covers the period he had the gun but doesn't mention it specifically.

A key witness for prosecutors was Beau's widow, Hallie, who had a brief, troubled relationship with Hunter after his brother's death. She found the unloaded gun in Hunter's truck on Oct. 23, 2018, panicked and tossed it into a garbage can at a grocery store in Wilmington, where a man seeking recyclables inadvertently fished it out of the trash.

The prosecutor pointed to text messages he said show Hunter trying to make drug deals in the days around the gun purchase. In one message, Hunter told Hallie he was smoking crack. "That's my truth," Hunter wrote.

"Take the defendant's word for it. That's his truth," Wise said. He urged jurors to reject the defense's suggestion that Hunter did not really mean what he was texting at the time and was simply trying to avoid being with Hallie.

"You don't leave your common sense behind when you come into that jury box," Wise said.

The defense told jurors that there was no actual witness to drug use by Hunter during the 11 days that he had the gun. Lowell also sought to discredit testimony from Hallie and another ex-girlfriend. He told jurors to consider their testimony "with great care and caution," noting that they were given immunity agreements in exchange for taking the witness stand for prosecutors.

Joe Biden said last week that he would accept the jury's verdict and ruled out a presidential pardon for his son. After flying back from France, the president spent Monday at his home in Wilmington before traveling back to Washington in the evening for a Juneteenth concert. He was scheduled to travel to Italy later this week for the Group of Seven leaders conference.

Last summer, it looked as if Hunter Biden would avoid prosecution in the gun case altogether, but a deal with prosecutors imploded after the judge, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, raised concerns about it. Hunter Biden also faces a trial scheduled for September on felony charges alleging he failed to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes over four years.

If convicted in the gun case, he 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.

## Rudy Giuliani processed in Arizona in fake electors scheme to overturn Trump's 2020 loss to Biden

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Rudy Giuliani, a former New York City mayor and Donald Trump attorney, was processed Monday in the criminal case over the effort to overturn Trump's Arizona election loss to Joe Biden, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said.

The sheriff's office provided a mug shot but no other details. The office of the Clerk of the Superior Court for Maricopa County said Giuliani posted bond of \$10,000 in cash.

"Mayor Rudy Giuliani — the most effective federal prosecutor in U.S. history — will be fully vindicated," said his spokesperson, Ted Goodman. "This is yet another example of partisan actors weaponizing the criminal justice system to interfere with the 2024 presidential election through outlandish charges against President Trump and anyone willing to take on the permanent Washington political class."

Giuliani pleaded not guilty in May to nine felony charges stemming from his alleged role in the fake electors effort. He is among 18 people indicted in the Arizona case, including Trump attorneys John Eastman, Christina Bobb and Jenna Ellis.

Former Trump presidential chief of staff Mark Meadows and Trump 2020 Election Day operations director Michael Roman pleaded not guilty Friday in Phoenix to nine felony charges for their alleged roles in the scheme.

The indictment alleges Meadows worked with other Trump campaign members to submit names of fake electors from Arizona and other states to Congress in a bid to keep Trump in office despite his November 2020 defeat.

Other states where criminal charges have been filed related to the fake electors scheme are Michigan, Nevada and Georgia.

## What does Israel's rescue of 4 captives, and the killing of 274 Palestinians, mean for truce talks?

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's dramatic weekend rescue of four hostages from the Gaza Strip, in an operation that local health officials say killed 274 Palestinians, came at a sensitive time in the 8-month-old war, as Israel and Hamas weigh a U.S. proposal for a cease-fire and the release of the remaining captives.

Both sides face renewed pressure to make a deal: The complex rescue is unlikely to be replicated on a scale needed to bring back scores of remaining hostages, and it was a powerful reminder for Israelis that there are still surviving captives held in harsh conditions. Hamas now has four fewer bargaining chips.

But they could also dig in, as they repeatedly have over months of indirect negotiations mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. Hamas is still insisting on an end to the war as part of any agreement, while Israel says it is still committed to destroying the militant group.

Here is a look at the fallout from the operation and how it might affect cease-fire talks:

ELATION, AND MOUNTING CALLS FOR A DEAL The rescue operation was Israel's most successful since the start of the war, bringing home four of the roughly 250 captives seized by Hamas in its Oct. 7 cross-border attack, including Noa Argamani, who became an icon of the struggle to free the hostages.

The raid also killed at least 274 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, deepening the suffering of people in Gaza who have had to endure the brutal war and a humanitarian catastrophe. The ministry does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its tallies.

The rescue was met with elation in Israel, which is still reeling from the Hamas attack and agonizing over the fate of the 80 captives and the remains of over 40 others still held in Gaza. Israeli hard-liners are likely to seize on it as proof that military pressure alone will bring the rest back.

But only three other hostages have been freed by military force since the start of the war. Another three were mistakenly killed by Israeli forces after they escaped on their own, and Hamas says others have

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been killed in Israeli airstrikes.

"If anyone believes that yesterday's operation absolves the government of the need to strike a deal, they are living a fantasy," Israeli columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-selling Yediot Aharonot newspaper. "There are people out there who need to be saved, and the sooner the better."

Even the Israeli army's spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, acknowledged the limits of military force. "What will bring most of the hostages back home alive is a deal," he told reporters.

Over 100 hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire last year, in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, and reaching a similar agreement is still widely seen as the only way of getting the rest of the hostages back. Hours after Saturday's rescue, tens of thousands of Israelis attended protests in Tel Aviv calling for such a deal.

U.S. President Joe Biden last week announced a proposal for a phased plan for a cease-fire and hostage release, setting in motion the administration's most concentrated diplomatic push for a truce.

Biden described it as an Israeli proposal, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly questioned some aspects of it, particularly its call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and a lasting truce. His ultranationalist coalition partners have threatened to bring down his government if he ends the war without destroying Hamas.

That appears to have only deepened suspicions on the part of Hamas, which has demanded international guarantees that the war will end. It's unclear if such guarantees have been offered, and Hamas has not yet officially responded to the plan.

NETANYAHU SEEKS TO GAINThe rescue operation was a rare win for Netanyahu, who many Israelis blame for the security failures leading up to the Oct. 7 attack and the failure to return the hostages despite months of grinding war.

He has reveled in the operation's success, rushing Saturday to the hospital where the freed hostages were held and meeting with each of them as cameras rolled. The rescue operation will likely help rehabilitate his image.

But as the elation fades, he will still face heavy pressure from an American administration that wants to wind the war down and an ultranationalist base that wants to vanquish Hamas at all costs. His main political opponent, the retired general Benny Gantz, quit the emergency wartime coalition on Sunday, leaving Netanyahu even more beholden to the hard-liners.

Netanyahu is already facing criticism from some of the families of deceased hostages, who say they received no such visits and accuse him of only taking credit for the war's successes. Israel will also likely face heightened international pressure over the raid's high Palestinian death toll.

"The success in freeing four hostages is a magnificent tactical victory that has not changed our deplorable strategic situation," columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv daily.

It all makes for a tough balancing act, even for someone like Netanyahu, who friends and foes alike consider to be a master politician.

The operation could provide the kind of boost with the Israeli public that would allow him to justify making a deal with Hamas. Or he might conclude that time is on his side, and that he can drive a harder bargain with the militants as they grapple with a major setback.

HAMAS LOSES BARGAINING CHIPSHamas has lost four precious bargaining chips it had hoped to trade for high-profile Palestinian prisoners. Argamani, widely known from a video showing her pleading for her life as militants dragged her away on a motorcycle, was a particularly significant loss for Hamas.

The raid may have also dealt a blow to Hamas' morale. In the Oct. 7 attack, Hamas managed to humiliate a country with a far superior army, and since then it has repeatedly regrouped despite devastating military operations across Gaza.

But the fact that Israel was able to mount a complex rescue operation in broad daylight in the center of a crowded urban area has at least temporarily restored some of the mystique that Israel's security forces lost on Oct. 7.

The operation also refocused global attention on the hostage crisis at a time when the U.S. is rallying world pressure on Hamas to accept the cease-fire deal.

But Hamas has a long history of withstanding pressure from Israel and others — often at enormous cost to Palestinians. The militants may conclude that it's best to use the remaining hostages to end the war while they still can — or they might just look for better places to hide them.

## **Alzheimer's drug that can slow disease gets backing from FDA advisers**

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A closely watched Alzheimer's drug from Eli Lilly won the backing of federal health advisers on Monday, setting the stage for the treatment's expected approval for people with mild dementia caused by the brain-robbing disease.

Food and Drug Administration advisers voted unanimously that the drug's ability to slow the disease outweighs its risks, including side effects like brain swelling and bleeding that will have to be monitored.

"I thought the evidence was very strong in the trial showing the effectiveness of the drug," said panel member Dean Follmann, a National Institutes of Health statistician.

The FDA will make the final decision on approval later this year. If the agency agrees with the panel's recommendation, the drug, donanemab, would only be the second Alzheimer's drug cleared in the U.S. that's been shown to convincingly slow cognitive decline and memory problems due to Alzheimer's. The FDA approved a similar infused drug, Leqembi, from Japanese drugmaker Eisai last year.

The slowdown seen with both drugs amounts to several months and experts disagree on whether patients or their loved ones will be able to detect the difference.

But Lilly's approach to studying its once-a-month treatment prompted questions from FDA reviewers.

Patients in the company's study were grouped based on their levels of a brain protein, called tau, that predicts severity of cognitive problems. That led FDA to question whether patients might need to be screened via brain scans for tau before getting the drug. But most panelists thought there was enough evidence of the drug's benefit to prescribe it broadly, without screening for the protein.

"Imposing a requirement for tau imaging is not necessary and would raise serious practical and access concerns to the treatment," said Dr. Thomas Montine of Stanford University, who chaired the panel and summarized its opinion.

At a high level, Lilly's results mirrored those of Leqembi, with both medications showing a modest slowing of cognitive problems in patients with early-stage Alzheimer's. The Indianapolis-based company conducted a 1,700-patient study showing patients who received monthly IV infusions of its drug declined about 35% more slowly than those who got a sham treatment.

The FDA had been widely expected to approve the drug in March. But instead the agency said it would ask its panel of neurology experts to publicly review the company's data, an unexpected delay that surprised analysts and investors.

Several unusual approaches in how Lilly tested its drug led to the meeting.

One change was measuring patients' tau, and excluding patients with very low or no levels of the protein. But panelists said there was enough data from other measures to feel confident that nearly all patients could benefit from the drug, regardless of their levels.

In another key difference, Lilly studied taking patients off its drug when they reached very low levels of amyloid, a sticky brain plaque that's a contributor to Alzheimer's.

Lilly scientists suggested stopping treatment is a key advantage for its drug, which could reduce side effects and costs. But FDA staff said Lilly provided little data supporting the optimal time to stop or how quickly patients might need to restart treatment.

Despite those questions, many panelists thought the possibility of stopping doses held promise.

"It's a huge cost savings for the society, we're talking about expensive treatment, expensive surveillance," said Dr. Tanya Simuni of Northwestern University. She and other experts said patients would need to be tracked and tested to see how they fare and whether they need to resume treatment.

The main safety issue with donanemab was brain swelling and bleeding, a problem common to all amyloid-targeting drugs. Most cases identified in Lilly's trial were mild.

Three deaths in the donanemab study were linked to the drug, according to the FDA, all involving brain swelling or bleeding. One of the deaths was caused by a stroke, a life-threatening complication that occurs more frequently among Alzheimer's patients.

FDA's panel agreed that those the risks could be addressed by warning labels and education for doctors as well as medical scans to identify patients at greater risk of stroke.

## US will store aid on secure beach in Gaza as UN pauses distribution from pier

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, EDITH M. LEDERER and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said Monday that it plans to stockpile aid shipments on a secure beach in Gaza during a U.N. pause on distributing food from the American-built pier after one of the deadliest days of the Israel-Hamas war.

The U.N. World Food Program, which works with U.S. officials to transfer desperately needed aid from the month-old pier to warehouses and local relief teams in Gaza, tweeted Monday that the U.N. would conduct a security review to assess the safety of its staff in handling aid deliveries from the pier. It said the pause would be temporary.

A humanitarian official familiar with the situation said the security review is expected to conclude within a few days and U.N. officials would then make decisions on resuming operations. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss planning.

The pause, which WFP head Cindy McCain first announced in a TV interview Sunday, is the latest trouble to hit the Biden administration's new sea route for bringing in aid to Palestinians. It also signals sharpened concern by the U.N. and relief organizations about their ability to safely care for Gaza's civilians during the eight-month-old war.

The review follows an Israeli military operation on Saturday that rescued four Israeli hostages taken by Hamas on Oct. 7, in the attack that triggered the war, and left 274 Palestinians and one Israeli commando dead.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said "it's only normal" that U.N. humanitarian officials pause and review the security situation following the Israeli operation. McCain said Sunday that two of WFP's warehouses had been "rocketed" and a staffer injured.

When such large-scale military operations take place, Dujarric said, "you can only imagine the difficulties in distributing the aid, both for the safety of those who are trying to get it and those who are trying to distribute it."

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said the delivery of aid from Cyprus to the pier was paused due to high seas Sunday and Monday but would resume Tuesday. He said there is enough space for aid to be stored in a secure holding area on the beach until agencies restart distribution into Gaza.

"It's a pretty large area," he told reporters. "I think we can continue to stockpile aid in the assembly area for onward distribution."

The pause came just a day after the U.S. military and the U.S. Agency for International Development, which is coordinating logistics with relief groups, said Saturday that the pier restarted operations after repairs. Part of the structure broke apart in rough seas and bad weather late last month.

Saturday's fighting, followed by the pause for the security review, blocked the planned distribution of aid from the pier, the humanitarian official said.

President Joe Biden ordered the U.S. military to construct the pier in March, in hopes of carving out an alternative aid route as the fighting and Israeli restrictions sharply limit shipments through land borders. But rough seas in the Mediterranean, insecurity within Gaza and a surge in fighting since early May mean the pier, completed in mid-May, has been able to operate for only about a week.

Ryder, pushing back against claims on social media, denied that any aspect of the pier or its equipment had been used in Saturday's military operation. The Pentagon says an area south of the pier was used for the return of the freed hostages back to Israel.

"Particularly in this environment, given what you're seeing play out in the Israel-Hamas conflict, there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation about what U.S. forces are or are not doing," he told reporters. Ryder said the U.S. did an air drop of more than 10 metric tons of ready-to-eat meals Sunday.

U.S. and international officials and private aid organizations say only a steady daily flow of hundreds of truck shipments through land borders can address the need for food and emergency aid in Gaza. More than 1 million people there are facing famine and all 2.3 million are struggling for food.

## Electronic voting worries security experts. Nevada touts safeguards as it expands it to tribes

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

SCHURZ, Nevada (AP) — Members of the Walker River Paiute Tribe have watched the boundaries of their land recede over time along with the waters of the lake that are central to their identity, threatening the cultural symbol that gave the tribe its name — Agai Dicutta, or Trout Eaters.

Not wanting to cede their voice, tribal leaders have been making a push for expanded voting rights. That effort includes filing a lawsuit on behalf of all Nevada tribes seeking polling places on tribal lands and access to early voting.

"Tribes shouldn't have to keep filing lawsuits just to vote on their own lands," said Elveda Martinez, 65, a tribal member and longtime voting advocate. "It should be more accessible."

The state has now granted the Walker River Paiutes and other tribes in Nevada a new right that advocates hope will greatly expand voting access for a community that gained U.S. citizenship only a century ago.

Voting on reservations across the country has historically been difficult, with tribal voters sometimes having to travel dozens of miles to their polling place. Slow mail service and lack of a physical address, common on tribal lands, have proved challenging.

The new process — the ability to cast ballots electronically — has the potential to significantly boost turnout among all tribes in Nevada. But what some see as a small measure of justice to equalize voting rights raises security concerns for others, with implications far beyond Nevada's 28 tribal communities as the nation braces for what is expected to be another close and contentious presidential election in November.

Under the plan, tribal members in Nevada who live on a reservation or colony can receive a ballot electronically through an online system set up by the state and then return it electronically. While not speaking specifically about Nevada's system, experts warn that such voting — when a completed ballot is sent back either by email, through an online portal or by fax — carries risks of ballots being intercepted or manipulated and should be used sparingly, if at all.

"At this point in the United States, it's a relatively small number of ballots that are coming through that way," said Larry Norden, an election expert with the Brennan Center for Justice. "But we should be very concerned — both from actual security risks but also from a public confidence point of view — about expanding this."

**HIGH-RISK ACTIVITY** While electronic voting may be limited at the moment, it's available across much of the country to specific groups of voters. More than 30 states allow certain voters to return their ballots either by fax, email or an online portal, according to data collected by the National Conference of State Legislatures and Verified Voting, a nonpartisan group that studies state voting systems.

In most cases, electronic ballot return is available only to U.S. military and overseas voters. But it's been expanded in recent years to include voters with disabilities in a dozen states. Nevada is believed to be the first to add tribes.

Cal Boone, the new tribal outreach coordinator for the Nevada Secretary of State's Office and a member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, has begun meeting with tribes around the state to share details about the process, which he believes could ease a legacy of barriers that has left some reluctant to vote.

"In past years, tribes didn't have access to vote in multiple ways. You had to rely on the mail system to cast your vote or otherwise drive out to great lengths to vote," Boone said. "What we are seeing in Nevada is really powerful, and it really sets the stage for what other states throughout the country can



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be doing to help support tribes.”

But the solution comes with risks.

In a 2020 memo to election officials, the FBI and other federal agencies assessed the risk of sending ballots electronically to be low, but allowing those ballots to be returned electronically was high. The memo highlights recommended security practices for systems that use internet or network connections.

“The information provided should be considered a starting point,” the memo states. “Even with these technical security considerations, electronic ballot return remains a high-risk activity.”

Earlier this year, the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which is charged with helping protect the nation’s election systems, said in an online post that the memo was being redistributed to ensure state officials and policymakers are “fully informed of risks” associated with electronic ballot return.

Susannah Goodman, director of election security for Common Cause, is among those concerned that there are no federal guidelines for such systems and no independent reviews, unlike what’s in place for voting machines and ballot tabulators.

An attempt to create independent standards ended in late 2022 after a group of experts determined it wasn’t possible at the time given the technology and cyber risks.

**‘CONFIDENT IN OUR SYSTEM’** Kim Wyman, the former top election official in Washington state, initially supported electronic voting as a military spouse, but said she grew wary after taking over as secretary of state. Her attempt to persuade lawmakers to repeal it was unsuccessful.

Wyman said she worries something could happen to the ballot in transit and what that would mean for public confidence in elections. She believes the safest bet is for voters who receive ballots electronically to print them out and return them by mail.

“Election officials are in a hard spot because they want to provide accessibility and they want to make sure that every eligible American has a right to participate in an election,” Wyman said. “But they have to do it in a way where they’re also securing those ballots and making sure that that voter’s ballot is counted the way the voter cast it.”

Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar said he knows the process carries risks, but sees everything related to elections as having some risk. He pointed to the federal government’s action in 2017 to designate the nation’s voting systems as critical infrastructure, just like dams, banks and nuclear power plants.

The state’s electronic ballot return system was designed by the state with security measures intended to verify eligibility, authenticate voters and their ballots, and ensure secure communications, he said. There are steps to ensure voters are not casting multiple ballots, and the system undergoes regular security reviews and updates.

“I’m confident in our system,” Aguilar said.

He expressed frustration about what he described as a lack of national leadership on this and other election issues, saying there should be less criticism and more work and funding to address concerns.

“The federal government has access to so many experts, they have access to resources. They should be providing a leadership position to give us a path forward,” Aguilar said. “To think backward and to scare us is not the appropriate way to do this.”

**STATES DIVIDED OVER SECURITY CONCERN** So far, few Nevada voters have opted in. As of Friday, 255 voters had submitted a ballot electronically — none of them tribal members — ahead of Tuesday’s primary. More than half of those were registered in Clark County, which includes Las Vegas and is the state’s most populous.

“Folks that participate find it very convenient and very easy to use,” Clark County Registrar Lorena Portillo said.

Ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, just over 2,500 voters returned their ballots electronically through the state system. Among them was Ramona Coker, who is blind. Coker said she no longer needs help to vote and can cast a ballot on her phone, which is equipped with screen-reading technology allowing her to follow audio prompts to make her selections.

“It feels very American. It feels like you have done your part and no one else has had an influence in that,” said Coker, who works for a Reno-area nonprofit.

She believes the challenges faced by voters with disabilities outweigh the potential risks of electronic balloting.

"We're always going to have bad-faith actors out there, no matter what delivery form or what return form that we use," Coker said. "And if you're always worried about that, then you never cast a vote again."

States led by both Democrats and Republicans have authorized electronic ballot returns, with varying rules. Alaska, California, Florida and Oklahoma limit the process to military and overseas voters and only permit electronic return by fax. In Texas, astronauts can use an online portal to cast their ballots. In West Virginia, first responders on duty outside their county also are eligible.

"Having been in the military, I've seen intelligence transmitted via the internet. We transmit nuclear codes via the internet," West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner said. "If we can do that, we can certainly get a secure ballot and transmit across the internet."

Not all states have embraced the practice. In Minnesota, officials considered it but ultimately decided against it.

"In light of recent security concerns, it's on ice," said Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon. "Some-day -- if those security considerations are addressed and if the concerns and objections of the federal agencies can be overcome -- we would definitely consider it because as a matter of convenience, it would probably make a difference."

**DIDN'T FEEL 'OUR VOICE EVEN MATTERED'**The Walker River Paiute reservation is along a scenic stretch of highway between Las Vegas and Reno, about two hours south of the state capital in a vast stretch of desert surrounded by distant mountain peaks.

On a late spring day, sprinklers prepare alfalfa fields that dot the reservation while wild horses graze in nearby foothills. There are no grocery stores, restaurants or hotels, and the nearest town is about 30 miles away.

Although the tribe has long had its own polling location — something other tribes in the state have not — the reservation's remoteness has sometimes added to a sense of political isolation. Some tribal members have not always seen the point in voting.

"Because of the historical abuses our people have faced, we were very timid to even take part in voting or elections," tribal Chair Andrea Martinez said. "For many years, we didn't feel like our voice even mattered."

The prospect of casting ballots electronically is a step Martinez and other tribal leaders welcome, but they're not sure it will make a major difference, at least initially. Internet access is spotty on the reservation, as is electricity because of aging utility poles.

"Although we, through the state, can access online voting, who knows if we'll even have electricity or internet that day?" Martinez said.

Teresa McNally, who oversees the election office in Mineral County, which includes the Walker River reservation, plans to hold a meeting with tribal members this year to explain the new system.

One thing she wants to emphasize is the focus on security, including the measures protecting the electronic ballot return system.

"What it takes to even get into our internet system here, it's crazy," she said.

Courtney Quintero, a tribal member and chair of the board overseeing tribal elections, said she planned to use the new system once she learned more about it, but acknowledged others may be hesitant.

"Trust is a big thing with our community," she said.

## **Donald Trump tells a group that calls for banning all abortions to stand up for 'innocent life'**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and PETER SMITH Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Donald Trump on Monday urged a staunchly anti-abortion Christian group to stand up for "innocent life," ambiguously revisiting an issue that Democrats want to make a focus of this year's presidential election.

The former president and presumptive Republican nominee's pre-recorded message praised the work of

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those attending the event hosted by The Danbury Institute, which is meeting in Indianapolis in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. The newly-formed institute is an association of churches, Christians and organizations that wants to eradicate abortion in its entirety.

A panel of in-person speakers doubled-down on that anti-abortion stance on Monday, and a top Southern Baptist leader called for a hardline position against in vitro fertilization. Albert Mohler, the president of the SBC's flagship seminary, said IVF is a "commodification of the embryo" that assaults human dignity. He criticized pastors as well as politicians showing openness to it including in Alabama, which shielded IVF providers from prosecution and civil lawsuits after a state Supreme Court ruling said frozen embryos are children.

"We're about to find out how pro-life the pro-life movement is," Mohler said.

Trump has repeatedly taken credit for the overturning of a federally guaranteed right to abortion — having nominated three of the justices who overturned *Roe v. Wade* — but has resisted supporting a national abortion ban and says he wants to leave the issue to the states. At odds with Mohler's view, Trump does support IVF access.

In his recorded remarks, Trump thanked the audience for their "tremendous devotion to God and Country" and said everyone needs to pull together to preserve their values, including religious liberty, free speech, innocent life and America's heritage and traditions.

"You just can't vote Democrat. They're against religion. They're against your religion in particular," Trump said. "You cannot vote for Democrats and you have to get out and vote."

Both Southern Baptists and Republicans at large are split on abortion politics, with some calling for immediate, complete abortion bans and others more open to incremental tactics. Polls over the last several years have found a majority of Americans support some access to abortion, and abortion-rights groups have won several statewide votes since *Roe* was overturned, including in conservative-led states like Kansas and Ohio.

Like the GOP, the Southern Baptist Convention has moved steadily to the right since the 1980s, and its members were in the vanguard of the wider religious movement that strongly supported Republican presidents from Ronald Reagan to Trump. The Conservative Baptist Network, one of the event's sponsors, wants to move the conservative denomination even further to the right.

Although they criticized President Bill Clinton's sexual behavior in the 1990s, Southern Baptists and other evangelicals have supported Trump. That has continued despite allegations of sexual misconduct, multiple divorces and now his conviction on 34 charges in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex. Trump gave his address on the same day he was appearing virtually for a required pre-sentencing interview with New York probation officers.

Many Southern Baptists say they see him as the only alternative to a Democratic agenda they abhor.

H. Sharayah Colter, spokesperson for The Danbury Institute, said in a statement that the presidential race was a "binary choice" and said Trump has "demonstrated a willingness to protect the value of life even when politically unpopular."

And Mohler, who leads Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and once an outspoken Clinton critic, wrote a column after Trump's conviction attacking Democrats for supporting transgender rights.

"Say what you will about Donald Trump and his sex scandals, he doesn't confuse male and female," wrote Mohler. On Monday, he denounced Trump's prosecution and conviction, other speakers tapped into themes of Christian nationalism, a fusion of American and Christian identity.

Trump has said he would not sign a national abortion ban and in an interview on the Fox News Channel last week, when commenting on the way some states are enshrining abortion rights and others are restricting them, said that "the people are deciding and in many ways, it's a beautiful thing to watch."

For over a year until he announced his position this spring, Trump had backed away from endorsing any specific national limit on abortion, unlike many other Republicans who eventually ended their presidential campaigns. Trump has repeatedly said the issue can be politically tricky and suggested he would "negotiate" a policy that would include exceptions for rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother.

Democrats and President Joe Biden's campaign have tried to tie Trump to the most conservative state-level bans on abortion as well as a recent Alabama Supreme Court ruling that would have restricted access to in vitro fertilization and other fertility procedures that are broadly popular.

"Four more years of Donald Trump means empowering organizations like The Danbury Institute who want to ban abortion nationally and punish women who have abortions," said Sarafina Chitika, a spokesperson for Biden's campaign. "Trump brags that he is responsible for overturning Roe, he thinks the extreme state bans happening now because of him are 'working very brilliantly,' and if he's given the chance, he will sign a national abortion ban. These are the stakes this November."

When asked about his appearance before The Danbury Institute, Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said Trump "has been very clear: he supports the rights of states to determine the laws on this issue and supports the three exceptions for rape, incest, and life of the mother."

Leavitt also said, "President Trump is committed to addressing groups with diverse opinions on all of the issues, as evidenced by his recent speech at the Libertarian Convention, his meetings with the unions, and his efforts to campaign in diverse neighborhoods across the country."

## **This NYC vet makes house calls. In 'Pets and the City,' she's penned a memoir full of tails**

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Lifestyles Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As a city kid, Amy Attas had big dreams of roaming the countryside, healing animals a la James Herriot's classic "All Creatures Great and Small."

How did it go? Well, the veterinarian made it from Queens to Manhattan, spending the last 32 years traversing the streets of her hometown as a full-time house call doc.

And, boy, does she have stories to tell, from escaping a massive, ailing and territory-threatened Rottweiler, fangs fully bared, to three weeks on intravenous antibiotics after a nasty bite from a cat patient.

Then there's the humans behaving badly ("No dog of mine will be neutered!") and the pampered celebrity-owned pets, including the beloved dogs of the late Joan Rivers, whom Attas counted as a friend. Cher once bared all to show Attas a rash after she adopted a dog with mange, and Billy Joel serenaded her on piano.

"You'll never guess what happened today," was Attas' nightly refrain to her husband. Now, she's collected those tales into a juicy and compassionate memoir, "Pets and the City," out June 18.

Woven among her stories are tips and advice for animal lovers. (Forget the Easter lilies, cat people.)

IN-HOME PET CARE IS NO LONGER A RARITY The pug-loving Attas had no grand business plan for her City Pets practice when she first packed up supplies and began traveling by subway and taxi. She had just left a tony Upper East Side animal hospital and some of her clients, including Rivers, wanted to keep using her. She assumed the house calls would be temporary.

"When I started, it was a novelty," Attas said. "From day one I was busy."

She has more company now as concierge services in general have grown in popularity. Other vets around the country do it full time like Attas, while some maintain brick-and-mortar practices and provide home services for end-of-life care.

Attas, meanwhile, has graduated to a private car and driver. She starts her days at 8 a.m., accompanied by one or both of her nurses. She allowed The Associated Press to tag along on a recent afternoon.

"I initially thought my practice would be filled with people who had difficulty getting to the veterinarian and maybe older people who had pets, or people with physical disabilities," she said. They do seek her out but, Attas said, "what I didn't realize was how attractive it would be to all kinds of other pet owners."

Meet Puddy, the beloved 19-year-old domestic short hair cat of artist Wendy Beyer. The arthritic black-and-white feline has high blood pressure and requires monthly checks. Beyer found Attas through an online search.

"It's life-changing," Beyer said of having Puddy cared for in the comfort of his own home, a cozy sun-and-art-filled apartment in the Hudson Yards neighborhood. "He's never liked being in a carrier. It's so

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traumatic trying to get him in the carrier myself.”

Beyer also likes Attas’ no-pressure approach to her decision to let Puddy age naturally without heroic measures.

“I think it’s helping to extend his life. He’s a really relaxed chill kitty. He’s not being stressed out,” Beyer said.

Hop on over to Fifth Avenue for a check on Cody, an adorable, barky white Maltese who, at age 8, is a bundle of fun-loving energy. He’s at the center of Lisa Healey’s life.

Cody has itchy allergies and a heart murmur. Attas, who helped the Healeys bid farewell to a previous dog, regularly sees Cody in the couple’s spacious apartment.

“This is our child and we would do anything for our children, so it’s worth the cost. It’s worth every penny. I don’t even think about it,” Healey said.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE VET PRACTICE House calls are a far different beast for vets than regular practices. There’s the travel, of course, no small thing in Manhattan. On a recent round, Attas and nurse Jeanine Lunz made use of their in-car time answering phone calls, working on scheduling and tending to the numerous other tasks most vets deal with when they have a few minutes between exams.

“It takes much longer than just waiting for a patient to come in and going from exam room to exam room in a hospital,” Attas said.

The cost of her transportation (she’s Manhattan-only) is included in the fee. She charges an additional fee for seeing multiple pets at once. It’s less than making more than one trip to a vet’s office or what other vets may charge for seeing more than one pet on the same day, she said. Attas restricts her practice to dogs and cats.

In all, Attas said her services can be about 30% more than brick-and-mortar practices. She doesn’t perform surgery, but she provides typical care, from vaccinations to blood and urine draws, relying on specialists for things like severe heart and eye issues. She uses animal hospitals when large equipment is needed or for acute emergencies when every second counts.

So far, Attas has seen more than 7,000 animals in her travels, including the pets of Joel, Wayne Gretzky, Steve Martin and Kevin Kline. At minimum, she or one of the two other vets in her practice visit 12 to 15 homes daily. Her personal best in terms of animals seen in a day is 23.

Attas and her human clients point to other advantages of house calls. Once clients are established, the humans don’t have to be home.

“Sometimes they have their doorman let us in. Sometimes their nanny or their housekeeper is at home. And many of our clients actually give us keys to their apartments,” Attas said.

HOUSE CALLS AREN’T JUST FOR THE RICH Attas dispels the notion that her client list is solely filled with pets of the wealthy.

“I go to billionaires’ homes. I go to housing projects. I work with not-for-profits to help seniors continue to live with their pets,” she said. “Some of my favorite clients through the years were people who didn’t really have a lot, but what they cherished most were their pets.”

Attas never wants to be so busy that she loses the intimate value of home visits.

“When you’re in the home, you’re experiencing how that pet lives,” she said. “I can’t even think of how many times I have been in someone’s home where I see something that is a complete danger for a pet.”

That includes potential killers like open windows with no screens, toxic plants and unsecured terraces. She ended one owner’s practice of serving up massive quantities of catnip after the cat went seriously loopy.

And she found an unlikely object inside a bull terrier that wasn’t coming out the way it went in: His human’s giant over-ear headphones. The human wondered where they had gone.

“We couldn’t figure out how he even consumed them,” Attas said.

She keeps a keen eye on humans who sometimes need help themselves.

“I’ve seen seniors who have lost pets and lose their will to live. In one particular case that I talk about in the book, a lovely woman’s elderly dog passed away, and when I went to check on her a week later she was a fraction of the woman I had seen the week before,” Attas said.

Attas brought the grieving 90-year-old client a senior dog to adopt under the guise of fostering. "She immediately had a reason to live again," Attas said, "and took care of that dog until the day she passed away."

## **The UN says more than 10 million people in Sudan have now fled their homes as war continues**

GENEVA (AP) — The number of internally displaced people in Sudan has reached more than 10 million as war drives about a quarter of the population from their homes, the U.N. migration agency told The Associated Press on Monday.

More than 2 million other people have been driven abroad, mostly to neighboring Chad, South Sudan and Egypt, International Organization for Migration spokesman Mohammedali Abunajela said. The IOM said the internally displaced include 2.8 million who fled their homes before the current war began.

"Imagine a city the size of London being displaced. That's what it's like, but it's happening with the constant threat of crossfire, with famine, disease and brutal ethnic and gender-based violence," IOM Director-General Amy Pope said in a statement.

Sudan's latest conflict began in April last year when soaring tensions between the leaders of the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country.

The war has wrecked Sudan, killing more than 14,000 people and wounding thousands of others, while pushing its population to the brink of famine.

Last month, the U.N. food agency warned the warring parties that there is a serious risk of widespread starvation and death in the vast western region of Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan if they don't allow in humanitarian aid.

Pope called for a unified response from the international community, saying less than one-fifth of the funds the IOM has sought for the response have been delivered.

Together, the number of refugees and internally displaced means that more than a quarter of Sudan's population of 47 million has fled.

## **African elephants call each other by unique names, new study shows**

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — African elephants call each other and respond to individual names — something that few wild animals do, according to new research published Monday.

The names are one part of elephants' low rumbles that they can hear over long distances across the savanna. Scientists believe that animals with complex social structures and family groups that separate and then reunite often may be more likely to use individual names.

"If you're looking after a large family, you've got to be able to say, 'Hey, Virginia, get over here!'" said Duke University ecologist Stuart Pimm, who was not involved in the study.

It's extremely rare for wild animals to call each other by unique names. Humans have names, of course, and our dogs come when their names are called. Baby dolphins invent their own names, called signature whistles, and parrots may also use names.

Each of these naming species also possesses the ability to learn to pronounce unique new sounds throughout their lives — a rare talent that elephants also possess.

For the study in *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, biologists used machine learning to detect the use of names in a sound library of savanna elephant vocalizations recorded at Kenya's Samburu National Reserve and Amboseli National Park.

The researchers followed the elephants in jeeps to observe who called out and who appeared to respond — for example, if a mother called to a calf, or a matriarch called to a straggler who later rejoined the family group.

Analyzing only the audio data, the computer model predicted which elephant was being addressed 28% of the time, likely due to the inclusion of its name. When fed meaningless data, the model only accurately labeled 8% of calls.

"Just like humans, elephants use names, but probably don't use names in the majority of utterances, so we wouldn't expect 100%," said study author and Cornell University biologist Mickey Pardo.

Elephant rumbles include sounds that are below the range of human hearing. The scientists still don't know which part of the vocalization is the name.

Researchers tested their results by playing recordings to individual elephants, who responded more energetically, ears flapping and trunk lifted, to recordings that contained their names. Sometimes elephants entirely ignored vocalizations addressed to others.

"Elephants are incredibly social, always talking and touching each other — this naming is probably one of the things that underpins their ability to communicate to individuals," said co-author and Colorado State University ecologist George Wittemyer, who is also a scientific adviser for nonprofit Save the Elephants.

"We just cracked open the door a bit to the elephant mind."

## What's the Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage, and why is it significant for Muslims?

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

Once a year, Muslim pilgrims flowing into Saudi Arabia unite in a series of religious rituals and acts of worship as they perform the Hajj, one of the pillars of Islam. As they fulfill a religious obligation, they immerse themselves in what can be a spiritual experience of a lifetime for them and a chance to seek God's forgiveness and the erasure of past sins.

Here's a look at the pilgrimage and its significance to Muslims.

**WHAT IS HAJJ?**Hajj is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia that is required once in a lifetime of every Muslim who can afford it and is physically able to make it. Some Muslims make the journey more than once.

Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, in addition to the profession of faith, prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

**WHEN IS HAJJ?**The Hajj occurs once a year during the Islamic lunar month of Dhul-Hijja, the 12th and final month of the Islamic calendar year. This year, Hajj will take place this month.

**WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAJJ TO MUSLIMS?**For pilgrims, performing Hajj fulfills a religious obligation, but it's also a deeply spiritual experience of a lifetime for many. It's seen as a chance to seek God's forgiveness for past sins, to grow closer to God and to walk in the footsteps of prophets.

Communally, Hajj unites Muslims of diverse races, ethnicities, languages and economic classes from around the world in performing religious rituals and acts of worshipping God at the same time and place. That leaves many feeling a sense of unity, connection, humility and equality. Pilgrims also show up with their own personal appeals, wishes and experiences.

Many pilgrims bring with them prayer requests from family and friends that they would like to be said on their behalf.

Some spend years hoping and praying to one day perform Hajj or saving up money and waiting for a permit to embark on the trip.

In 2019, nearly 2.5 million Muslims performed Hajj before the coronavirus pandemic disrupted religious and other gatherings the world over and took its toll on the Islamic pilgrimage. Last year's Hajj was the first to be held without COVID-19 restrictions since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

Ahead of the journey, preparations may include packing various essentials for the physically demanding trip, seeking tips from those who've performed the pilgrimage before, attending lectures or consuming other educational material on how to properly perform a series of Hajj rituals as well as spiritually readying oneself.

At times, pilgrims brave intense heat or other challenging conditions during the pilgrimage.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RITUALS THAT PILGRIMS PERFORM? Pilgrims make the intention to perform Hajj and they enter a state of "ihram." Being in ihram includes abiding by certain rules and prohibitions. For instance, men are not to wear regular sewn or stitched clothes that encircle the body, such as shirts, during ihram; there are simple ihram cloth garments for men instead. Scholars say the intention is to discard luxuries and vanity, shed worldly status symbols and immerse the pilgrim in humility and devotion to God.

A spiritual highlight of Hajj for many is the standing on the plain of Arafat, where pilgrims praise God, plead for forgiveness and make supplications.

Other rituals include performing "tawaf," circumambulating, or circling the Kaaba in Mecca counterclockwise seven times.

Muslims do not worship the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure that they consider the metaphorical house of God; it's the focal point toward which devout Muslims face during their daily prayers from anywhere in the world.

Pilgrims also trace the path of Hagar, or Hajar, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim, Abraham to Jews and Christians, who Muslims believe ran between two hills seven times searching for water for her son.

Among other rituals, pilgrims throw pebbles in a symbolic stoning of the devil.

WHAT IS EID AL-ADHA? Eid al-Adha, or the "Feast of Sacrifice," is the Islamic holiday that begins on the 10th day of the Islamic lunar month of Dhul-Hijja, during Hajj.

Celebrated by Muslims around the world, Eid al-Adha marks Prophet Ibrahim's test of faith and his willingness to sacrifice his son as an act of submission to God. During the festive holiday, Muslims slaughter sheep or cattle and distribute some meat to the poor.

## Ukraine's air force may keep some F-16 warplanes abroad to protect them from Russian strikes

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine may keep some of the F-16 fighter jets it's set to receive from its Western allies at foreign bases to protect them from Russian strikes, a senior Ukrainian military officer said Monday.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have committed to providing Ukraine with over 60 U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets to help it fend off Russian attacks. Ukrainian pilots are currently undergoing training to fly the warplanes ahead of the deliveries expected to start later this year.

Serhii Holubtsov, head of aviation within Ukraine's air force, said that "a certain number of aircraft will be stored at secure air bases outside of Ukraine so that they are not targeted here."

Holubtsov told the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that those F-16s could be used to replace damaged aircraft as they undergo repairs as well as for training Ukrainian pilots abroad.

"This way, we can always have a certain number of aircraft in the operational fleet that corresponds to the number of pilots we have," he said. "If there are more pilots, there will be more aircraft in Ukraine."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Moscow could consider launching strikes at facilities in NATO countries if they host the warplanes used in Ukraine.

"If they are stationed at air bases outside the Ukrainian borders and used in combat, we will have to see how and where to strike the assets used in combat against us," Putin said last year. "It poses a serious danger of NATO being further drawn into the conflict."

In March, the Russian leader again warned Ukraine's Western allies against providing air bases from where the F-16s could launch sorties against the Kremlin's forces. Those bases would become a "legitimate target," he said.

"F-16s are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and we will also need to take that into account while organizing our combat operations," Putin stated.

On Monday, Andrei Kartapolov, the head of the defense committee in the Russian Parliament's lower house told the state RIA Novosti news agency that NATO bases hosting Ukrainian F-16s would be "legitimate targets" for Moscow if the warplanes use them to launch attacks on Russia.



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The F-16s require a high standard of runways and reinforced hangars to protect them from attacks on the ground. It's not clear how many Ukrainian air bases can meet those requirements, and Russia would be certain to quickly target a few that could accommodate them once the jets arrive.

Holubtsov noted that the F-16s will help protect front-line and border regions from Russian glide bombs that have inflicted significant damage to both troops and residential areas, including Kharkiv. Glide bombs are heavy Soviet-era bombs fitted with precision guidance systems and launched from aircraft flying out of range of air defenses.

"I think we will succeed, first of all, in pushing back the aircraft that drop glide bombs farther from the contact line," he said. "If we manage to push them back at least another 30-50 kilometers (19-31 miles), this can already be considered a turning point and an achievement, if not of superiority, then of parity in the airspace."

Ukraine's Western allies are trying to bolster military support for Kyiv as Russian troops have launched attacks along the more than 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) frontline, taking advantage of a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid. Ukraine is currently fighting to hold back a Russian push near its second-largest city of Kharkiv, less than 30 kilometers (less than 20 miles) from the border.

Russian troops have also continued their slow offensive in the eastern Donetsk region. On Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry claimed that the Kremlin's forces had captured the village of Staromaiorske, the claim that hasn't been confirmed by Kyiv and couldn't be independently verified.

Ukraine has struck back with regular missile and drone attacks on Moscow-occupied territories and areas inside Russia.

In the latest strike, Ukrainian forces hit Russian air defense systems in Dzhankoy, Chornomorske and Yevpatoriya in the Moscow-occupied Crimea with missiles, Ukraine's General Staff said Monday. The Russian Defense Ministry hasn't commented on the Ukrainian claim, which couldn't be independently confirmed.

The U.S. and other NATO allies have responded to the latest Russian offensive by allowing Ukraine to use weapons they deliver to Kyiv to carry out limited attacks inside Russia. The decision could potentially impede Moscow's ability to concentrate its troops for a bigger offensive near Kharkiv and in other border areas.

Last week, Putin responded by warning that Moscow "reserves the right" to arm adversaries of the West worldwide. "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 said.

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 high-tech missiles to share with adversaries of the West if Putin decides to fulfill his threat.

## Today in History: June 11, more than 80 killed at Le Mans auto race

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 11, the 163rd day of 2024. There are 203 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 11, 1955, in motor racing's worst disaster, more than 80 people were killed during the 24 Hours of Le Mans in France when two of the cars collided and crashed into spectators.

On this date:

In 1509, England's King Henry VIII married his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

In 1770, Captain James Cook, commander of the British ship Endeavour, "discovered" the Great Barrier Reef off Australia by running onto it.

In 1776, the Continental Congress formed a committee to draft a Declaration of Independence calling for freedom from Britain.

In 1919, Sir Barton won the Belmont Stakes, becoming horse racing's first Triple Crown winner.

In 1938, Johnny Vander Meer pitched the first of two consecutive no-hitters as he led the Cincinnati

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Reds to a 3-0 victory over the Boston Bees. (Four days later, Vander Meer refused to give up a hit to the Brooklyn Dodgers, who lost, 6-0.)

In 1962, three prisoners at Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay staged an escape, leaving the island on a makeshift raft; they were never found or heard from again.

In 1985, Karen Ann Quinlan, the comatose patient whose case prompted a historic right-to-die court decision, died in Morris Plains, New Jersey, at age 31.

In 1987, Margaret Thatcher became the first British prime minister in 160 years to win a third consecutive term of office as her Conservative Party held onto a reduced majority in Parliament.

In 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that people who commit hate crimes motivated by bigotry may be sentenced to extra punishment.

In 2001, Timothy McVeigh, 33, was executed by injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people.

In 2009, with swine flu reported in more than 70 nations, the World Health Organization declared the first global flu pandemic in 41 years.

In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that states can target people who haven't cast ballots in a while in efforts to purge their voting rolls.

In 2020, Louisville, Kentucky, banned the use of "no-knock" warrants and named the new ordinance for Breonna Taylor, who'd been fatally shot by officers who burst into her home.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., is 94. International Motorsports Hall of Famer Jackie Stewart is 85. Singer Joey Dee is 84. Actor Roscoe Orman is 80. Actor Adrienne Barbeau is 79. Rock musician Frank Beard (ZZ Top) is 75. Animal rights activist Ingrid Newkirk is 75. Singer Graham Russell (Air Supply) is 74. Rock singer Donnie Van Zant is 72. Actor Peter Bergman is 71. Pro Football Hall of Famer Joe Montana is 68. Actor Hugh Laurie is 65. TV personality and former U.S. Senate candidate Mehmet Oz, M.D., is 64. Singer Gioia (JOY'-ah) Bruno (Expose) is 61. Rock musician Dan Lavery (Tonic) is 58. Country singer-songwriter Bruce Robison is 58. Actor Clare Carey is 57. Actor Peter Dinklage is 55. Actor Lenny Jacobson is 50. Actor Joshua Jackson is 46. Americana musician Gabe Witcher (Punch Brothers) is 46. U.S. Olympic and WNBA basketball star Diana Taurasi is 42. Actor Shia LaBeouf (SHY'-uh luh-BUF') is 38.